



## Remarks With Czech Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg at Ballistic Missile Defense Agreement Signing Ceremony

**Secretary Condoleezza Rice**  
Prague, Czech Republic  
July 8, 2008

[View Video](#)

**MODERATOR:** (Via interpreter.) Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to welcome you at the ceremony of the signature of the agreement between Czech Republic and the United States of America on the establishment of the radar station of missile defense system of the United States and the Czech Republic. The agreement will be signed by Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg on behalf of the Czech Republic and on behalf of the United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.



(The agreement was signed.) (Applause.)

**MODERATOR:** (Via interpreter.) The agreement has been signed and now, there will be a short speech by the Foreign Minister of Czech Republic Karel Schwarzenberg.

**FOREIGN MINISTER SCHWARZENBERG:** (Via interpreter.) (Inaudible) Secretary, ladies and gentlemen, it is a great honor and pleasure for me that I was able to sign this agreement with the United States today. This agreement is a part of the consistent policy of the Czech Republic. The first task of the foreign policy of any country is to ensure security of the country. And this agreement not only increases the security of the Czech Republic, but also of Europe and of the whole Euro-Atlantic area.

For the short time of one year and a half, when I have had the honor of being the Foreign Minister of the Czech Republic, I signed two major agreements: the Lisbon treatment and the other is this one. Contrary to many critical opinions, I would say that both are part of the consistent Czech security policy as the Czech Republic can feel safer only if it decides firmly – and is an integral part of the European community and thus, is also a part of a bigger entity, both economically and politically.

And on the other hand, our relation to NATO, which is a natural alliance for us, and the deepening of transatlantic links within the alliance is the primary objective of our foreign policy. Thus, both agreements, both treaties constitute a foundation for the security of our country. This is why I regard this agreement as particularly important.

Second, I would like to thank, on this occasion, to all people who played a greater role in the agreement than myself, because I only signed it today. I would like to name my predecessor and government colleague, Deputy Prime Minister Mr. Alexandr Vondra. If it hadn't been for his initiative and energy, we wouldn't have been proceeding so fast. And he – also, my Deputy Mr. Tomas Pojar, Mr. (inaudible), as the Minister of Defense (inaudible), Minister of Environment (inaudible) and many others.

I think this is an opportunity today to thank all of those who did their utmost to make this agreement come true in time. And I would also like to thank the American side for the very fair, although very tough negotiations. The topic – the agenda was very difficult, but we made it at the end of the day. Thank you for your attention.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Thank you very much. Thank you, Minister Schwarzenberg, for that very – those very kind words, and thank you for the hard work that you have put into the effort to bring this agreement into fruition. I'm very proud to stand with you today to sign this landmark agreement. I think that it is truly a landmark agreement. It is an agreement that is befitting for friends and allies who face a common threat in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and wish to address it through the application of the best defensive technologies that we can bring to bear.



This is an agreement that is supported by our NATO allies, as was noted at Bucharest at the summit, because missile defenses today are aimed only at those who would threaten us. They are not like the missile defenses of the Cold War period, which were caught up in discussions about strategic stability. We've made the point to our Russian colleagues that we all face the threat from states like Iran that continue to pursue missiles of ever-longer range, and we must be in a position to respond. And so with our Czech allies, we are able to do that today, with our NATO allies, we have been able to secure agreement that this is important to NATO, and that all of these agreements will come together in an architecture that will help defend us all.

I want to note too that this agreement is not just about missile defense. There will be an accompanying agreement very, very shortly that will help us to take advantage in the private sector, to help our private sectors take advantage of the research and development opportunities that this agreement will bring into being. I myself am an academic. I'm from a university that has a huge research and development, technological, computer, engineering component to it. And I know how important leading-edge technology can bring – can be if one can bring universities in; graduate students can benefit, but also our private sectors in terms of companies can benefit. And I know that there have been conferences here in which U.S. companies have participated and that there's great excitement about the R&D and technological potential that this agreement will bring, deepening the technological cooperation between the United States and the Czech Republic.

