

DŮVODY VEDOUcí KE ZMĚNĚ ARCHITEKTURY AMERICKÉ PROTIRAKETOVÉ OBRANY V EVROPĚ

REASONS BEHIND THE CHANGE OF AMERICAN BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENSE ARCHITECTURE IN EUROPE

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Abstrakt

Článok analyzuje zmenu architektúry Amerického balistického štítu v Európe Barrackom Obamom v septembri 2009. Autor tvrdí, že zmena bola čiastočne, ale nie výlučne motivovaná snahou uzmierniť ruský odpor voči tomuto projektu. Toto vyhodnotenie sa zakladá na tom, že existuje viacero argumentov pre a proti videniu zmeny architektúry ako snahy o uzmiernenie Ruska. Odpoveď sa preto pravdepodobne nachádza niekde medzi.

Abstract

The article analyses the change of the architecture of American ballistic missile system in Europe by Barrack Obama in September 2009. The author argues that this change was partially, but not solely, motivated by the effort to appease the Russian antagonism against this project. This is supported by various arguments for and against the assertion that it was an effort to appease Russia. Thus, the answer should be somewhere in the middle.

Klíčová slova

Protiraketová obrana/system, Irán, Rusko, Spojené štáty, balistická raketa, SM-3, Obama.

Keywords

Ballistic missile defence, Iran, Russia, United States, ballistic missile, SM-3, Obama.

INTRODUCTION

One of the key questions in Western and particularly post-communist area is the reason behind the change of the ballistic missile defense (BMD)¹ architecture by Barrack Obama in September 2009. The original plan was to build an interceptor site in Poland and radar in the Czech Republic. This was changed to “Flexible, Adaptable Approach”² using different technologies at more places. For many people this was surprising and it started an emotional debate. The official argumentation was that it was because of technical reasons and Russian opposition to this plan had no effect on this³. On the other hand, it was called appeasing to Russia and betraying Europe by some politicians⁴. After analyzing all the relevant information, it is hard to believe the US representatives that they did not change the architecture to reduce the Russian opposition to this project. On the other hand, US is going to have a workable BMD system in Europe, so Americans did not completely “betray” countries in Central-East Europe. Thus, this article says that Russian opposition has some influence on changing the architecture, but it was not the only reason for this change.

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The article will be divided into three large chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter briefly outlines the history of BMD from 80's until the most recent developments of American BMD in Europe. The second chapter compares the old and new BMD architecture and describes the nature of Iranian ballistic missile developments. The third chapter describes the whole debate about BMD between Russia and United States and issues which happened to be linked to BMD. The conclusion analyzes the whole debate around BMD and many issues which are connected to it. It provides arguments in support of the initial assertion.

BRIEF HISTORY OF AMERICAN BALLISTIC MISSILE SYSTEMS

BMD before 9/11

History of BMD goes back to the beginning of the Cold War. There were programs in late 1950's up to 1960's, such as Defender or Safeguard projects, but mostly for technical reasons their ambitions were limited. The first significant plan to develop and deploy such systems was Ronald Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative. It was a very ambitious plan to build systems which would protect the whole area of the United States from Soviet missiles. The technological problems, huge cost estimates for deploying such a system and the collapsing Soviet threat led to restructuring of the program⁵.

In January 1991, President George H. W. Bush abandoned plans to protect against a massive Soviet first strike and redirected the program to a Global Protection against Accidental Launch System (G-PALS) to protect the United States, its forward deployed forces, and its allies and friends from limited ballistic missile attack⁶.

Under Bill Clinton, BMD stayed focused on tactical and theater missile defense. Throughout the rest of the 1990's there was a small, but gradual progress in BMD technologies largely due to limited funds⁷. In 1998, focus shifted back to strategic missile defense with additional budget boosts. The main reason was growing threat from North Korea and other hostile nations with ability to acquire ballistic missiles, and the need for protection from accidental attack from Russia or China⁸. A significant research was done in area of BMD in consequent years, but none deployment, as had been originally proposed in 1998⁹. Thus, when George W. Bush came into office in January 2001, he allegorically found plans for BMD on his table.

George W. Bush's years

Soon after becoming a president, George W. Bush showed his disbelief in the mutually assured doctrine. In his speech at National Defense University on May 1. 2001 he said: "Today's most urgent threats stem... from the small number of missiles from these states, states for whom terror and blackmail are a way of life... Many care little for the lives of their own people. In such a world, Cold war deterrence is not an option"¹⁰. September, 11. 2001 just accelerated the whole process. Thus, since deterrence was not an option, other possibilities were regime change or building defense systems against potential threats from these "rogue" states.

The only barrier in building BMD system was the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, still valid from 1972. On December 13, 2001, President Bush gave Russia the six-month notice of US intent to withdraw from this treaty. Subsequently, on December 17, 2002, he issued a statement announcing national policy on ballistic missile defense that required the Secretary of Defense to proceed with fielding an initial set of missile defense capabilities in 2004. The whole missile defense program was reoriented with the concept of layered defense against missiles of all ranges. The deployment started soon after and first place where Ground-Based Interceptors (GBI) were installed was Fort Greely, Alaska in 2004. 24 installed interceptors¹¹ provide protection from limited number of ballistic missiles, heading from North Korea to United States¹². The second place for next four interceptors was finished soon after, in 2005 at the Vandenberg Air Force Base, California^{13 14}.

