

MISSILE SHIELD OVER EUROPE

Countering the future missile threat could bring NATO and Russia together

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The threats posed by the proliferation of ballistic missiles and the potential nexus of ballistic missiles and nuclear programs are of great concern to the United States, NATO, Russia and the international community. For example, Iran claims its ballistic missiles are defensive in nature and its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes. However, insufficient cooperation and the lack of transparency on Iran's part leave these claims open to serious debate. Meanwhile, the international community has gone to great lengths to engage Iran diplomatically. Additionally, the U.S., NATO and Middle Eastern countries have engaged in threat mitigation activities that include nonproliferation efforts, economic sanctions and the deployment of missile defense systems.

Regarding missile defense, in September 2009, President Barack Obama announced a new U.S. missile defense policy for Europe called the Phased Adaptive Approach, or PAA. At the Lisbon Summit in November 2010, NATO also considered the ballistic missile threat and decided to develop the capability to defend Alliance "populations and territories against [a] ballistic missile attack."¹ This article reviews NATO and U.S. missile defense policy for Europe, concludes with several analytical findings and argues that missile defense presents an excellent opportunity for cooperation between NATO and Russia.²

NATO MISSILE DEFENSE POLICY

There are three components of NATO's missile defense policy. First, the Active Layered Theater Ballistic Missile Defense program, or ALTBMD, established in September 2005, is aimed at protecting deployed Alliance forces (i.e., Theater Missile Defense, or TMD) from short- and medium-range ballistic missiles. The ALTBMD has been focused on integrating NATO's command and control systems and communication network to enable the exchange of information between NATO and national-level missile defense systems. Second, in November 2010, Allies "decided that the scope of NATO's current ALTBMD programme's command, control and communications capabilities will be expanded beyond the protection of NATO deployed forces to also protect NATO European

populations, territory and forces."³ Third, under the auspices of the NATO-Russia Council, or NRC, NATO is engaged in TMD and, more recently, missile defense cooperation with Russia. Of significance, at the November 2010 NRC meeting, NATO and Russia agreed on a joint ballistic missile threat assessment, agreed to resume TMD cooperation, and "tasked the NRC to develop a comprehensive Joint Analysis of the future framework for missile defense cooperation."⁴

As background, several documents provide the framework for NATO's current policy and activities related to TMD and missile defense. NATO's 1999 Strategic Concept initially recognized the need for TMD, citing "the risks and potential threats of the proliferation of NBC [nuclear, biological and chemical] weapons and their means of delivery."⁵ At that time, NATO's focus was on TMD, which is intended to protect troops operating in the field. After the U.S. withdrew in 2002 from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, or ABM Treaty, which limited U.S. missile defense to a single site, the U.S. and NATO started to consider the feasibility for missile defense of NATO territory.⁶ The shift in 2002 toward a possible NATO missile defense mission represented a considerable expansion to the protection previously envisioned under the TMD concept.

In 2002 at the Prague Summit, Allies "initiated a new NATO Missile Defence Feasibility Study to examine options for protecting Alliance territory, forces and population centres against the full range of missile threats."⁷ In November 2006 at the Riga Summit, NATO concluded that missile defense is technically feasible and directed that additional work be done to determine the political and military implications of missile defense and also directed that a threat assessment be updated.⁸ In April 2008, NATO's Bucharest Summit Declaration acknowledged that ballistic missile proliferation posed an increasing threat to the Allies' forces, territory and populations and specifically referenced Iran's ballistic missile program; recognized the planned deployment of U.S. missile defense assets to Europe; and emphasized the importance of NATO-Russia missile defense cooperation.⁹ In April 2009, Allies reaffirmed many previously agreed-to



Two Standard Missile 2 interceptors, part of the Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense Program, are successfully tested in the Pacific. NATO plans to station ships carrying the interceptors in the Mediterranean Sea to defend against threats.

missile defense conclusions and directed that work be done to look at options for possibly expanding the role of NATO's ALTBMD beyond protecting deployed forces to include the protection of NATO territory.¹⁰

In December 2009, the Allies welcomed the U.S. PAA for missile defense in Europe and said that if NATO decides to take on missile defense of NATO territory as a mission, then the PAA would be a valuable national contribution to NATO's capability and to Alliance security.¹¹ Finally, as mentioned previously, in November 2010 NATO agreed to develop a missile defense capability to protect Alliance territory.

