

Romania to Host Three US Missile Batteries

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BUCHAREST, March 5, 2010 (AFP) – Romania is to host three batteries of interceptor missiles as part of a planned US defence shield in Europe that has upset Russia, President Traian Basescu said on Friday.

“This is not a secret. There will be three batteries of eight missiles each,” Basescu said during a resenatation of the defence ministry in Bucharest.

Foreign Minister Teodor Baconschi had said last month that Romania was planning to host 20 interceptor missiles, adding that the talks with the US government on the system would probably take a year and a half.

Bucharest agreed in October to participate in the revamped US missile shield expected to be operational by 2015.

Poland and the Czech Republic also agreed to take part in the US shield.

The announcement had angered Russia despite assurances from top US officials that the shield will not target Moscow but rather is intended to ward off a potential threat from Iran.

“This is a defensive system and it cannot be reversed into an offensive one,” Basescu insisted on Friday.

Last year Russia applauded US President Barack Obama’s decision to shelve an initiative by his predecessor George W. Bush to place an anti-missile radar facility in the Czech Republic and interceptors in Poland.

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