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Ballistic Missile Defense in Europe

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Abstract

This paper will build on ballistic missile defense in Europe. In the first part, a brief historical overview will place the current public management issue into light. This is followed by a discussion of the main actors in the international debate, the problems that arise and the available options and recommendations to address missile defense. In the second part, differences between George W. Bush and Barack H. Obama will analyze under the title “Ballistic Missile Defense in Europe: Evolving Problems during Change in Presidential Administration”

Program, Options and Recommendations

Historical Overview

Missile defense is a relic of the Cold War. With the escalation of nuclear threat between the United States and the USSR, the United States sought a way to prevent full-scale nuclear destruction of key infrastructure and the homeland. President Johnson began the rough draft of a plan to fix the issue with rockets that exploded to disrupt and possibly destroy any incoming nuclear missile.¹The plan largely remained a side-project in the discussion until the Reagan administration proposed a new space based interception system. The system, when proposed by Reagan, was very theoretical without any necessary technology to implement it, and as a result was dubbed by the media as Star Wars. By 1988, the system had produced a system called Brilliant Pebbles to ram satellites into incoming missiles with the total of all space based funding estimated to be around \$100 billion.² Needless to say, the USSR was

less than thrilled of the prospect of their nuclear warheads being ruled as not an option, although with the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972 ruled out the use of ballistic missiles.

When the USSR fell, lots of pressure for missile defense went away since the biggest threat at the time being vanished. George H.W. Bush did not want to abandon the effort, however, and he changed the purpose and strategy of missile defense away from the Star Wars shield model to the Global Protection Against Limited Strikes (GPALS). GPALS was a much more limited focus on actual ground based interception systems as opposed to space-based systems.³ When Clinton took office in 1993, he changed the name of the program to the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization (BMDO). The goal and focus of missile defense plans over the years remains the same; to protect the armed forces of the United States and its allies and eventually protect the United States itself.⁴ While the funding was constantly an issue, research on the possible defenses used for the system continued, and achieved some marginal results at best. Hitting a rocket out of the air with another rocket was incredibly difficult to do, and the lack of concrete results gave fuel to critics in Washington and abroad of the practicality of a missile defense system. But the potential benefits of being protected against such a devastating attack enticed the United States to keep researching the issue. But while this was happening in the United States, Russia was still concerned with the development of a defense system, particularly by the United States through NATO, feeling that the system would be used against them, particularly with NATO's involvement in Yugoslavia.⁵

The game plan changed when George W. Bush took office. Although the opposition to missile defense was gaining momentum, 9/11 changed the picture drastically. Much opposition to missile defense changed dramatically, as security was a huge concern. The Bush administration used that to gain support for a full missile defense system, as opposed to a limited one that had been pursued in the past decade. The Bush administration's first major step of the change was unilaterally backing out of the ABM treaty in June 2002 (although it was announced in December 2001, as per the details of the treaty). Russia had some issues with it, but Putin remained confident that the result would not bother US-Russian relations.⁶ In the meantime, North Korea had decided that it would begin to test fire ICBMs and pursue its ICBM project. However, US-Russia relations became strained when Bush began to say that the missile defense system would protect the Axis of Evil, when Russia had signed a ten-year agreement for nuclear power plants in Iran⁷, and concerns over if the missile defense shield would be given away. Tensions began the two countries grew more and more with the United States invading Iraq. Despite growing international concerns over the missile defense

shield, Bush began looking for suitable spots for a radar site in the Czech Republic and a missile silo in Poland. The Polish government wanted the silos while its citizens were concerned over environmental and health issues.⁸ Official talks began to allow the construction of the silos and radar in 2007, and the Czech government agreed in 2008, while negotiations had failed in Poland, whose government had changed parties and opinions.⁹ Russia responded by threatening to take action if the treaty was ratified.¹⁰ In the meantime, Europe was back and forth on the issue, ultimately warning about if it could support the system, although it was designed to help them. NATO and the EU saw themselves as being in the middle of a brewing battle between Russia and the US.¹¹

