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International Missile Defense: Washington and Warsaw's Postive Step Toward Final Agreement

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News that Washington and Warsaw have come to an agreement *in principle* on fielding 10 interceptors in Poland as part of America's missile defense system in Europe marks a positive development for transatlantic relations and international security.¹

A comprehensive missile defense system offers protection to America, its forward deployed troops, and its allies. The placement of interceptors in Poland and radar in the Czech Republic would bolster transatlantic security, protecting both the United States and Europe from the growing threat of long-range ballistic missiles and the unconventional payloads they may carry.

In order to begin construction, the Administration must now seek final agreements with Warsaw and Prague and expedite fulfillment of the conditions imposed in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008.² Congress should also fully fund President Bush's fiscal year (FY) 2009 funding request of \$720 million for the system's actual construction.³

A Long and Winding Road. After a protracted period of negotiations over fielding a missile defense system in Europe, the announcement by Polish Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski, that "the impasse in the negotiations over the anti-missile shield has been broken," represents something of a diplomatic breakthrough.⁴ It moves toward a final deal after a significant period of stagnation, during which the new administration of Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk has found its feet.

However, the road ahead will not be an easy one. Minister Sikorski, in office for just three months, has made it clear that Poland intends to extract financial and security guarantees from the United States, additional to its existing arrangements under the NATO alliance. The U.S. must take these requests seriously, which among other things will likely include a petition for PAC-3 batteries to bolster Polish air defenses.

In the face of increased Russian animosity and intimidation, Washington has already invested considerable financial and political capital in its bilateral alliance with Warsaw and it should continue to do so; (Poland is the greatest recipient of U.S. military aid in Europe.) Poland is a valuable alliance member in Iraq and Afghanistan and a key partner within NATO. The modernization of the Polish military presents a win-win opportunity for Washington and Warsaw. Poland is proposing to send an additional 400 troops to Afghanistan at the end of April,⁵ at a time when older NATO members such as Germany are not pulling their weight and others are reconsidering their commitment to the mission. The United States must use the negotiations over missile defense to shore up its broader bilateral relationship with Poland.

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The Russian Question. Moscow has been vociferous in insisting that a European missile defense system is a serious threat to Russian interests. Days before the Warsaw–Washington announcement, the Russian Defense Ministry stated that Russia may restructure its military presence in Kaliningrad, on the border of Poland and Lithuania, in response to missile defense plans for Eastern Europe.⁶ Russian President Vladimir Putin has even drawn parallels between the plans for an Eastern European missile shield and the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, which saw the Soviet Union and the United States go to the brink of nuclear war.⁷

But Russia's objections hold little water. A hypothetical Russian land-based nuclear strike on the United States would not be launched on a trajectory over Poland, but would fly toward its American targets over the North Pole, or Iceland and Greenland, depending on the targets. Furthermore, according to the Missile Defense Agency (MDA), the proposed kinetic kill vehicle designated for deployment in Poland is simply not fast enough to catch a Russian land-based intercontinental ballistic missile in a tail-chase scenario. The Polish-based interceptors would also have no capability against Russia's sea- or air-based nuclear deterrence capabilities.

Despite multiple offers and counter-offers between Washington and Moscow over missile defense, Washington must recognize that reconciliation is extremely unlikely. Russian anxiety is more likely about the placement of the system in what it perceives as its old stomping grounds, rather than

any real strategic concerns. Ultimately, neither Washington nor Moscow will abandon its position for or against the planned Eastern European sites. Unless America is prepared to let Moscow dictate American security policy, it must tell Moscow that they will have to agree to disagree. It must also send the message that Russian intimidation of a key ally and NATO partner will not be tolerated.

The EU Question. The European Freedom Alliance Party in the European Parliament is calling to make missile defense in Eastern Europe an EU issue.⁸ This is bad news. The supranational European Union is a bureaucratic, statist, cumbersome, anti-American entity that has attempted to frustrate American policy on multiple occasions. The involvement of the EU is unnecessary and would effectively kill any hope of a deal. Poland, the Czech Republic, and the United States must give zero consideration to involving the EU at any level.

For its part, NATO has generally considered the Washington–Warsaw–Prague talks to be bilateral and has not interfered. Also, NATO has expressed general support for European missile defenses, especially against short- and medium-range missiles. NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer stated after the April North Atlantic Council meeting: “There is absolutely a shared threat perception between the allies. Allies all agree that there is a threat from ballistic missiles.”⁹ NATO's developing interest in missile defense is a good thing; it should ultimately complement America's missile defense program in Eastern Europe. There is no rea-

1. Angus McDowall, “Poland ‘Agrees’ to U.S. Missile Defence Deal,” *Daily Telegraph*, February 4, 2008.
2. National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008, Public Law 110-181.
3. “Bush Requests \$720 Million for Missile Shield in Eastern Europe,” *International Herald Tribune*, February 4, 2008, at www.ihf.com/articles/2008/02/04/america/shield.php.
4. MDA Digest, Missile Defense Agency, February 4, 2008.
5. “Poland to Send Additional 400 Troops to Afghanistan,” *International Herald Tribune Europe*, December 28, 2007, at www.ihf.com/articles/ap/2007/12/28/europe/EU-GEN-Poland-Afghanistan.php.
6. “Russia May Restructure Forces in Kaliningrad Region in Response to U.S. Missile Defense Plans,” Interfax-AVN (Moscow), January 30, 2008, at www.interfax.ru/e/B/politics/28.html?id_issue=11955882.
7. “At EU Summit, Putin Evokes Cuban Missile Crisis,” *International Herald Tribune*, October 25, 2007, at www.ihf.com/articles/ap/2007/10/26/europe/EU-GEN-EU-Russia-Summit.php.
8. US Missile Defence System, Council Statement, January 30, 2008, at www.greens-efa.org/cms/default/dok/218/218205.greensefa_roundup_3031_january_2008@en.htm.
9. NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, Press Conference, April 19, 2007, at www.nato.int/docu/speech/2007/s070419a.html.

son to believe that simultaneous development of missile defenses in Europe by both NATO and the U.S. would be incompatible in the long-term.

Conclusion. President Bush is correct in asserting that the need for missile defense in Europe is both real and urgent.¹⁰ The number of nuclear weapons states is increasing, as well as the number of states with ballistic missiles. Iran's announcement this week of a space program, which could feed a long-range missile program, does not help matters. The United States has rightly decided that it must never leave itself vulnerable to any weapons system or state and that comprehensive missile defense will protect the homeland, its troops deployed abroad, and its allies. Moscow will undoubtedly try to make missile defense a wedge issue to divide Europe, undermine NATO, and weaken transatlantic relations, all while carving out a sphere of political and military influence for itself.

Hosting a transatlantic missile defense system will deepen and further unify the security relationship between Poland, the Czech Republic, and the United States and will significantly enhance mutual national security against external threats from ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destruction. Washington, Warsaw, and Prague will need to invest considerable political capital and demonstrate real leadership to pull off a final deal before President Bush leaves office. It is essential they do so.

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10. President George W. Bush, Remarks Before the National Defense University, Washington, D.C., October 23, 2007, at www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/10/20071023-3.html.