These interceptors have information from various radar sites around North America¹⁵. According to Ballistic Missile Defense Review posted in February 2010, the continental United States is “now” and for the “foreseeable future” protected against limited ICBM attacks¹⁶.

What remained necessary as a part of the global BMD system, according to Bush Administration, was an ability in the Europe Theater to defend against intermediate-to-long-range ballistic missiles launched from Iran. The Department of Defense argued it was important to US national security interests to deploy a GMD capability in Europe to optimize defensive coverage of the United States and Europe against potential threats both into Europe and against the United States. In 2002 the Bush Administration began informal talks with the governments of Poland and the Czech Republic over the possibility of establishing missile defense facilities on their territory. The official proposal came from the US government in January 2007. It was to deploy ten GBIs in silos at former military base Redzikowo in Poland and X-band radar in Brdy in the Czech Republic. The second, transportable forward acquisition radar would have to be deployed in a country not yet identified, but closer to Iran. Some European press accounts once mentioned the Caucasus region, but the Bush Administration never publicly indicated where this radar might be located¹⁷. Treaties were not ratified in any of countries until the end of Bush’s presidential term¹⁸. The reason was mainly in difficult negotiations. While Polish were trying to get as much as possible for this interceptor site¹⁹, in the Czech Republic about two thirds of population and political opposition were against it²⁰.

BMD after Barrack Obama’s accession

The New American Administration of Barrack Obama avowed the BMD as a protection from Iran, but at the same time it gave two crucial questions: They wanted to examine the effectiveness of cost of the whole system, mainly because of the financial crisis, and examine its technical feasibility. Thus, the debate between those who believed that there were enough tests and that the system works well and those who asserted that some technical issues are still not resolved rose again²¹.

President Obama officially announced the change in plan on 17. September 2009²². The date was very inappropriate; it was exactly on the 70th anniversary of the invasion of Soviet forces into Poland during World War II²³. Secondly, both Czech and Polish prime ministers said that president Obama let them know about his decision just hours before it was officially announced^{24 25}. However, American administration denied they did not inform Polish and Czech leaders of the policy shift until just before the announcement²⁶.

This change was strongly criticized²⁷ and thus representatives of the United States had to show their commitment to a new plan of BMD. Crucial was the visit of US vice-president Joe Biden to Poland, Czech Republic and Romania by the end of October 2009²⁸. These states are gradually showing to be most important in the new architecture.

Already by the end of December the United States agreed with Poland on deployment of Patriot system in north-eastern part of Poland near town Morag²⁹. The Patriot system was agreed in exchange for deploying GBI on Polish soil by the Bush administration and the Obama administration approved this decision³⁰. Battery of Patriots arrived in Poland on May, 24, 2010. It is quite surprising that this battery, manned by 150 US troops will not be stationed permanently, but just about for one month four times a year, the purpose of which is to train Polish military personnel. The whole deployment has got more symbolic than real value. Permanent home for this battery is in Germany³¹. Secondly, it needs to be said that Patriot system cannot be used against missiles from Iran; it is used against tactical ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and advanced aircraft³². This means that this system in Poland is used to practice against threats from Russia. This clearly is not a good signal for Russia and maybe could have been handled better by America. More important fact is that the United States and Poland have agreed on deployment of SM-3 missiles on Polish soil in about 2015. This agreement was done on October 20, 2009, just one

month after announcing the new architecture³³. This means that Poland will be an important part even for the new “Obama’s” BMD architecture in Europe.

Role of the Czech Republic has become clear after a long time. Soon after the announcement of a new plan for BMD, on October 4, 2009, US deputy foreign secretary Ellen Tauschner said, that in the Czech Republic there could be headquarters for the new BMD architecture³⁴. While later, on November 16, 2009 she said less clearly what role the Czech Republic should play: it should be an “important role” without further specification. She also announced that more exact possibilities will be clear only after planned expert meetings, which should finish in about middle of 2010³⁵. The final decision was announced on June 30, 2010. Prime Minister Petr Nečas announced that Czech Republic will host US Missile warning centre. According to minister of defense Alexandr Vondra it should be two offices, one in Prague for the General Staff of the Army, and the second one at another place. Czech nationals should be operating computer terminals, which will be tracking missiles. They will have access to information from various American radar stations³⁶. According to Nečas, it should eventually be part of NATO missile defense³⁷. This is clearly a political gesture. With current technologies, this centre could have been on the South Pole and it would work the same way. It is an American compensation for the radar, which would give some American presence on Czech soil, but would not be as problematic politically as the radar was. So far, all relevant Czech parties agree with this installation, with the exception of the Communist party³⁸.

Biden’s visit in October 2009 had clearly great importance in Romania. While it was not counted with Romania according to Bush’s plan, it will have a part in the new architecture. On February 4, 2010 Romanian president Traian Băsescu announced that he had obtained an official proposal to host a new BMD system. Romanian highest defensive council has already approved this plan for hosting twenty SM-3 interceptors. Negotiations could take even one and half year and final decision is on Romanian parliament, but it is expected to be passed without problems. Interceptors are planned to be deployed in about 2015^{39 40}.