The scenario changed again during the Obama administration. Obama wanted to scale back the focus of the problems with the missile defense shield. Obama sought to address the issue of defense more proactively, by using diplomatic and economic means to deter Iran and North Korea instead of a military solution. As a result, Obama scrapped the idea of a large-scale land-based system.¹² The new system would put smaller missiles on Navy ships, and might possibly lead to land based systems, but not until 2015.¹³ While Russia saw this as a huge step forward to easing concerns, there was no direction of action to take sanctions with Iran. At the current time, Iran and Russia still have plans for nuclear enrichment for power plants, while the US is concerned about it.

Actors

The goal set by the Obama Administration will involve several domestic and international actors. In order to validate a proposed plan, at least three nations will need to ratify the plan in their respective governments. As it stands today, Poland and Czech Republic are both engaged in conferences with the United States on establishing ballistic missile defense locations in their counties. From the sound of Obama's suggestions for a sea-based component, the United States is also in conferences with the United Nations as well. Both Poland and the Czech Republic are eager to discuss locations in their countries for both protection and the economical benefits to two new military facilities in their country, however conferences and international ratification is a slow process. In an ideal sense, the Ministry of National Defense from Poland and the Ministry of Defense from the Czech Republic are the key negotiation players with leaders from the Department of State and the US Missile Defense Agency.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates have been instrumental in pushing Obama's plan forward in Europe and at sea. President Obama is

quoted as stating “the new missile-defense architecture in Europe will provide stronger, smarter, and swifter defenses of American forces and America's allies.”¹⁴ Both have represented Obama and the United States abroad in pursuit of international agreement for a short-ranged ballistic missile defense based at sea.

Domestic federal departments and agencies are also busy asserting their muscle for the plan in the United States Congress. The Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Defense have equal incentives to see this plan through as a means to defend the United States. Assuming that an international agreement is made on the location and scope of the defense system, there will be many more actors thrown into the situation. The Army and Air Force were central to the Bush Administration’s plan and will remain so in Obama’s plan, however the Navy will now be necessary to maintain sea-based defense systems. The Army Corps of Engineers will still be necessary for construction of the sites in Poland and the Czech Republic.

There is opposition to the plan coming from leadership in Russia. Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev argue that a ballistic missile defense station constructed in Poland is a sign of aggression towards Russia by the United States. There seems to be little weight to this argument, as the sites are designed for defensive purposes only and not as a strategic site to launch a ballistic missile offensive. Even if this were the case, the United States would not choose Russia as its main target in the region anyway, and so their argument has no merit. Sergey Lavrov Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said in a speech before Obama's ballistic missile defense announcement that Moscow will continue to oppose any new sanctions over Iran's nuclear program. Sergey Lavrov is an essential actor in the Russian Administration. International opposition to the Obama Administration’s plan will further impede the agreement process.

Problems

Russia opposed the Bush Administration’s missile defense plan, fearing it would violate existing arms control mechanisms and shift the balance of power in Europe. Russian President Vladimir Putin strongly cautioned against eroding the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, which was signed in 1972.¹⁵ The Kremlin believed the U.S. plan would weaken Russia’s nuclear deterrent.¹⁶ Russia further warned that it was considering aiming its rockets at the proposed U.S. missile defense system. Russia believed U.S. military installations, placed in former Soviet satellite states, could pose a threat to its security.¹⁷ As Russian Defense Minister Ivanov put it, “I have every reason to say that there are no ICBMs in Iran or North

[Korea], nor are there going to be any [in the foreseeable future]. So the real question is, against what countries will this system be used?”¹⁸ The unspoken answer, of course, was Russia—and everyone involved knew it.¹⁹

