

U.S. considering Ukrainian radar for missile shield

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The possibility of a Ukrainian radar facility being used as part of a U.S. missile defense system is being considered, Ukraine's ambassador to the United States said on Thursday, according to RIA Novosti.

Oleh Shamshur told a briefing in Kiev that the issue "is being discussed on the working level, at a preliminary stage."

U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Alexander Vershbow recently said the United States was considering Ukraine as a possible site for a radar station as part of its new missile defense configuration in Europe.

According to the U.S. magazine Defense News, Vershbow "added Ukraine to the list of possible early warning sites." He said Ukrainian officials "have mentioned" their interest in participating.

President Viktor Yushchenko said on Friday that Ukraine has not received requests from the United States to host anti-missile facilities on its soil.

However, he said Ukraine has two radar facilities – one in Sevastopol and one in Mukachevo in the country's west – which Kiev would like to "integrate into a European or global security system."

U.S. President Barack Obama in September scrapped plans to deploy a radar in the Czech Republic and interceptor missiles in Poland, due to a re-assessment of the threat from Iran. Moscow fiercely opposed the plans as a national security threat.

According to the Obama administration's new plan, land-based missile-defense shields will not be implemented before 2015. Sea-based defenses will be operating in the Mediterranean up to 2015.

Moscow, which has consistently objected to the shield as a threat to its national security, welcomed the move. Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said later that Moscow would scrap plans to deploy Iskander-M missiles in Russia's Kaliningrad Region, near Poland.

Medvedev said last November that Russia would deploy the missiles in Kaliningrad, which borders NATO members Poland and Lithuania, if the shield was put into operation.

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