The last country, which is discussed with regard to BMD, is Bulgaria. Bulgaria officially expressed its wish to become involved after Romania was given an official offer from the United States. US Ambassador in Sofia James Warlick said in March 2010, that the United States were having unofficial negotiations with more countries in this region⁴¹ and that Bulgaria “has a place in the US missile defense shield”⁴². Because SM-3 interceptors are going to be in bordering Romania and US representatives have been speaking about three places as sufficient to cover whole Europe⁴³, it is very unlikely that they will be in Bulgaria. Of course, if Romania finds agreement with the United States. Thus, some kind of radar systems seems to be most likely to be deployed in Bulgaria⁴⁴.

TECHNICAL AND STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

The new plan

As state above, United States needed a third site to provide stronger protection against possible Iranian ICBM threat to the East Coast of the United States and Europe⁴⁵. The plan was to locate an X-band radar in the Czech Republic and 10 ground-based interceptors in Poland. Deployment of the silos and interceptors was scheduled to begin in 2011 with completion in 2013⁴⁶. However, US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates said during briefing about change of BMD architecture that these GBI would not become operational until probably 2017 or 2018⁴⁷.

The plan proposed by Barrack Obama on September 17, 2009 was called “Phased, Adaptive Approach”. Instead of GBI, it uses SM-3 interceptors and probably different radar sites at various places in Europe. The whole plan is based on gradual deployment and improvement of current

technologies and although technology advancement could modify details, the plan counts with four phases:

- Phase One (2011 timeframe): Deploy current and proven missile defense systems available in next two years, including the sea-based Aegis Weapon System, the SM-3 interceptor (Block IA), and sensors such as the forward-based Army Navy/Transportable Radar Surveillance system (AN/TPY-2), to address regional ballistic missile threats to Europe and US personnel;
- Phase Two (2015 timeframe): After appropriate testing, deploy a more capable version of the SM-3 interceptor (Block IB) in both sea and land-based configurations, and more advanced sensors, to expand the defended area against short- and medium- range missile threats;
- Phase Three (2018 timeframe): After development and testing is complete, deploy more advanced SM-3 Block IIA variant currently under development, to counter short-, medium-, and intermediate-range missile threats;
- Phase Four (2020 timeframe): After development and testing are complete, deploy the SM-3 Block IIB to help better cope with medium- and intermediate- range missiles and the potential future ICBM threat to the United States⁴⁸.

Differences between both architectures

There are big differences between these two architectures. Strategically speaking, the greatest is probably between abilities of these systems. GBI were to counter the ICBM threat. On the other hand, Obama's architecture aims to counter threats from ballistic missiles of shorter range. Generations of SM-3, which are currently under development, will have gradually greater and greater range and intercept capability⁴⁹. Around 2020, SM-3 Block IIB, which is currently "in the initial phase of technology assessment and development", according to Ballistic Missile Defense Review Report issued on February 2010 "will have some early-intercept capability against long-range missile"⁵⁰. This is in a slight difference from the words of General Cartwright in September 2009, as he said that SM-3 Block IIB "will have substantial capability to intercept intercontinental ballistic missile type capabilities emanating from Iran"⁵¹. Overall, these words are not very reassuring and thus viable protection of eastern part of United States and whole Europe from Iranian ICBM would take probably couple of more years than 2020, while under Bush plan, it would be set up around 2017 or 2018.

The other question is protection from missiles of short- and medium-range. The Bush administration accepted that the GBI would not protect south-eastern Europe. This could be addressed by "fill-in" systems, such as Aegis ships, or by a NATO-developed defense. Under president Obama, these fill-in systems have become the priority⁵².

Important difference between both architectures is flexibility. US representatives admitted that the original plan was a bit static and thus could have a good target for preemptive attack. Obama's architecture counts with deployment of interceptors on more places. In the third phase, around 2018, there should be three places to protect the entire area of Europe⁵³. There should be more variety in the surveillance systems as well, because it is possible to integrate more types of systems into the new architecture. For example, the originally naval system AEGIS, radars which are parts of Patriot system or to integrate air or space borne surveillance systems. All of these systems will be connected by high-performance computer systems^{54 55}.

Difference is even between the numbers of enemy ballistic missile systems which they are able to intercept. Original plan was based on intercepting ICBMs, but only of a relatively small number, because there was planned to be only 10 interceptors in Poland. Thus, there was risk, that in critical situation it would be necessary to decide which places would be protected and which have to be sacrificed. This situation should not happen in the new plan. There is going to be more ships with

SM-3 missiles and later on there will be probably three places with these interceptors, every site probably with more than 10 interceptors. Moreover, SM-3 are much easier to build and deploy and thus if needed, their number can be raised much faster than GBI^{56 57}.

The price difference between GBI and SM-3 is important as well. While one GBI costs 70 million US dollars, SM-3 currently costs 10 million, later versions could cost up to 15 million dollars⁵⁸. Outside of price is reached the basic requirement of effective missile defense, that interceptor needs to be cheaper than missiles it is about to attack. Even later versions of SM-3 are for sure going to be cheaper than any Iranian ICBM⁵⁹. The price is lowered down by the possibility of burden-sharing. While GBI was an American technology deployed only on Alaska and California, SM-3 are used by more countries⁶⁰.