The United States experienced further resistance to its missile defense plan within the parliaments of Poland and the Czech Republic—the proposed sites for a ground-based system. In Poland, the left-leaning Civic Platform party won national elections and pledged to renegotiate the missile treaty. While the Czech leadership approved a missile defense treaty with the United States, the Czech parliament refused to ratify the treaty.²⁰ Without a defense system in place, the Czech government expressed concerns about Russia’s intentions. Czech Deputy Foreign Minister Tomas Pojar said, “[w]e are talking with Russians. We are very open with Russians. But they should not have veto over our security and over NATO’s security issues and decisions.”²¹

The financial scope of the problem has posed a problem for the plan. In 2002, a selected acquisition report (SAR) that was sent to the U.S. Congress projected the cost of a missile defense system as \$47.2 billion for 2002 through 2009. One year later, a SAR indicated the cost would be \$62.9 billion over the same period. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the Bush plan would have cost \$9-\$13 billion per year and still would not have fully protected Europe from an Iranian missile attack.²² The U.S. Congress refused to grant funding for the program until the plans were ratified.²³ Since ratification never took place, the DoD and MDA were at an impasse. Perhaps out of concern caused by widely varied cost estimates, U.S. lawmakers voted indirectly to delay the missile interceptor system. Congress cut nearly \$139 million from the fiscal 2008 budget request for the Polish missile site.²⁴

The large interceptor system advocated by the Bush Administration has only been tested to this date eight times, and not against the type of missiles that would likely be used in an attack.²⁵ This created debate among legislative and diplomatic lines, especially when the successes and failures of the three-stage configuration, as tested, were considered.²⁶ Many were hesitant to invest in unreliable technology. This concern was shared by the nations set to ratify agreements at the international level.²⁷ According to physicist Richard Garwin, who served on a panel studying ballistic missile defense, the system “would have added only marginally” to existing missile protection and do so “at high cost.”²⁸

The ground-based system was a derivative of a larger system which had already proved problematic for the MDA and could not be tested until at least 2011.²⁹ Even the most optimistic estimates concluded that the missile shield would not be fully operational until

2013, leaving future administrations with the responsibility of operating the Bush administration’s missile shield.³⁰

Options

A ballistic missile attack presents a “peak load” problem in which a threat is not necessarily likely, but will be devastating if it materializes. Decision makers are faced with a double-risk dilemma, as shown on the table below:

	A missile is not launched	A missile is launched
Not prepared for an attack	MINOR DEFEAT (?) The status quo: U.S. and its allies remain safe, as long as no attack is launched.	MAJOR DISASTER. Thousands, if not millions of people die and are injured. A political (and public management) failure.
Prepared for an attack	MINOR VICTORY (?) Some groups will be satisfied, believing that a missile shield is preventing an attack. However, this option requires billions of dollars which could be spent elsewhere.	MAJOR SUCCESS (?) If a missile is destroyed before it reaches the U.S. or an allied nation, few will argue that the missile shield is worth the expense. However, others may argue that diplomacy or sanctions could have averted an attack.

1. Do nothing

If the United States decides to cancel its missile defense plans, tensions between the United States and Russia will almost certainly ease. However, allies such as Poland and the Czech Republic—who feel threatened by Russia—will believe that the United States has left them abandoned. Other nations may view the U.S.’s capitulation as a sign of weakness.

2. Proceed with Bush Administration plan (Land-based technology)

If the U.S. proceeds with the Bush Administration plan, Poland and the Czech Republic will feel more secure against a potential Russian threat. Iran and North Korea may become hesitant to advance their ballistic missile programs. However, Poland and the Czech Republic would need to ratify the treaties. The U.S. would have to resolve its funding impasse and technology gaps.

3. Use only Sea-Based Technology

The U.S. could proceed with an entirely sea-based system. Most of the technology is in place, with U.S. Navy Aegis ships prepared to employ SM-3 interceptors. This option avoids the diplomatic problem of treaty ratification and could also ease tensions with Russia. However, without the use of land-based radar, the system would not be as accurate. The U.S. would have to maintain a constant naval presence in the region, requiring extensive and costly logistical support.

