

US Missile Shield in Ukraine, Caucasus could spark regional crisis with Russia

By [Global Research](#)

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Including Ukraine and the Caucasus nations into a U.S. air-defense system could cause another internal political crisis in these countries, a senior Russian MP said Friday, according to RIA Novosti.

A senior Pentagon official said Thursday that the United States “would like to place a radar base in the Caucasus” amid earlier reports of plans to deploy elements of a missile shield in Poland and the Czech Republic, which have further strained relations between the U.S. and Russia.

Akhmed Bilanov, first deputy chairman of the State Duma Committee for CIS Affairs, told RIA Novosti that the events that occurred in the Crimea last year and the subsequent protests against Ukrainian-U.S. military exercises clearly demonstrated that “Ukrainian society was divided on the issue of NATO.”

He said any further pressure would only exacerbate the situation in these countries, and possibly in the entire region.

“Needless to say, this situation will not be of any benefit to the United States, quite the contrary, it would cause additional problems and make the U.S. security system more vulnerable,” Bilanov said.

Russia, which has been anxious about NATO bases that have been deployed in former Communist-bloc countries and ex-Soviet republics, has blasted the plans to deploy anti-missile systems in Central Europe as a national security threat and a destabilizing factor for Europe.

The deployment of a U.S. anti-missile radar system in the Caucasus would not affect Russia’s defense capabilities, but the country could respond to the move nevertheless, the Russian Air Force commander said earlier on Friday.

Vladimir Mikhailov said Russia was capable of offering an adequate response to the deployment.

Washington said the defense system was designed to counter possible strikes from North Korea and Iran, which are involved in long-running disputes with the international community over their nuclear programs.

Lieutenant General Henry Obering, who oversees the Pentagon’s Missile Defense Agency,

did not specify which country in the Caucasus might be selected as a possible site for an anti-missile radar, but a senior Russian analyst suggested Friday that Georgia would be the most likely site.

"The most convenient territory [for the radar], in political terms, is currently Georgia, which has not as yet raised objections to any U.S. proposals," said Leonid Ivashov, deputy head of the Academy of Geopolitical Problems think tank. "I believe the Americans could station a radar there."

But he said that deployment in Azerbaijan was also a possibility.

NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said in Munich last month that Georgia could become a candidate to join the alliance in 2009 if it successfully carried out the necessary military reforms of its Armed Forces.

The Georgian Defense Ministry had no comment on the matter Friday.

Azerbaijan said Washington had not yet approached it with any proposals.

Ivashov also said Russia would have to monitor missile systems in the Caucasus to ensure its security.

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