From political perspective the difference is that Bush's plan was based on bilateral agreements between the United States on one side and Poland and the Czech Republic, each country separately, on the other. The new architecture will be under NATO command⁶¹.

The whole vision of both architectures is different. Bush's was to protect the United States and Europe from the most dangerous, but least viable threat – from Iranian ICBM's, while the new one is trying to build a wider network: Network, into which more surveillance systems, types of interceptors or even states could be implemented, in order to protect from more actual threat with the perspective of additional improvement of capabilities.

Iranian threat

US representatives have been officially speaking about two reasons for this change in architecture. The first was a change in intelligence assessment of advancement in ballistic missile technologies in Iran. According to this information, Iran is advancing faster in the development of short- and middle-range missiles, like type Shahab-3, which constitutes more serious threat for Europe. On the other hand, advancement of ICBMs goes more slowly than it was expected in 2006. The second reason for change was development of new technologies. Over the last years, United States have made great strides with missile defense, particularly in their ability to counter short- and medium-range missiles. These capabilities offer variety of options to detect, track and shoot down enemy missiles⁶².

The greatest threat was always seen in ICBMs, capable reaching mainland United States. In 2001, US intelligence community assessed that Iran will have ICBMs by 2015, but there were various caveats on that potential capability. This and similar assessments drive US military efforts to drive the BMD program. However, there were great uncertainties about this program and more recent intelligence assessments pushed threat of an Iranian ICBM "further out in the decade"⁶³. On the other hand, in April 2010, Defense Intelligence Agency reported that by 2015 Iran, with the help of North Korea or Russia, could field ICBMs. Moreover, in spring 2009, Iran successfully launched their first homegrown satellite into orbit. This, by words of former director of Defense Intelligence Agency "shows progress in mastering the technology needed to produce ICBMs"⁶⁴. James Corum, although he was talking about The Quadrennial Defense Review, wrote that there is a high possibility that Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Joint Chiefs Chairman "have deliberately minimized the current security threats to please the Obama administration"⁶⁵. These persons have been in charge of more decisions and reports and thus there is possibility that they, and others, have formulated more crucial documents to please the current administration. As the case of Iraq having weapons of mass destruction shows, there could be great problem in transfer of information between various parts of state administration, as politicians tend to "cherry pick" information they like. Thus, evaluation of intelligence behind the change of BMD architecture will probably have meaning only later, when more information will be available.

Situation is quite different in terms of medium- and intermediate- range ballistic missiles. Shahab-3 is the most known medium-range ballistic missile. As with many other technologies, it is not clear what the range of this missile is. Estimates are from 1500 kilometers⁶⁶ to 2500

kilometers⁶⁷. Ballistic Missile Defense Review Report says that Iran has the ability to mass-produce these missiles⁶⁸. Furthermore, In November 2008, Iran has allegedly tested Sajjil missile, significant difference being that Sajjil missile is easily transported and within minutes ready for firing⁶⁹, the range should be around 2000 kilometers⁷⁰.

Successful tests of Shahab-3 in 2006-2008⁷¹ and development of Sajjil missiles were probably such information that was behind the change of BMD architecture in Europe. Currently, with 2000 kilometers range Iran is able to reach NATO countries on the Balkan Peninsula and with the development of next versions of Shahab and other missiles it is possible that it will be able to reach more and more European countries⁷². So far, countries like Romania and Bulgaria are not likely to become target of Iranian ballistic missiles. Iran will reach deterrence it needs only with the possibility to strike mainland USA, so it will probably continue on its path of getting ICBMs.

BMD Critique

It needs to be said that there exists not insignificant critique of the whole BMD systems and their promised capabilities. Pavel Podvig, Russian scientist working at Stanford University offers more theoretical caveat: “Missile defense will never make shred of difference when it comes to its primary mission-protecting a country from the threat of a nuclear missile attack...because it would take only small probability of success to make such a threat credible while missile defense would need to offer absolute certainty of protection to truly be effective”⁷³. On the other hand, Theodore Postol and George Lewis are famous of their critique of both Bush’s and Obama’s BMD architectures. According to them, Obama’s decision from September 2009 “scrapped a technically flawed missile defense system that could never produce useful level of defense for Europe”. But the new system is as well “highly fragile and brittle and will intercept warheads only by accident”⁷⁴. Inability to hit the warhead of a missile is identified as the main flaw. According to them, if the rest of the missile is hit, it does not have a significant impact and the warhead continues in its flight with very little change of trajectory. However, even in cases when interceptor hits the body of the missile, and not the warhead, the test was evaluated as a success⁷⁵.