4. Phased-in approach

The Obama Administration has decided on a four-phase approach. The first stage, to be completed by 2011, will be the deployment of Navy Aegis ships equipped with SM-3 interceptors to the eastern Mediterranean.³¹ The second phase (scheduled to be in place by 2015) will be the development of an upgraded, land-based SM-3 in allied countries with radar systems, possibly in the Caucasus.³² Discussions are currently underway with Poland and the Czech Republic on basing the missiles in their territory. The third phase (scheduled to be in place by 2018) will deploy a larger and more capable ground-based system, which will allow the shield to protect Europe and the United States against short and intermediate-range rockets and, eventually, ICBMs.³³ In the fourth phase, the U.S. would deploy the SM-3 Block IIB interceptor to cope with medium-and intermediate-range missiles, as well as potential ICMB threats.³⁴

The phased approach pacifies Russia in the short-term, while providing European allies with a sense of security. It also holds promise as a deterrent against aggression from North Korea, Iran, and other nations with ballistic missiles.

However, this approach has some disadvantages: First, the program relies on a less-accurate sea-based system through at least 2015. The U.S. and its allies will remain vulnerable for at least five more years, providing a window of opportunity for nations who may wish to attack. Second, while Russia's leaders are appeased for now, they will likely voice opposition to the large ground-based system as it draws closer to completion in 2018. Finally, the phased approach relies on successively more-capable systems that do not yet exist. What if the SM-3 Block IIB interceptor is not ready in time, or does not work? The Obama Administration's plan leaves these questions unanswered.

Recommendations

There is no one action that the Obama administration can make that will address this issue. Our recommendation is a four-step process; scale back ballistic missile defense

implementation, develop flexible systems, continue research and development, and increase diplomacy.

1. Scale back large-scale missile defense implementation

The current ground-based missile defense systems in development are not ready to create an effective missile shield. Even if they had high success rates, countries with large stockpiles of missiles would not be deterred by the threat of a few silos scattered around the globe. If anything, this would encourage countries that are developing missile technologies to make sure they have large stockpiles of weapons before they carry out an attack. This would encourage a new form of arms race, which would involve many more actors than what we experienced during the Cold War.

2. Develop flexible systems

An alternative to putting large bulky ground based systems in place is to consider implementing more flexible systems. For a land option, this could be a highly mobile piece of equipment – which could be mounted on a truck or rail system. On sea, the focus should be putting a missile defense system on smaller and smaller vessels, capable of travelling into shallow waters in short notice. By air, planes could be equipped with missile defense and could stand guard over high priority areas. Threats to the United States and its allies are constantly changing and our defenses should be nimble enough to deal with emerging threats. With more flexible systems it would reduce the amount of time it would take to respond to a threat and also be a better deterrent to adversaries.

3. Continue research and development

Missile defense technology is a continuing cat-and-mouse game. As anti-ballistic missiles become faster, smarter, and more accurate, so do regular missile systems. Many countries may not be able to do any sort of missile defense, but may still have the capability to effectively launch deadly weapons. Iran in particular is developing missiles with solid rocket boosters which are reaching speeds faster than any current missile defense system would be able to destroy once launched.³⁵ Before complete deployment of a missile defense system it is necessary to continue research and development to discover better ways of countering threats. The program should not be cut completely, but it needs more time to perfect.

4. Increase diplomacy

Work together with other actors to develop ballistic missile defense technology. Instead of closing off to the rest of the world the United States should embrace help offered by other nations who have a stake in protecting themselves from missile attacks. Other nation-states sometimes have more direct threats against them and desperately need a missile shield. The

U.S. scale-back its laws dealing with dual-use technologies and seek out help from the rest of the world to deal with this global threat.

Using diplomacy also offers an opportunity improve relationships so the system will never have to be used. The missile defense system should be used as a last resort. The best possible outcome is that it will never have to be used. The U.S. should engage its adversaries and increase diplomatic relations so it will not be threatened by missile attacks. This goal is the hardest to achieve but it has the largest payoffs. Obama's recent Nobel Peace prize demonstrates not only Obama's commitment to diplomacy, but perhaps more importantly the positive light that the rest of the western world views the United States in with the change of administration.

