

Russian ministry urges strategic security, air defense agreements with U.S.

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27/03/2007 16:31 MOSCOW, March 27 (RIA Novosti) – Russia is seeking to secure agreements with the United States on controversial issues of strategic security, including plans to deploy air defense missiles in Central Europe, the Russian Foreign Ministry said Tuesday.

Russia, which has long been anxious about the opening of NATO bases in former Communist-bloc countries and ex-Soviet republics, strongly criticized recent U.S. plans to deploy an anti-ballistic missile system in Central Europe as a national security threat and a destabilizing factor for Europe.

“The appearance of a U.S. missile defense base in Europe would represent a reconfiguration of America’s military presence in Europe and the formation of a strategic component that could negatively affect Russia’s nuclear deterrent potential,” the ministry said in its foreign policy overview, posted on its Web site.

Washington continues to insist that the proposed deployment of missile defense elements in Poland and the Czech Republic are intended to counter possible strikes from North Korea and Iran, which are involved in long-running disputes with the international community over their nuclear programs.

“The Americans are inducing some of their European NATO partners to unfold a multilayered air defense system in Europe as an integral part of their global air shield,” the ministry said.

The ministry said the U.S. military build-up – opening anti-ballistic missile bases in Alaska and California and plans to establish another in Central Europe – represented consequences of the country’s withdrawal from the restrictive Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2002.

The U.S. aroused further security concerns in Russia in early March when a senior Pentagon official said Washington would like to station a radar base in the Caucasus.

The document recommends that agreements be secured with the U.S. on further effective limitations of strategic offensive arms and strategic security issues that Moscow and Washington have substantial differences on.

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