POLITICAL OUTLOOK

Democratic Party views

The Republican Party has always been more hawkish and pursued more offensive policies compared with generally antiwar Democratic Party. In the case of BMD, it has never been different. Democratic senator Edward (Ted) Kennedy famously called Ronald Reagan’s SDI “reckless Star Wars schemes”⁷⁶. The Democratic Party members have been very critical to George Bush’s ambitious pursue of BMD, using arguments quite similar to Theodore Postol’s. In 2004, Senator Carl Levin said that “If we want a missile defense that works rather than one that sits on the ground and soaks up money, we should not shy away from realistic testing requirements”⁷⁷. The similar argumentation has been used many times by Obama during his presidential campaign. He supported “deploying a missile defense when the technology is proved to be workable”⁷⁸. This meant that he considered that there were not enough tests on GBI. But Barrack Obama had to come with some solution. Plans of George Bush were unpopular, but United States and its allies couldn’t be left without any missile defense, even if not working, but at least for political reasons. Charles Krauthammer concludes what are the necessities of coming from opposition to government: “When a party is in opposition, it opposes. That’s its job. But when it comes to power, it must govern. Easy rhetoric is over, the press of reality becomes irresistible. By necessity, party adopts some of the policies it has once denounced. And new national consensus is born”⁷⁹. The only solution left was thus to change the plan of BMD to try to make it look like implementing different policies from George Bush, but keeping the main purpose of BMD. And it was successful. For the first time in

decades, democrats have fully accepted the idea of BMD. And with them, the large majority of American public.

Russian critique

For sure, an issue such as BMD must have very important political implications. This chapter will focus on how it affects relations between the United States and Russia. It is generally known that Russia is the strongest critic of BMD in Europe. However, as Lt. General Henry Obering said, this was not such an issue in the beginning: “When we pulled out of the ABM treaty, we did not hear anything from Russians. When we begin our deployments in Alaska in the summer 2004, we heard nothing from Russians, when we initially were formulating our strategy for expansion to Europe...not a very strong reaction. It was not until we named Poland and the Czech Republic... They know it is not a technical challenge to them. This is geopolitical. This is messing in what is considered to be their backyard”⁸⁰. Russian firm opposition could be best demonstrated by threats that Russia will deploy its missiles into the Kaliningrad enclave, targeting proposed missile defense deployments in Poland⁸¹.

According to Pavel Podvig, Russian opposition to US BMD cannot be attributed to a single specific factor, rather, it is a combination of political and technical considerations. The key element is that Russia’s position is based on the notion that US program is directed against Russia and that its primary goal is to undermine strategic balance between Russia and United States.

Another point is based on doubts about the existence of a missile threat that the US is supposed to counter. Russian position is that the country cannot pose a serious threat unless it has a relatively mature ballistic missile program, which would be capable to produce “modern ballistic missiles”. According to the statement from 2007, space launch would be an indicator of maturity of a missile program⁸². Since Iran launched its first homegrown satellite into orbit in early 2009⁸³, this argument could not be valid any more.

Next, Russia has expressed serious concerns about the open-ended nature of the US program. While conceding that initial deployment of ten interceptors and the radar does not represent a threat to the Russian strategic potential, it points out that the system can be expanded by deployment of additional interceptors and radar⁸⁴.

The last of major problematic issues was that interceptors and the radar would be deployed close to the Russian national territory⁸⁵. Part of this critique is based on often repeated Russian argument, that Russia has been given “pledge” made by the governments of West Germany and the United States in 1990 not to bring any former Communist states into the Alliance. “When we were told during the German reunification process that NATO would not expand, we believed it” said Anatoly Adamishin, former Soviet deputy foreign minister, in 1997⁸⁶. However, Michael Kramer says that all this pledge is a myth, that there were no talks about future of the rest of Communist states and no-one would even think about this possibility. “Officials in the new governments were beginning to realize just how much the security environment in Eastern Europe had been changed. They still assumed that the Warsaw Pact would survive”⁸⁷.

As US representatives have told, the change of architecture helped only to mitigate two, generally minor Russian caveats. First was that the radar in the Czech Republic would be able to look deep into the Russian territory and could monitor launches of their ICBMs. The second was Russian fear that GBIs in Poland could be fitted with nuclear weapons and become an offensive weapon. This could not be argued in case of SM-3. Important outcome of change of architecture is also the ability to implement more systems. US representatives expressed their interest in partnership with Russia. They clearly said that Armavir radar in southern Russia could be integrated into this system and could be very effective in covering potential Iranian missile launches⁸⁸.

The reactions towards the change of architecture have been various. It was welcomed by some Western Europe representatives or by NATO secretary-general Anders Fogh Rasmussen⁸⁹.

However, it was criticized by some Polish or Czech representatives. Chairman of security committee of the Czech parliament Jan Vidim called it “cowardice of president Obama and betrayal of allies”⁹⁰. The reaction from Russia has been very positive. As Dmitry Rogozin, Russian Ambassador to NATO said: “It’s like having a decomposing corpse in your flat and then the undertaker comes and takes it away...This means we’re getting rid of one of those niggling problems which prevented us from doing the real work”⁹¹.

Obama’s engagement

To understand the worries about abandoning BMD plans, it is necessary to come to the beginning of president Obama’s term. Engagement was named as a pillar and guiding principle of Obama’s foreign policy. At the beginning of his presidency, the United States faced a global public widely angry at America and distrustful of its motives. An unpopular war in Iraq and a controversial war on terror threatened America’s moral authority overseas and divided even America’s allies. Barrack Obama pledged to renew America’s relationship with the world, working in concert with other nations to address shared global challenges. He signaled a strong break from the past and delivered an ambitious series of speeches designed to build a strong foundation of support for his administration’s foreign policy agenda⁹².