“Ballistic Missile Defense in Europe: Evolving Problems during Change in Presidential Administration”

As mankind continues to develop sophisticated weapons systems, there is a continual cat-and-mouse game to also create effective countermeasures for the new weapons systems. Some of the most destructive weapons are ballistic missiles. The corresponding countermeasure is ballistic missile defense (BMD). This can be thought of trying to hit a bullet with a bullet. But with Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) the bullets are travelling up to 17,000 miles per hour in outer space and a miss could mean the destruction of life as we know it. BMD technology has been largely unsuccessful and incredibly expensive. Many Americans believe the United States is completely protected against ICBMs, but this is not the case. Past Presidential administrations have attempted to implement a fully functional BMD system. While they have provided limited successes, it is not fair to say in the event of an ICBM strike the U.S. could not be hit. Along with technological complications come diplomatic issues, as new potentially threatening nation-states develop ICBM and nuclear capabilities. Since the September 11th terrorist attacks, the United States and the European Union have been working together to reduce the risk of another offensive from terrorist organizations and military combatants. Growing intelligence reports from the Middle East suggest in the near future Iraq, Afghanistan and Iran may be capable of launching an offensive on the European allies or even the continental United States. The two administrations that have occupied the White House since 9/11 have created different strategies to defend against a missile strike. This case study will compare the missile defense plans for Europe in the Bush and Obama administrations.

The Bush administration determined that long-range ballistic missile attacks were likely to occur based on a number of intelligence reports. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice argued that North Korea and Iran both posed serious threats to the U.S. and the EU. North Korea and Iran have been considered unpredictable and threatening nations, despite reports from the U.S. National Intelligence Estimate that Iran discontinued missile weapons in early 2003.³⁶ The Iranian government asserted ICBM research and development have been discontinued, but this was never confirmed. Under Secretary of State John Rood spearheaded the U.S. negotiations for European missile defense conversations with NATO. He argued that the status of missile development in any single nation was irrelevant, as a comprehensive ballistic missile defense system would yield benefits regardless of the type of instrument used in a strike.³⁷ Reports also indicated that Iran was very likely to develop technology that would make long-range ballistic missile deployment inevitable as early as 2015.

Based on the threats of potential ballistic missile deployment from North Korea and Iran, President George W. Bush centered his operational plan on long-range ballistic missile defense. In 2006, it was publicly announced that the U.S. would construct ten ground-based interceptors in silos in Poland and a radar site in the Czech Republic. Formal discussions of the plan began in January 2007. The missile defense program became known as Ground-based Midcourse Defense (GMD). ICBMs have three phases: boost phase, midcourse phase and re-entry phase. The missile travels in space approximately 25 minutes in orbit during the midcourse phase.³⁸ GMD uses ground-based interceptors to take out ICBMs during the midcourse phase.

The task to implement BMD in Europe fell to the Missile Defense Agency (MDA), whose mission is to “develop and field an integrated, layered, ballistic missile defense system to defend the United States, its deployed forces, allies, and friends against all ranges of enemy ballistic missiles in all phases of flight.”³⁹ The plans for the interceptor site in Poland consisted of ten two-stage silos with the intention to protect both the U.S. and the EU from ballistic missile attacks from the Middle East. The radar site plans were set to be operational at the Bodny military training area in the Czech Republic. The Department of Defense (DoD) put the MDA in charge of delegating responsibility to the Army (at the interceptor site) and the Air Force (at the radar site). The Army Corps of Engineers was given instructions to spearhead construction at each site. A third component of the Bush missile defense plan was a mobile, forward-based radar network. This was meant to provide radar support closer to Iran and had land-based mobile capabilities. The mobile radar component was in the internal discussion stage at the DoD; no formal international talks took place about the staging of

land-based mobile radar stations in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Reports in May 2009 suggested that this third option was unnecessary in light of Iran's threat capabilities.⁴⁰

