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## Fact Sheet

Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs

Washington, DC

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## U.S. Missile Defense

One of the most direct threats to U.S. national security, and the security of U.S. friends and allies, is the threat of nuclear, biological, or chemical (NBC) weapons delivered by ballistic missiles. Nonproliferation, counter proliferation, export controls, diplomacy, deterrence, and missile defense, are all part of a national security strategy to address this threat.

### The Ballistic Missile Threat Today

The ballistic missile threat to the U.S., its forces deployed abroad, and allies and friends is real and growing.

- Not only is the threat from numbers and capabilities of ballistic missiles growing, but the group of countries possessing ballistic missiles includes some of the world's most threatening and least responsible regimes, such as North Korea and Iran.
- Iran could have long-range missiles capable of reaching the U.S. and Europe before 2015. Currently, Iran possesses many short to medium-range ballistic missiles. Iran launched its Shahab 3 missile most recently in January 2007. This missile is capable of hitting targets in Southeastern Europe. Current NATO missile defense efforts provide protection against shorter range threats only, and would not be capable of defending against longer range missiles launched from the Middle East to Central or Western Europe.
- North Korea continues to develop the Taepo Dong 2, which could reach parts of the United States and is capable of carrying a nuclear payload. North Korea has successfully tested shorter range ballistic missiles, demonstrating the capability to target U.S. forces and our allies in South Korea and Japan.

### Proposed Basing of U.S. Missile Defense Assets in Europe

The U.S. has agreed with Poland and the Czech Republic to begin formal missile defense basing negotiations, which if favorably concluded, would allow the fielding of ten U.S. long-range ground-based defensive interceptors in Poland and a

tracking radar in the Czech Republic.

- The proposed U.S. missile defense assets in Europe would defend the U.S. and much of Europe against long-range ballistic missile threats launched from the Middle East. The U.S. would benefit from greatly enhanced protection from attacks originating in the Middle East, while Europe would gain defenses where none previously existed.
- Some southern European countries do not face long-range threats from Iran given their proximity to the Middle East. NATO has focused its missile defense development efforts on countering shorter range threats. The United States and NATO efforts are complementary and could work together to form a more effective defense for Europe.



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