Obama wanted to start with engagement with Iran as well. He publicly stated: “We are going to take a new approach...My belief is that engagement is the place to start”⁹³. The goal was the same as before, to stop Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. This has been one of the most difficult foreign policy issues of Obama’s presidency. The connection with BMD, especially in Europe is clear: If Iran does not pursue nuclear weapons equipped on ballistic missiles, there would not be need to build BMD systems in Europe. Thus, getting as many allies in this issue was crucial for ability to impose greater pressure and potential punishment, mostly through UN. Russia is maybe the most important country in this respect and until recently has not been very helpful.

With relation to Russia, US vice-president Joe Biden at his speech in Munich, February 2009 announced that “it’s time to press the reset button and to revisit the many areas where we can and should be working together with Russia”. Inter alia he mentioned “cooperation to secure loose nuclear weapons and materials to prevent their spread, to renew the verification procedures in the START Treaty, and then go beyond existing treaties to negotiate deeper cuts in both our arsenals”⁹⁴.

In fact, before the change of the BMD architecture, Russia had not been very helpful in creating pressure on Iran. Russia assumed an ambivalent position. On the one hand, expressed concern over Iran’s possibly becoming nuclear power, denied any involvement in the process, and seemingly agreed that it is necessary to stop Iran, and on the other hand, expressed sweeping support for Iran, which included active participation in the development of Iran’s nuclear profile. This position was shaped by Russian belief, that nuclear weapons are precisely the element likely to contribute to stabilization, as was proven by the Cold War. Russia is already surrounded by nuclear powers and thus one more of them will not change the overall balance. According to this logic, Iran should become a nuclear power, Russia can gain benefits, by positioning itself as the one that would bridge and oversee a new regional order, which assumes the weakening of the United States⁹⁵.

Many politicians in Washington started to think that maybe US had been pressing on Russia too much: Regularly hectoring Moscow about democracy, encouraging Georgia and Ukraine to seek membership in NATO, challenging Russia’s energy dominance in Central Asia and the Caucasus, recognizing Kosovo’s independence as well as installing BMD system in Europe. According to them, it would be better to negotiate series of quid pro quos that focused on getting those things from Russia that the United States truly needs⁹⁶. There are many issues where US needs Russian help. Even if they will not help prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, what is really a difficult task, their help in creating missile shield would be very valuable. This is

connected with the issue of renewing the START Treaty. But the list of issues where US needs Russia could be really long.

Relations with Russia after the change of BMD architecture

As was already written, Russian reaction towards the change of BMD architecture was very positive, although they still didn't like the whole idea of BMD in Europe. Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin said on 29 December 2009 about what was the main problem blocking new nuclear disarmament treaty, which expired on 5 December 2009: "What is the problem? The problem is that our American partners are building an anti-missile shield and we are not building one... By building such an umbrella over themselves, our [US] partners could feel themselves fully secure and will do whatever they want, which upsets the balance". Analysts said that Moscow wanted a clause in the new treaty that would limit the scale of any US defense shield⁹⁷. Russia was irked even by decision to put parts of new BMD into Poland and Romania. Sergey Ivanov, Russia's deputy prime minister warned that Romanian move would complicate talks about the START treaty: "It's impossible to talk seriously about a reduction of nuclear capabilities when a nuclear power is working to deploy defensive systems against nuclear warheads possessed by other countries".

Signing of new START treaty in Prague on 8 April, 2010 could be understood as a sign of the improvement of relations between Russia and USA. The greatest problem from American side was Russian demand for limitation of American BMD systems⁹⁸. Although this was denied by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton: "the treaty places no constraints on our missile defense plans – now or in the future"⁹⁹, limitations could be found. Preamble says: "Recognizing the existence of the interrelationship between strategic offensive arms and strategic defensive arms, that this interrelationship will become more important as strategic nuclear arms are reduced, and that current strategic defensive arms do not undermine the viability and effectiveness of the strategic offensive arms of the Parties"¹⁰⁰. Thus, pure mentioning of interrelationship between strategic offensive and defensive parts gives some option to state that building BMD systems is violation of this treaty. Another limitation is in Article V, Section 3: "Each Party shall not convert and shall not use ICMB launchers and SLBM launchers for placement of missile defense interceptors therein"¹⁰¹. This is limitation because some submarines were considered as carriers of ballistic missile interceptors¹⁰². This option is thus no longer possible. Outside of these two constraints, Russian officials have affirmed their country's unilateral right to withdraw from the treaty if US missile-defense programs ever develop to the point where they might jeopardize the credibility of Russia's nuclear deterrent¹⁰³.

Sign of improving relations between Russia and West or worsening between Russia and Iran was in multiple delays of Russian S-300 missile defense system. Russia signed contract in December 2005 to sell at least five S-300s to Iran, but has not delivered this system so far. Russian representatives were speaking about unspecified "technical problems"¹⁰⁴. The reason of technical issue is clearly not true, as Vladimir Kasparyants, head instructor of air defense systems at Almaz-Antey, the company that builds the S-300 told Interfax: "There are no technical problems with the S-300 systems. This is a political issue"¹⁰⁵. S-300 could have been used as effective Iranian protection from possible preventive strike from Israel or United States on Iranian nuclear facilities.