Agreements among the United States, Poland, and the Czech Republic were negotiated in 2008. Each country signed the BMD agreements. The plan, however, encountered domestic obstacles in both Poland and the Czech Republic. The BMD agreements required ratification from the Polish and Czech parliaments. The agreements were never ratified, so the DoD and the MDA reached an impasse when requesting a defense budget for the project. The Army Corps of Engineers was asked to prepare cost expenditure assessments for each site. This could not take place until the plans were ratified. Diplomatic requirements brought the project to a standstill when the U.S. Congress refused to grant funding for the program to the DoD until the plans were ratified.⁴¹ Since one site was meant to aid the other, ratification was required from both Poland and the Czech Republic before construction began at either site.

In 2002, a selected acquisition report (SAR) that was sent to the U.S. Congress projected the cost of a missile defense system as \$47.2 billion for 2002 through 2009. One year later, a SAR indicated the cost would be \$62.9 billion over the same period. The total was included in the fiscal year 2004 budget request, but was not broken down into discreet elements. At least \$18 billion of the increase was attributed to engineering changes required after President Bush announced the need in December 2002 for a "layered system."⁴² According to the Congressional Budget Office, the Bush plan would have cost \$9-\$13 billion per year and still would not have fully protected Europe from an Iranian missile attack.⁴³ According to physicist Richard Garwin, who served on a panel studying ballistic missile defense, the system "would have added only marginally" to existing missile protection and do so "at high cost."⁴⁴

Perhaps out of concern caused by widely varied cost estimates, U.S. lawmakers voted indirectly to delay the missile interceptor system. Congress cut nearly \$139 million from the fiscal 2008 budget request for the Polish missile site. Bush responded: "Missile defense is a vital tool for our security, it's a vital tool for deterrence and it's a vital tool for counter proliferation. Despite all these benefits, the United States Congress is cutting funding."⁴⁵

There are a number of criticisms surrounding the Bush Administration's plans. The interceptor site planned for Poland was rooted in a two-step configuration of missile response, which is different than the operational three-stage ballistic missile interceptors in the United States today.⁴⁶ The large interceptor system the Bush Administration wanted to use has only been tested to this date eight times, and not against the type of missiles that

would likely be used in an attack.⁴⁷ This created debate among legislative and diplomatic lines, especially when the successes and failures of the three-stage configuration, as tested, were considered.⁴⁸ Many were hesitant to invest in unreliable technology. This concern was shared by the nations set to ratify agreements at the international level.⁴⁹

Russia in particular opposed the missile defense plan because it would violate existing arms control mechanisms, reluctance to shift the balance of power in Europe, escalating tensions between the U.S. and Russia and the lack of a defined threat. In 2001, President Bush expressed a desire to begin a dialogue between Russia and the United States on BMD. Russian President Vladimir Putin welcomed the opportunity, but strongly cautioned against eroding the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, which the two nations had signed in 1972. The Bush administration did not agree with Russia's interpretation of the treaty mainly because it was originally signed between the US and the Soviet Union.⁵⁰

Putin stated Russia's main defense priority was maintaining its strategic forces, which he defined as "guarantee[ing] the neutralization of any potential aggressor, no matter what modern weapons systems he possesses."⁵¹ Russian Defense Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov said Bush's missile defense plans did not make "political sense, to say nothing of military sense."⁵² The Kremlin believed the U.S. plan would weaken Russia's nuclear deterrent.⁵³ Russia further warned that it was considering aiming its rockets at the proposed U.S. missile defense system. Russia believed that such a response would be justified because U.S. military installations, placed in former Soviet satellite states, could pose a threat Russian security.⁵⁴ Defense Minister Ivanov pointed out that the Russian Topol-M ground-based missiles could "reliably overcome any missile defense systems. Thus, we take these [U.S.] plans in stride."⁵⁵