This agreement also, of course, is simply an affirmation of our alliance and of the good work that we do together. Let me join you in thanking the members of the Czech negotiating team, who I can assure you negotiated very well and very toughly on the part of the Czech Republic. I'd like to thank also our chief negotiator, Acting Under Secretary John Rood, and Dan Fried, the Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, and to note also that Lieutenant General Trey Obering is here from the Missile Defense Agency, the head of that agency. We've had very good work between all of our agencies. And Secretary Gates and I, who have worked very hard to see this come into being, know that for the United States, this is a great moment. President Bush, with whom I spoke just before leaving Washington, was delighted that we were signing this agreement today. And so as I said to the Prime Minister, this is just another step in the tremendous transatlantic relationship that the United States and the Czech Republic enjoy.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

**MODERATOR:** (Via interpreter.) Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, a toast will follow and then the press conference.

(Pause.)

**MODERATOR:** (Via interpreter.) Ladies and gentlemen, please be seated. Good afternoon once again. Let me thank – to the Minister. Let me open the press conference. Since you have already had the opportunity to hear the speeches, we will then go directly to questions by the press.

**QUESTION:** (Via interpreter.) Good afternoon. Madame Secretary, can I ask you what specific opportunities does this signed agreement bring for the Czech Republic to control or monitor the developments on the radar site? And then the Minister, do you --

**SECRETARY RICE:** For the Czech Republic?

**QUESTION:** (Via interpreter.) Yes, ma'am.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, of course, it is now going to be on Czech territory and it will be the closest possible cooperation in terms of this. We consider this now to be a joint project, in effect. And so the Czech Republic and the United States, the militaries, the technical people will work extremely closely together in daily and, I would say, hourly close proximity with these radars.

It also – I want to emphasize what I said before. We expect the R&D cooperation as this goes forward to be exceedingly close as well. So this is our – the Czech Republic is our partner in this. This is not just for the Czech Republic or for the United States, but also for NATO. So I expect the closest possible cooperation.

**FOREIGN MINISTER SCHWARZENBERG:** (Via interpreter.) From my viewpoint, the last words would be uttered when this agreement is ratified by the Czech parliament. Since that moment, the – since this moment, the parliament is the king of the game. Then what the technical solutions, the construction, how it would look like, I am not in position to say this. This is certainly – this is sort of up to the U.S. party as well.

**MODERATOR:** (Via interpreter.) Now a question for U.S. Press.

**QUESTION:** Arshad Mohammed of Reuters. Secretary Rice, this morning, or earlier today, you spoke not just about the ballistic missile threat potentially from Iran, but also the potential nuclear threat.

Two questions: One, what do you make of the Iranian response to the P-5+1 last week? Does it open up the possibility for some subset of the P-5+1 to talk to the Iranians even if they have not suspended enrichment? And also, what do you make of the welter of conflicting statements that one has heard from the Iranians in recent days, some conciliatory, some rather bellicose, some suggesting renewed threats toward Israel and other U.S. interests? What do you make of the public and the private? Thank you.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, Arshad, on the second point, far be it for me to try to read internal Iranian politics. I don't know. There do appear to be many different voices. I hope that the voices that are cautioning reason, that are responding more positively to what is a very generous offer from the P-5+1 – and by the way, that offer, I want to underscore, was made not just by those who have been negotiating with the Iranians, because the other members of the P-5+1, of course, have diplomatic relations, but I want to underscore that I signed that letter because the United States fully stands behind the package that has been offered.

It is a generous package in many ways. It, I think, shows that those in Iran who have been telling the Iranian people that the United States and its allies are trying to prevent Iran from having a civil nuclear program have not been telling the truth. It is quite clear that Iran can have a civil nuclear program. The Russians have a reactor there which we have been supporting. It is just a matter of enrichment and reprocessing in the fuel cycle. So I hope that this proposal, since it has been extensively published in Iran, will demonstrate that the Iranian regime needs to tell its people the truth. This is a generous offer. It even has civil nuclear cooperation as a part of it.