It seems that concessions towards Russia in terms of BMD, mostly change of architecture have helped in getting Russian support towards sanctions on Iran. While in the beginning of September 2009 Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov ruled out imposing sanctions: "I do not think those sanctions will be approved by the United Nations Security Council"¹⁰⁶. What meant that Russia, holding veto, would not support sanctions. This changed very soon after changing the architecture. On 23 of September, just several days after announcement of changing architecture, Dmitry Medvedev, Russian president said after meeting with president Obama: "Sanctions rarely lead to productive results. But in some cases sanctions are inevitable"¹⁰⁷. This was quite significant

breakthrough. Maybe it is just a coincidence, but president Obama had set deadline of September for progress on talks with Iran¹⁰⁸. Iran has been quite steady with gradually improving its nuclear abilities and not many experts probably expected it is going to change its posture just because of the change of American administration. Probably even Obama expected this and he may have changed BMD architecture at the very time in order to get Russian support at the end of September. It took another 9 months to impose sanctions, during which America was forced to make even more concessions but, in the end, Russia supported sanctions on Iran.

These sanctions were imposed on June 9, 2010. They have the form of Resolution 1929. They fell short of “crippling sanctions”, which Obama had pledged a year ago, unable to secure a unanimous vote at the Security Council. Support from China and Russia was gained only after assuring that the measures would not impair their ability to continue trading with Teheran¹⁰⁹.

It is clear that the United States are trying to persuade Russia to cooperate in developing pressure on Iran. Americans have got many instruments to do this and at least in some degree they are likely to succeed. In the future, it could be expected that Russia will not sell Iran any of its most-advanced military equipment, mostly such that could protect Iran from preventive strikes. Secondly, as Iranian threat will probably rise, Russia and the US will probably cooperate in the area of BMD more closely.

CONCLUSION

Unfortunately, only Barrack Obama himself could give an exact answer to the question why he changed the BMD architecture in Europe. Probably the greatest problem in search for the answer is lack of first-hand information. Intelligence and other kinds of confidential reports are not available; neither do high governmental, army and intelligence representatives talk about their views on this topic. What is left, are official, rather vague reports, public speeches and academic analyses.

The facts should be summarized first. While BMD was a priority for George W. Bush, Barrack Obama was not so keen in the pursuit of this issue. During his campaign and after taking the office he stated that he supported “a missile defense system when the technology is proved to be workable”¹¹⁰. Additionally, he tried to engage in diplomatic talks with Iran and stop its nuclear program through diplomacy. This was doomed to failure from the beginning. Obama tried to improve relationship with Russia as well, knowing that creating pressure on Iran would be effective only with the help of Russia. Due to this, he did not press for Georgian membership in NATO, offered help for Russian ascension to the World Trade Organization, and did not speak very much about human right violations¹¹¹. This was rewarded by the ability to pass UN sanctions on Iran for violating the non-proliferation treaty. However, this will most probably not change Iran’s determination to get nuclear weapons. Thus, there will be a need for BMD systems to protect us from Iranian ballistic missiles, even if Israel or United States preventively attack Iran¹¹². This would just delay its nuclear program, but probably not stop it.

The answer to the main question, whether the change of BMD architecture had technical or political reasons, such as appeasing Russia, is ambiguous. There are several reasons in support of this notion and several against it.

The main reason against is that there is still going to be American BMD in the area of post-communist states. The difference lies in the fact, that it is going to be a few years later. It is difficult to see whether this time offset would be such a victory for Russia. Moreover, the American presence is going to be greater than according to Bush’s plan. Originally, the plan involved only Poland and the Czech Republic, and possibly some third state for closer based radar; now it is going to be in Poland, the Czech Republic, Romania, Bulgaria, and possibly even other countries. As the Early Warning Center in the Czech Republic shows, it is not a big problem to locate American installations generally in any country that would like to have it. The geopolitical argument is hardly valid.

The other reason to believe that it was not appeasing Russia is in future capabilities of this new architecture. While the old one had the ability to intercept even Russian ballistic missiles, there were only ten interceptors and additional deployment would not be easy. This would not change the balance between Russia and the US. The other plan could be more threatening for Russia. While for the next ten years it will not have the ability to intercept ICBM's, after 2020 it could have this ability, but the number of interceptors will be greater and more importantly, additional deployment would be much easier. This could have the ability to upset nuclear balance between Russia and the US.

It could be argued that the change was not motivated by the Russian opposition, but because the Democratic Party got hold of the government. There was a need for BMD, but it was necessary to approach it in a different way from George Bush's plan. It was easy to criticize from the opposition, but democrats have acknowledged the need for BMD when becoming governmental.

Generally, it seems that the words of secretary Gates are going to be fulfilled when it comes to the overall abilities of the new architecture: "I believe this new approach provides a better missile defense capability for our forces in Europe, for our European allies and eventually for our homeland than the program I recommended almost three years ago"¹¹³. While the old system provided protection for maximum of 10 places in the United States and Europe, the new one will be covering larger part of Europe, able to accommodate to threats, intercept greater "raid" of missiles and even implement more systems into itself. However, the crucial question is how good will the SM-3 Block IIB be in intercepting ICBMs when it is deployed, which should be about 2020. While general Obering said that they would have: "substantial capability to intercept ICMB type from Iran"¹¹⁴, Ballistic Missile Defence Review Report said that they would have "some early-intercept capability against long-range missiles"¹¹⁵. This is not very reassuring and it presents big questions to the future.