Officials familiar with the competing proposals stated that a key difference between the U.S. and Russian governments was the perceived imminence of an Iranian missile threat.⁵⁶ President Bush said that a missile system was urgently needed to guard Europe against a potential attack from Iran. Russia, on the other hand, downplayed the threat.⁵⁷ According to Russian estimates, Iran was fifteen to twenty years away from creating missiles with the range necessary to successfully attack Western Europe or the United States.⁵⁸ As Russian Defense Minister Ivanov put it, "I have every reason to say that there are no ICBMs in Iran or North [Korea], nor are there going to be any [in the foreseeable future]. So the real question is, against what countries will this system be used?"⁵⁹

Even U.S. Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates doubted an Iranian attack was imminent, suggesting that the U.S. might delay activation of the shield until there was

“definitive proof” of a threat.⁶⁰ “We have not fully developed this proposal,” Gates said, “but the idea was we would go forward with the negotiations, we would complete the negotiations, and we would develop the sites, build the sites, but perhaps would delay activating them until there was concrete proof of the threat from Iran.”⁶¹ Gates also dismissed the argument that the U.S. missile defense system was designed to intercept missiles from Iran and North Korea.⁶² According to the Congressional Research Service (CRS), Iran had suspended all efforts to build an ICBM.⁶³

The United States experienced further resistance to its missile defense plan within Poland and the Czech Republic—the proposed sites for a ground-based system. In Poland, the left-leaning Civic Platform party won national elections and pledged to renegotiate the treaty allowing the construction of U.S. missile sites. Several polls indicated that the majority of Polish citizens disapproved of a U.S. missile bases.⁶⁴ Polls in the Czech Republic revealed that 70% of its citizens opposed the Bush plan. The Czech government in place at the time later failed to gain reelection, in part because it supported the U.S. missile shield plan.⁶⁵ The new Czech government approved a missile defense treaty with the United States, but the treaty required approval from parliament, where it faced strong opposition. Opposition parties criticized the plan and demanded a national referendum.⁶⁶

According to Czech Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek only minor details remained to be resolved by early 2008. Topolánek stated that the main point amounted to discussing the environmental impact of a potential U.S. missile site, “[w]e are actually looking for the standards which would be the strictest possible standards to be applied in terms of ensuring and guaranteeing environmental protection. That is a technical matter that is going to be resolved very soon”.⁶⁷ At the same time, the Czech government maintained diplomatic relations with Russia. According to Czech Deputy Foreign Minister Tomas Pojar, “[w]e are talking with Russians. We are very open with Russians. But they should not have veto over our security and over NATO’s security issues and decisions.”⁶⁸ To ease tensions between the U.S., Russia and the Czech Republic, Defense Secretary Gates offered to allow Russia to maintain a presence at the Czech site. This proposal was subject to the Czech government’s approval.⁶⁹

The United States was not able to fully implement the Bush plan by the time he left office. The ground-based system could not be tested until at least 2011, and that system was a derivative of a larger system which had already proved problematic for the MDA.⁷⁰ Even the most optimistic estimates concluded that the missile shield would not be fully operational

until 2013, leaving subsequent administrations with the responsibility of operating the Bush administration's missile shield.⁷¹

President Obama's BMD plan is based on the Iranian threat, much like the Bush administration, but the actual approach differs greatly. Both presidents recognized the threat of missiles fired from Iran and the U.S. should protect itself and its allies against the threat.⁷²

The Obama administration prefers a smaller scale, mobile BMD as opposed to a big and bulky defensive system.⁷³ The new BMD plan is made out to be cheaper, quicker and more effective against the threat from Iranian missiles.⁷⁴ One of the sharpest breaks with Bush administration policies is that the new approach would offer a stronger, swifter and smarter defense system for the US and its allies.⁷⁵ The ballistic defense would focus on the threat posed by Iran's short and medium range missiles, rather than its ICBM and nuclear capabilities.⁷⁶ Another new approach is to remove Czech Republic and Poland facilities to attempt to get Russia's help to guard against Iran and their missile program.⁷⁷

