



U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

KEYWORD SEARCH

[Subject Index](#)



[Home](#)

[Issues & Press](#)

[Travel & Business](#)

[Countries](#)

[Youth & Education](#)

[Careers](#)

[About State](#)



You are in: [Under Secretary for Political Affairs](#) > [Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs](#) > [Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs Releases](#)  
> [Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs Remarks](#) > [Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs Remarks \(2007\)](#) > [May](#)

## Do the United States and Europe Need a Missile Defense System?

### Daniel Fried, Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs

Testimony Before the House Foreign Affairs Committee Subcommittee on Europe and the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation and Trade  
Washington, DC  
May 3, 2007

Chairman Wexler, Chairman Sherman, Ranking Member Gallegly, Ranking Member Royce, members of the Sub-Committees, thank you for giving me the opportunity to appear before you again. It is always a pleasure to be here. Today, I will speak about our missile defense plans for Europe, focusing on the regional issues, while Assistant Secretary John Rood will focus on the more technical and performance issues.

The short answer to the question of whether we and our Allies need a missile defense system is an emphatic yes. This answer is based on an assessment of the strategic context we face today, which is radically different than that prevailing during the Cold War. What we face is the possibility that some of the world's most threatening and unstable regimes will develop and deploy lethal nuclear arsenals, and the ballistic missiles to deliver them to Europe and the United States.

In the Cold War, classic deterrence theory held that near-absolute vulnerability and reliable retaliatory capability -- so-called Mutual Assured Destruction -- provided security. During the debate over President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative, others argued that defenses were in fact a better answer to the strategic nuclear challenge of the time. That debate was never settled, but it isn't, at any rate, relevant to the one we're having today at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We face threats of a different kind and need different answers unencumbered by heated arguments of the past.

Iran already possesses many medium to short-range missiles. Its Shahab 3 missile is capable, today, of reaching targets in southeast Europe. And Iran will not stay put. The Intelligence Community estimates that Iran could have long-range missiles capable of reaching all of Europe and the U.S. before 2015 if it chooses to develop them.

Iran's worrying development of a threatening capability is matched by threatening rhetoric, including direct threats to Europe. As example, let me quote remarks Iranian President Ahmadi-Nejad made last October. This is, let me once again remind you, a leader who denies the Holocaust ever existed and who says the state of Israel should be "wiped off the map." Referring to possible war between Israel and the Palestinians, this is what the Iranian President stated to our European friends: "We have advised

the Europeans that the Americans are far away, but you are the neighbors of the nations in the region. We inform you that the nations are like an ocean that is welling up, and if a storm begins, the dimensions will not stay limited to Palestine, and you may get hurt."

There may be other threats that develop. As Defense Secretary Gates told European Allies and the Russians last week, we must think twenty years ahead, and consider the threats we may face.

Diplomatic efforts may help reduce, or even prevent, these threats. Along with our European allies and Russia, we are engaged in intensive diplomacy intended to change Iran's current nuclear development plans. We may succeed, and this is the best course.

But we may not, and we have an urgent responsibility to defend the American people and our allies. In this context, our proposal for a limited missile defense system makes sense. It allows for a wider, more flexible range of options to respond to a potential attack should deterrence fail.

Let me stress that the system we are contemplating is nowhere as ambitious as was the missile defense plans of the Cold War. It is limited, fitting to the threats we face. The importance of multiple options was evident last summer when we activated our fledgling defense system for the first time in response to the North Korean missile launch preparations.

A missile defense system does not mean that the United States is abandoning a non-proliferation emphasis. On the contrary-a missile defense system can help our non-proliferation efforts. Effective defenses reduce incentives for states to acquire missiles in the first place.

The missile defense system that we are proposing to place in Europe-in cooperation with Poland and the Czech Republic-would provide an extra layer of protection against possible missile attacks to the U.S., our NATO allies and other European friends.

The threat is real, and the system we are proposing works. It calls for fielding 10 interceptor missiles in Poland and a radar facility in the Czech Republic. These assets would be for purely defensive purposes-to counter missile threats from the Middle East, particularly Iran. They have no offensive capability. The interceptors carry no explosive warheads of any type, but rely instead on their kinetic energy to collide with and destroy incoming warheads.