On the other hand, there are several arguments that support the explanation that the change of architecture was appeasing Russia. The first one could be American willingness for negotiations, mostly in the case of the START treaty. There are clear limits on BMD and in the new START treaty and generally, in different cases that are directly linked with BMD, US did not press very much on Russia. It is clear that US wanted Russian support in creating pressure on Iran and was able to be very flexible in negotiations with Russia.

Another argument suggests quite strange motivation behind the change of the architecture. Outside of intelligence reports, it should have been a steep improvement in technology. Secretary Gates said "Over the last years, we have made great strides with missile defense, particularly with our ability to counter short-and-medium-range missiles"¹¹⁶. This is a weird logic. Any defense should be based on what it should defend against, not on its own ability. The fact that Americans have improved their ability to intercept short-and-medium-range missiles is great, but the greatest danger is represented by the ICBMs. If US find new way of protection against laser weapons, for instance, would they build such a system if no US enemy had laser weapons? Definitely not. It was known that Iran owned proven short-and-medium-range missiles and US were planning to build some defense against it as well, but this has nothing to do with ICBMs, the biggest threat.

The intelligence aspect is not clear, either. It is not possible to get to information that top policy-makers have, but history shows that politicians tend to cherry-pick information they like. However, Iran sent its first satellite into orbit in early 2009, before the change. The ability to launch satellites is strongly connected with constructing long-range ballistic missiles. It seems that only future will show what the state of Iranian ballistic missile program is, but information about it is not very reassuring that US will be able to intercept Iranian IRBM or IBMSs when they are built.

Just making mathematical average of the arguments for and against says that the answer must be somewhere in between. There was some motivation to create a "time off" for Russia before the BMD system is deployed on European soil. The greatest motive for this appeasement was to get the Russian support for creating pressure on Iran to stop its nuclear program. So far it seems that this

“gamble” went fine and Russia is supporting US, or at least not helping Iran. States in Central-Eastern Europe should be happy as well. For those, who want it, they can get American presence on their soil, while not upsetting Russia and their fellow anti-American citizens so much.

From a political perspective, this change of architecture was a not a bad step of Barack Obama. American needs will be fulfilled while it creates less antagonism. It is much more difficult to evaluate the technical part. If all official American statements are true and become fulfilled, it will be a success. However, this will be clear in about ten years, and many questions are still very problematic.

NOTES

¹ This term will be most frequently used, although other terms like missile defense or anti-ballistic missile have the same meaning.

² DoD News Briefing with Secretary Gates and Gen. Cartwright from the Pentagon.

³ Ibid.

⁴ KUCHYŇKOVÁ, Zdeňka, Americký radar v Česku nebude.

⁵ CIRINCIONE, Joseph, Brief History of Ballistic Missile Defense and Current Programs in the United States [online].

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⁷ History of U.S. Missile Defense Efforts 1945-Present [online]

⁸ FRANSWORTH, Elisabeth, A Viable Defense?

⁹ National Missile Defense Independent Review Team (NMD IRT), Executive Summary, p.1.

¹⁰ President Bush Speech on Missile Defense, May1, 2001.

¹¹ This number should be achieved by the end of fiscal year 2010, number of interceptors grew gradually, starting from 10 in 2004.

¹² *Vandenberg Air Force Base* [online].

¹³ *Fort Greely* [online].

¹⁴ Ballistic Missile Defense Review Report, February 2010, p.13.

¹⁵ Missile Defense Agency (MDA) Exhibit R-2 RDT&E Budget item Justification, p. 2.

¹⁶ Ballistic Missile Defense Review Report, February 2010, p.15.

¹⁷ HILDRETH, Steven A., EK, Carl. Long-Range Ballistic Missile Defense in Europe, p. 8.

¹⁸ Chronologie vývoje projektu protiraketové obrany USA.

¹⁹ Bush: U.S. to help Poland modernize military.

²⁰ Proti radaru je nejvíc lidí od roku 2007. Dva ze tří Čechů.

²¹ SMITH, Julianne, V čem se liší přístup Obamy a Bushe k radaru.

²² The exact plan will be described later, for now it needs to be said that it counts with different type of interceptors – Standard Missile-3 (SM-3) on more than one place and other components in countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

²³ JOYNER, James, Obama Abandons Poland and Czech Missile Defense.

²⁴ USA „zmázly“ radar v Brdech, Češi litují i oslavují.

²⁵ Critics: Obama Endangering U.S. With Missile Plan.

²⁶ BAKER, Peter, Czechs Accept Modified Missile Shield Role.

²⁷ This will be discussed later.

²⁸ ZENERGLE, Patricia, Biden to visit Poland, Romania, Czech Republic.

²⁹ U.S. Patriot Missiles in Poland Early April: Report.

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³¹ JONES, Gareth, Patriot missile battery arrives in Poland.

³² Patriot Missile Air Defence System, USA.

³³ DEMPSEY, Judy, Poland to Accept U.S. Offer on Shield.

³⁴ V Česku by mohlo být velitelství nového protiraketového systému.

³⁵ USA pokračují v látání děr po zrušení radaru, Česku nabízejí významnou roli.

³⁶ ŠMAJLEROVÁ, Zuzana, USA vybudují v Česku centrum pro detekci raket. Měli by ho obsluhovat Češi.

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