"PHASED, ADAPTIVE APPROACH"

In September 2009, President Obama announced a new U.S. missile defense policy for Europe. The new U.S. policy is guided by two main factors. First, it is based on an updated threat assessment, which emphasizes the threat posed by short-range ballistic missiles, or SRBM, and medium-range ballistic missiles, or MRBM, rather than the threat from intercontinental ballistic missiles, or ICBM. Second, it is based on advances in missile defense technology, particularly sea- and land-based interceptors and the sensors that support them. The PAA missile defense policy for Europe calls for the following:

- **Phase One (in the 2011 timeframe)** — Deploy current and proven missile defense systems available in the next two years, including the sea-based Aegis Weapon System, the SM-3 interceptor (Block IA), and sensors such as the forward-based Army Navy/Transportable Radar Surveillance system (AN/TPY-2), to address regional ballistic missile threats to Europe and our deployed personnel and their families.
- **Phase Two (in the 2015 timeframe)** — After appropriate testing, deploy a more capable version of the SM-3 interceptor (Block IB) in both sea- and land-based configurations and more advanced sensors to expand the defended area against short- and medium-range missile threats.
- **Phase Three (in the 2018 timeframe)** — After development and testing are complete, deploy the more advanced SM-3 Block IIA variant currently under development to counter short-, medium- and intermediate-range missile threats.
- **Phase Four (in the 2020 timeframe)** — After development and testing are complete, deploy the SM-3 Block IIB to help better cope with medium- and intermediate-range missiles and the potential future ICBM threat to the U.S.¹²

In announcing the PAA, the president emphasized that the new approach is consistent with NATO missile defense efforts and said that he would welcome Russian cooperation to bring their missile defense capabilities into a broader defense of common interests. The president also alluded to the adaptable nature of the PAA, saying, "Going forward ... we will rigorously evaluate both the threat posed by ballistic missiles and the technology that we are developing to counter it."¹³

COUNTERING MEDIUM-RANGE BALLISTIC MISSILES

From a technical capabilities standpoint, in the present and for the next two to three years, the greatest ballistic missile threat to Europe is from MRBM with a range of approximately 2,000 kilometers. Theoretically, if launched from the Persian Gulf region, MRBM could reach southeastern Europe, including parts of NATO members Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria and Romania.

If deployed in sufficient numbers, the sea-based Aegis Weapon System, the SM-3 interceptor (Block IA) and associated sensors called for in Phase One (2011) of the PAA are sufficient to defend against an MRBM attack. A combination of Aegis patrols in the Mediterranean and Black seas would provide optimal Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense, or BMD, coverage for southeastern Europe. Operationally, however, a U.S. BMD employment strategy that relies on the Black Sea could meet with Russian opposition, due in part to the presence of Russia's Black Sea Fleet and its base in Sevastopol. Russia views the Black Sea as being within its sphere of influence. A sub-optimal but acceptable Aegis BMD deployment would be patrols based solely in the Mediterranean Sea.

Phases Two and Three of the PAA call for the deployment of the more capable land-based SM-3 interceptors in Eastern Europe (likely in Romania and Poland). Of significance, the land-based SM-3 capabilities planned for Phase Two (in the 2015 timeframe) will render unnecessary the potentially contentious Black Sea Aegis BMD patrols.

RUSSIAN INVOLVEMENT

The previous U.S. administration's missile defense plan for Europe caused great concern in Russia because it called for the deployment of a radar capability in Eastern Europe that would have had the capability to monitor Russian ICBM. Russia also felt the previous plan was announced unilaterally rather than in a coordinated, bilateral or multilateral way. Further, Russia viewed the previous plan as an initial



NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen visits Bucharest, Romania, in May 2010 as part of a mission to explain the proliferation threat.



U.S. NAVY

The U.S. Navy launches a medium-range ballistic missile over the Pacific Ocean; minutes later, the missile was intercepted by the Aegis combat system. The U.S. and its NATO partners plan to deploy such an anti-missile defense system to protect Europe.

capability that would have paved the way for further U.S. expansion of missile assets in Eastern Europe and worldwide.