Poland and the Czech Republic have accepted our offer to negotiate with them; Assistant Secretary Rood will lead the first round of negotiations in late May. Basing these missile defense assets there deepens our strategic relationships with Poland and the Czech Republic. Deploying this limited system on these two important NATO Allies would extend defensive coverage to their territory and most of Europe as a whole.

Secretary Gates was in Poland last week and I accompanied him. The Poles and Czechs will have questions about the system, and we will have answers. We have agreed that these systems must increase net security to Poland and the Czech Republic.

A great deal has been said and written about Russia's reaction to our plans. The system poses no threat to Russian security; the interceptors cannot be used against Russia's strategic forces. The Russians know this.

We have consulted with Russia on this issue on numerous occasions and at very high levels, starting last year. We have recently intensified our consultations with Russia, and President Bush has offered President Putin cooperation on missile defense. Assistant Secretary Rood can explain this to you in more detail. In Moscow last week, Secretary Gates made clear to the Russian leadership that we were prepared to address their concerns.

Transatlantic security is indivisible. If Europe is not secure, the U.S. is not secure. We cannot have U.S. security decoupled from that of our NATO allies. We cannot take a unilateral or isolationist approach to security.

Indeed, we have on multiple occasions consulted and cooperated with our Allies and friends on missile defenses within both NATO and the NATO-Russia Council (NRC). President Bush made it a priority to offer to extend coverage to our friends and Allies and deployed forces. We also have been working on theater missile defenses within NATO and the NRC for some time now and have made progress.

Our most recent discussions were on April 19 in Brussels and last week in Oslo at the level of Foreign Ministers, where I accompanied Secretary Rice.

Although Russia remains wary of U.S. missile defense plans, I believe that we have made significant progress within NATO and the NRC in explaining the security rationale for the system, its technical capabilities, what it can do against Iranian capability in particular, and what it cannot do against the Russian arsenal. After the April 19 NRC meeting, NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer told reporters that "there is a shared threat perception" and that "Allies agree that a threat from ballistic missiles exists."

At last week's meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers in Oslo there was near unanimity in support of missile defense from our NATO allies.

Security is indivisible, as I said. The location of the proposed defense installations in Poland and the Czech Republic is optimal for covering the most Alliance territory possible. We are currently working with NATO to explore how a U.S. long-range missile defense system could work with NATO missile defense systems.

The U.S. proposed system is designed to counter long-range threats from the Middle East, and would be able to protect all those NATO countries facing such threats.

However, some Allies could still face threats from shorter and medium-ranged missiles. For these countries to be protected, they would require short- and medium-range missile defense systems. These systems are more mobile than the system we are proposing and can be deployed relatively quickly if a need should arise.

As I mentioned, NATO has already launched a development effort focused on countering shorter range threats, specifically through its Active Layered Theater Ballistic Missile Defense system a NATO-funded Command and Control structure integrating sensors and interceptors which will be provided by member nations.

NATO is also exploring options to protect the Alliance against the full range of ballistic missile threats, including long-range missiles. At the 2006 Riga Summit, NATO Heads of State and Government noted the conclusions of the Missile Defense Feasibility Study, which agreed that missile defense for NATO territory is technically feasible within the assumptions and limitations of the study.

U.S. and NATO efforts are complementary and could work together to form a more effective defense for Europe. We would be able to link to NATO systems with the ones we plan to deploy. We have raised this idea of cooperation with NATO and hope that the alliance will agree to this type of cooperation.

In sum, we have made progress with our European allies, with NATO and potentially with Russia about our proposed missile defense system in Europe.

Thank you for your attention. I appreciate the opportunity to be here and I look forward to your questions.

 [BACK TO TOP](#)



[Updates](#) | [Frequent Questions](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Email this Page](#) | [Subject Index](#) | [Search](#)

The Office of Electronic Information, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.

[About state.gov](#) | [Privacy Notice](#) | [FOIA](#) | [Copyright Information](#) | [Other U.S. Government Information](#)