

Polish FM says Patriots in Poland will be armed

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Warsaw — Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski said on Thursday that the U.S. side had confirmed it would adhere to clauses in a Polish-U.S. cooperation declaration referring to the installation of Patriot missiles in Poland.

Poland has been promised by the U.S. that it will go ahead with the deployment of a Patriot battery in Poland and that the missiles will be armed, Minister Sikorski told reporters.

Sikorski added that earlier in the day he had discussed the shield with U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Czech Foreign Minister Jan Kohout.

The new element is that the U.S. has assured us that the Patriots will be armed and capable of being linked to our defense system, Sikorski said.

Sikorski said that in due course Poland will be invited by the United States to host an element of a new missile defense system.

"We think this is an interesting offer ... We are waiting for written proposals. This is an American decision. We will take a close look at the offer when we receive it," Polish news agency PAP quoted the minister as saying.

Sikorski made the statement after Washington said earlier Thursday that it abandoned plans for a large missile defense shield in eastern Europe.

Under the Polish-U.S. accord signed last year, 10 ground base interceptors are to be installed in Redzikowo, northern Poland, part of a larger system that would include a radar system in the Czech Republic, to counter Tehran's emerging long-range-missile program.

The U.S. plan has angered Russia, which deems it a serious threat to its national security and warns that it will deploy a short-range missile system in its Baltic enclave of Kaliningrad bordering Poland in response to the U.S. plan.

U.S. President Barack Obama has said he supports missile defense in principle but wants to make sure the system is reliable and does not detract from other security priorities.

Warsaw first asked for the Patriot unit after Moscow condemned the missile shield plans as a threat to Russia.

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