Taken together, U.S. missile defense plans for Eastern Europe, NATO expansion into Eastern Europe and the Baltic Region, and the U.S. withdrawal from the ABM

Treaty, among other factors, have all contributed to Russian threat perceptions as articulated in Russia's 2010 Military Doctrine, which paints NATO enlargement as an "external military danger."¹⁴

President Obama's decision to abandon previous missile defense plans for Eastern Europe was a positive step from Russia's perspective. Russia seems slightly more at ease with the new PAA for Europe. The PAA's approach is different

from the previous plan in that it focuses initially on the threat posed by short- and medium-range ballistic missiles. Not until Phase Four would the PAA counter ICBM. However, recent U.S. agreements with Poland, Romania and the Czech Republic to place PAA missile defense capabilities in their countries in future PAA phases will likely eventually create additional tension with Russia. This point of tension probably will occur at some point in the future but prior to the actual deployment of these capabilities.

Despite these challenges, the November 2010 NATO-Russia Council agreement on missile defense cooperation was a positive step and is an area of enormous potential in terms of NATO-Russia cooperation. However, it remains to be seen whether NATO and Russia can use missile defense cooperation to move beyond paper agreements and speeches marking "historic breakthroughs" to truly achieve greater cooperation, transparency and security.

Although NATO and Russia share many common interests (e.g., Afghanistan, Iran, North Korea, terrorism, missile defense, nuclear and missile nonproliferation, and countering drugs), missile defense presents a real opportunity for NATO to take policy steps that chart a positive course vis-à-vis Russia. Therefore, the U.S. and NATO should intensify efforts to increase cooperation with Russia on missile defense.

Rather than seeking a quantum leap in NATO-Russia cooperation, policymakers should look for areas in which incremental confidence-building steps can be taken over time. In fact, regarding Iran in general, the analysis suggests that U.S. and NATO engagement with Russia is the key to a true breakthrough with Iran because Russia's political, security and especially economic ties with Iran give it leverage. □

1. NATO Strategic Concept, November 19, 2010, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68580.htm, para. 19.

2. The information presented includes general perspectives obtained during the author's meetings from September 7-10, 2010, with U.S. and NATO representatives at U.S. European Command (Stuttgart, Germany), U.S. Army Europe (Heidelberg, Germany), and NATO Headquarters (Brussels, Belgium). The analytical findings are drawn from a larger study on this topic, which is available from the author upon request. E-mail: john.d.johnson2@us.army.mil.

3. NATO, Lisbon Summit Declaration, November 20, 2010, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68828.htm, para. 37.

4. NATO-Russia Council Joint Statement, November 20, 2010, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-830E999E-1279C358/natolive/news_68871.htm.

5. NATO, The Alliance's Strategic Concept, April 24, 1999, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_27433.htm, para. 56.

6. David S. Yost, "NATO's Evolving Purposes and the Next Strategic Concept," *International Affairs*, Volume 86, Issue 2, March 10, 2010, 508.

7. NATO, Prague Summit Declaration, November 21, 2002, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_19552.htm, para. 4g.

8. NATO, Riga Summit Declaration, November 29, 2006, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_37920.htm, para. 25.

9. NATO, Bucharest Summit Declaration, April 3, 2008, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm, paras. 28-29, 37-38, 41.

10. NATO, Strasbourg/Kehl Summit Declaration, paras. 50-54.

11. NATO, Final Statement, Foreign Ministers Meeting, Brussels, paras. 14-16.

12. The White House, Fact Sheet on U.S. Missile Defense Policy, A "Phased, Adaptive Approach" for Missile Defense in Europe, September 17, 2009, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/FACT-SHEET-US-Missile-Defense-Policy-A-Phased-Adaptive-Approach-for-Missile-Defense-in-Europe/.

13. The White House, Remarks by the President on Strengthening Missile Defense in Europe.

14. The Russian Federation, The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation, February 5, 2010, http://merln.ndu.edu/whitepapers/Russia2010_English.pdf.