

Poland Unveils Location for Proposed US Patriot Missiles

By [Global Research](#)

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Warsaw – The US Patriot missiles soon to arrive in Poland will be located in Morag, near the Baltic coast, instead of on the outskirts of Warsaw, a Ministry of Defence spokesman said Wednesday.

The missiles are part of a system proposed by US President Barack Obama in September last year that Washington says will counter Iran's ballistic missile programme. It replaces the more controversial Bush- era plan for a missile-defence shield.

Morag, a town some 60 miles from the Russian border, was chosen because it had good conditions to house the buildings, accommodation and technology that will come with the missile battery, Defence Ministry spokesman Janusz Sejmej told the German Press Agency dpa.

'There were no considerations here of a strategic nature,' Defence Minister Bogdan Klich told the daily Wyborcza on Wednesday. 'In Morag we could offer the best conditions for American soldiers and the best technical base for the equipment.'

The battery will be manned by some 100 US soldiers, and will contain four to eight missiles. It is set to arrive in Poland in April and will take two months to set up.

The outskirts of Warsaw had previously been reported as the likely location to house the system.

Poland signed a deal in December that specified conditions for the stationing of US soldiers on Polish soil, and gave the green light for the new shield.

The short- and medium-range system is a less complicated version of a Bush-era plan to station long-range missile-defence systems in Poland and the Czech Republic.

The original system drew sharp criticism from the Kremlin, which said the missiles were a target to its nuclear arsenal.

The Obama administration's decision to abandon the original shield was viewed by some as a capitulation to Moscow, who had complained the system was aimed at them, rather than Iran.

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