The Obama administration's plan can be broken into four parts. First, the new missile defense system is designed to confront Iran's emerging military might more directly.⁷⁸ A shield based on the Navy's Aegis system will be geographically closer to Iran and can be deployed sooner and more cost-effectively than the land-based system put forward by the Bush administration. NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen says the system would provide Europeans and Americans with protection against a real threat.⁷⁹

Second, the Obama plan will be replaced by a network of smaller, more modern missiles based on ships with eventual land facilities. Defense Secretary Gates has said that "[t]he intelligence community now assesses that the threat from Iran's short- and medium-range ballistic missiles ... is developing more rapidly than previously projected. This poses an increased and more immediate threat to our forces on the European continent, as well as to our allies."⁸⁰

Third, the plan is based upon a healthier U.S.-Russian relationship, specifically to get Russia to support tough U.N. economic sanctions against Iran if it continues to pursue its nuclear ambitions. Thus far Russia appears reluctant to provide any more sanctions against Iran for anything.⁸¹ However, BMD sours relations between the U.S. and Russia, with Russia believing the shield would ultimately erode its strategic nuclear deterrent.⁸² Removing the proposed facilities from the Czech Republic and Poland will help ease Russia's perceived threat. This has already been demonstrated as Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's claiming that "so far, I can say that a possible review of the U.S. position on missile defense

would be a positive signal.”⁸³ By getting Russia on board with the U.S., Iran will be isolated and will have to comply with U.S. and EU demands.

Fourth, the plan gives a larger role to the Navy. The new defense plan will be based on ships, so the Navy will have an integral role in BMD.

Based on the plan as described by Secretary Gates, the new missile defense plan will unfold in three stages. The first stage will be the deployment of Navy Aegis ships equipped with SM-3 interceptors in the eastern Mediterranean. The second phase (scheduled to be in place by 2015) will be the development of an upgraded, land-based SM-3 in allied countries with radar systems possibly in the Caucasus⁸⁴. Discussions are currently underway with Poland and the Czech Republic on basing the missiles in their territory. The third phase (scheduled to be in place by 2018) will deploy a larger and more capable ground-based system, which will allow the shield to protect Europe and the United States against short and intermediate-range rockets and, eventually, ICBMs.⁸⁵ Tensions are still high between the U.S. and the Russian Federation, but the Obama administration has taken a more engaging and cooperative approach to improve relations. The administration’s BMD plan is part of a larger vision to improve relations with the rest of the world. President Obama’s international vision has even earned him the Nobel Peace Prize for this year.

President Obama’s missile defense plan continues the same basic idea of defense that the Bush administration attempted. It is important to keep in mind that President Obama seeks to have a much more diplomatic and cooperative approach to this defense. In addition, the administration emphasizes that the new plan does not mean that he is stepping back against the threats. Instead, the development means being more flexible against the threat of modern missiles.

As the United States and its allies attempt to prepare against the threat of an ICBM attack, BMD is one method which is being implemented as a countermeasure. Since the invention of the ICBM, BMD technology has not been able to stay ahead of the power curve. This case study looked at two administrations’ approaches with how to deal with BMD in Europe. In the Bush administration, the President called for a ground-based system in Eastern Europe to protect against long-range Iranian ICBMs. Besides the technological challenges to the program, the system also increased tensions with other nation-states. In the end the administration failed to implement its vision. Under the Obama administration, the threat was still seen to come from Iran, but probably from short and intermediate-range missiles. This prompted a quick end to the large system outlined by the Bush administration. The policy change came to the delight of several nation-states, most notably the Russian Federation, who

perceived it as an improvement over the last administration. The jury is still out if the Obama administration will follow through with its plan or if BMD will be seen as a top national security issue. No President has been able to fully protect the United States and its allies against the threat of a missile attack, so it will be important to closely monitor the progress of the current administration.

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