

US signs up Poland and Czech Republic for missile shield

Niall Green
8 February 2007

In a move set to further destabilise international relations, the United States has officially announced that it has entered into an agreement with the Czech Republic to host a radar station as part of the Missile Defence Initiative (MDI) system, which would combine long-range radar and interceptor missiles to detect and shoot down ballistic missiles. The Polish government has also announced that it is amenable to the US using a base on its territory to house a large silo capable of launching interceptor missiles.

The American missile shield is intended to tip the balance of nuclear arms decisively in favour of Washington by establishing a network of highly sophisticated radar, satellite and anti-intercontinental ballistic missile interceptors that would be able to destroy any attempt by a rival nuclear arms power to launch a counteroffensive against a US nuclear strike.

Dubbed the “Son of Star Wars,” after the Reagan administration’s planned anti-nuclear missile system aimed at the Soviet Union, a functioning US missile shield would end the era of so-called “Mutually Assured Destruction”—whereby an attack by one nuclear armed power on another would result in the decimation of both. With such a preponderance of nuclear might and the ability to avert counter-strikes, the US would be able to dictate terms to its rivals in the knowledge that it had the ultimate military sanction.

The Czech Republic and Poland are close allies of Washington and members of NATO. Poland has soldiers participating in the occupation of Iraq and has agreed to host other conventional US military bases. Both countries are part of what former Bush administration Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld called “New Europe” in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003, due to their ability to be bought with promises of US investment associated with defence projects in return for acting as counterweights to Washington’s rivals in western Europe.

Mirek Topolaneck, the Czech prime minister, welcomed the US request, saying, “We are convinced that a possible deployment of the radar station on our territory is in our interest. It will increase security of the Czech Republic and Europe.”

Poland’s Deputy Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski confirmed that Washington has approached Warsaw over the

project, adding that his government was “now waiting for firm proposals.”

The Pentagon has insisted that both bases would be sovereign US territory and that the approximately 500 staff stationed there would not be subject to Polish or Czech law. US spending on the two bases has been estimated to total \$1.6 billion by the time they come online in 2011.

The Czech defence minister, Vlasta Parkanova, acknowledged public opposition to involvement with the US missile programme, which has already seen demonstrations in Prague, but insisted that the government would go ahead regardless: “I am aware that locating an allied radar site on our territory is a sensitive issue for Czech citizens. Some threats can be confronted only in cooperation with our partners, and an attack by a ballistic missile is among them.... We should not consider this issue ideologically but consider whether it raises the security of the Czech Republic and all its citizens.”

Opinion surveys indicate that two thirds of Poles and Czechs oppose taking part in the missile shield.

The US has already built missile interceptor sites in Alaska and in California, but says it needs to spread its coverage into Europe in order to counter “growing threats.”

Washington has insisted that its missile shield will be used to defend itself and its allies from attack by “rogue states,” a term commonly used by the US government to describe Iran and North Korea. Baker Spring, a defence analyst at the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank in Washington, D.C., with close links to the most hawkish elements of the Bush administration, told *New Scientist* magazine that “the primary purposes of [the Czech base] would be to counter intermediate to long-range missiles primarily out of the Middle East region.”

However, neither Iran, which has not carried out a nuclear detonation test, nor North Korea, whose nuclear weapons capability is very crude, are credible targets for such a vast and complicated defensive system. The primary intention of the US shield is to disable the attack capabilities of those rival countries that actually have missile delivery systems capable of striking the United States or seriously threatening its major forward bases—i.e., Russia and China.

Commenting on the announcement by the Czech government that it was hosting the US radar base, Russia’s Defence

Minister Sergei Ivanov said, "Russia is not worried. Its strategic nuclear forces can assure in any circumstance its safety. Since neither Tehran nor Pyongyang possess intercontinental missiles capable of threatening the USA, from whom is this new missile shield supposed to protect the West? All it actually amounts to is that Prague and Warsaw want to demonstrate their loyalty to Washington."

Despite the bravado of the Russian government regarding its military capabilities, the Kremlin is acutely aware of the threat posed to it by the accelerating nuclear arms race being pushed by the US. General Yuri Baluyevsky, Russian chief of general staff, described the deployment of parts of the missile shield into Europe as an "unfriendly move, to put it mildly."

"Its interception range will cover a significant portion of the European part of Russia, and its integration with US information resources will further strengthen the anti-Russian potential of this facility. We would be forced to search for countermeasures which would be asymmetrical and clearly much cheaper," the general said.

The Pentagon's strategic focus in eastern Europe is the development of a network of military facilities capable of furthering the domination of the US over Eurasia and its vast resources of energy, minerals and labour. While Russia is a much weaker power than the US, its inheritance of the bulk of the nuclear arsenal and military-industrial infrastructure of the former Soviet Union means that it remains America's primary military rival. The resource wars and coups d'état launched and orchestrated by Washington in Central Asia and the ex-Stalinist states indicate that US imperialism intends to dominate the entire region, which is viewed by the Kremlin as within its sphere of influence. Such a strategy opens up the possibility of a military confrontation with Moscow.

China, though it has a much less developed nuclear weapons capability than either Washington or Moscow, is viewed by the US elite as the principal threat to America's continuing status as the sole world superpower. The Bush administration has identified China as its main "strategic competitor" in the twenty-first century, and much of the focus of US diplomatic and military policy, including its sabre rattling against North Korea, is aimed at hemming in Beijing's aspirations and securing the position of US capital in Asia.

China is developing a network of international relations in Asia, Africa and Latin America that threatens the dominance that Washington had hoped to maintain following the liquidation of the USSR in 1991. With its enormous appetite for raw materials, Beijing has developed a web of bilateral trade and aid deals that directly threaten US economic and geo-strategic interests. China has close ties with several countries that have been singled out by Washington as potential targets for "regime change," including North Korea, Burma, Zimbabwe, Iran and Venezuela.

The explosion of US militarism in the Middle East and Central Asia is largely aimed at undermining the ability of its

rivals, especially China, to gain access to energy supplies independent of US domination. The continuation and escalation of US militarism threatens to bring Washington and Beijing into more direct conflict. The US has repeatedly stated its position that should China attempt to militarily enforce its claim over Taiwan, a long-time US ally that Beijing claims as an integral part of China, it would respond with full military force.

In response to the long-term US militarisation of space and the development of a missile defence shield, China recently tested an anti-satellite missile system, blowing up one of its own satellites in space. Beijing's show of force was a clear warning that it would respond to the growing threat to its own nuclear arms by developing new means of disrupting the space-based aspect of the Pentagon's MDI programme.

Though Beijing's anti-satellite missile system is based on 1970s Soviet technology, China and Russia are being forced by the threat of US aggression to step up the development of their own military technologies and anti-missile shield stratagem. Not only does this mean a new stage in the arms race with Washington, but it also necessitates an escalation of other regional tensions.

Japan is developing its own space programme in cooperation with the US, which would enflame already tense Sino-Japanese-Korean relations. India, whose nuclear weapons programme has been succoured by Washington in order to empower its regional ally as a bulwark against expanding Chinese power in Asia, tested the new ground-based Prithvi II anti-missile system in November 2006.

Veteran American journalist Seymour Hersh revealed in April 2006 that top US war planners are considering the use of nuclear weapons against Iranian nuclear research sites in the likely event of an attack on Iran this year, the first use of a nuclear weapon in war since 1945. With such reckless and barbaric military policies already being prepared against Iran, there is every reason to believe that Washington is planning and capable of still greater follies directed against its principal strategic opponents.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact