

Russia could deploy missiles near Poland: officer

By [Global Research](#)

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MOSCOW – Russia could deploy its latest Iskander missiles close to Poland if plans to install U.S. Patriots on Polish soil go ahead, Interfax quoted a senior Russian officer as saying on Thursday.

Polish Deputy Defense Minister Stanislaw Komorowski told Reuters on Monday Warsaw wanted U.S. Patriot air defense missiles to be deployed this year regardless of whether President Barack Obama decided to press ahead with missile defense plans in Europe.

Moscow strongly opposes the missile shield proposed by Obama's predecessor George W. Bush, which aims to place a radar in the Czech Republic and interceptor missiles in Poland. Russia says the shield is a threat to its security.

"Patriot systems, if they are deployed, will cover future work on installing a unit of the U.S. strategic air defense system with interceptor missiles in Poland," Interfax news agency quoted an unidentified member of Russia's general staff as saying.

He said Russia had proposed as a counter-measure "to deploy the tactical Iskander missile in the Kaliningrad region," which borders NATO member Poland, in response to deployment of the U.S. missile shield, Interfax reported.

"One cannot exclude that the issue of the Iskander will arise again," he added.

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev pledged last November to station surface-to-surface Iskander missiles in Kaliningrad if the United States went ahead with its plans.

In February he said Moscow would not install Iskander missiles in Kaliningrad if Washington refrained from deploying the missile shield.

Obama's administration is reviewing the missile shield project for cost effectiveness and viability, although he said during a visit to Prague last month that Washington would continue to research and develop the plans.

Poland has agreed to host interceptor missiles as part of the missile shield which Washington says is directed against Iran, not Russia. The West accuses Tehran of trying to build nuclear weapons, which it denies.

In return for Poland's consent to host the missile shield, Washington promised to help upgrade Polish air defenses with a battery of Patriot surface-to-air missiles, among other measures.

"Deploying Patriot systems in Poland is, to a certain extent, a response to Russia's

objections to plans to install elements of the U.S. strategic missile defense in Europe," the Russian officer told Interfax.

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