I don't know about the prospects for negotiation. We have certainly continued to say that the United States stands ready to reverse 20 – now – 9 years of American policy, and to sit at the table with the Iranians and with our allies, if Iran will suspend its enrichment and reprocessing. There are ways that Iran might wish to talk with Javier Solana or others in order to get that suspension to take place. But I did speak with Javier Solana yesterday. He's in contact with his Iranian counterpart. And it's our great hope that the Iranians will avail themselves of this opportunity to get on the right side of the international community.

**MODERATOR:** (Via interpreter.) Next question (inaudible).

**QUESTION:** Madame Secretary, what hopes to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed shield, given the fact that the interceptors designed for Europe still not tested?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, you rightly note that there are many developmental elements to missile defense that are still being – that are still being developed. Missile defense – we do have some initial capability, for instance, in the United States that we've been able to use in circumstances that were threatening to us.

But there is still a long way to go in developing these systems. That is one of the points that we have made even to our Russian colleagues, which is that this is a system that is still being developed. But that very development process, in and of itself, as well as the testing, and we've had several successful tests – but that the success – that the testing and the R&D will provide an opportunity for the Czech Republic and the United States, as well as others, to jointly develop those capabilities.

I will say that the radar itself has some benefit as a radar, because the ability to – of naval forces, U.S. Naval Forces, to help protect, for instance, the Czech Republic, or this territory with aegis is certainly made possible through this radar. So in and of itself, the radar has some value.

I look very much forward – a little later on, I'm going to have a chance to talk with members of parliament. It is only fitting that, of course, ratification has to take place. This is a democracy. It is a democracy that has a functioning and essential parliamentary procedure, and so I'm going to be happy to have an opportunity to talk about questions like this and questions like R&D with the parliamentarians as well later on.

**MODERATOR:** (Via interpreter.) Next question, *Washington Times*.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. Nicholas Kralev with *Washington Times*. Madame Secretary, the Polish Foreign Minister came to see you yesterday, but he also came to see and talk to the two presidential candidates. Given all the questions around this system from a technological point of view, and given the fact that you have very little time left in office, wouldn't you agree that the next president will have to make the decision about this system? And would you – do you intend to talk to Senators Obama and McCain to make sure that they do support this project?

Thanks.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, of course, the presidential candidates will make up their minds on – on how they wish to address this issue, but – and I'm not going to get involved in the politics here.

But here is the case for missile defense – and by the way, it is already a system that is paying some benefit. I think it is known that at the time of the North Korean missile test, we were able to use certain initial operating capabilities to protect ourselves, had the North Korean missile test resulted in a threat to the United States. It's hard for me to believe that that's not a capability that an American president is going to want. We were able to use some of the capabilities when we were all threatened by a satellite that was tumbling to earth with hazardous materials. It is hard for me to believe that that is a capability an American president is not going to want to have.

But most importantly, we face with the Iranians – and so do our allies and friends, a growing missile threat that is getting ever longer and ever deeper, and where the Iranian appetite for nuclear technology as – to this point is still unchecked. And it's hard for me to believe that an American president is not going to want to have the capability to defend our territory, the territory of our allies, whether they are in Europe or whether they are in the Middle East, against that kind of missile threat.

We are not in 1983, when we all talked about a missile defense shield that would somehow shield the United States from a Soviet first strike. And there were questions at that time about whether or not it contributed to have – to strategic stability to have a first strike capability and then a defensive response. I was an arms controller of the first order. I knew how many warheads danced on the head of an SS-18 as well as anybody. I understood that debate. That is not today's world.

And so to the degree that this debate about missile defense and U.S. capabilities and the ability to defend our allies, and the kind of agreement that we've just signed with the Czech Republic and would hope to sign soon with Poland; to the degree that the Bucharest Summit Declaration clearly states the importance and the need of missile defense; I certainly believe that American president, whoever that is going to be, is going to be listening.

**MODERATOR:** (Via interpreter.) Ladies and gentlemen, your last question, (inaudible).

**QUESTION:** (Via interpreter.) Good afternoon, (inaudible). Mr. Minister, I would like to (inaudible) the ratification process. Are you optimistic as to the approval of the agreement by the parliament? And do you have a recipe how to convince Czech members of the parliament to approve the agreement?

**FOREIGN MINISTER SCHWARZENBERG:** (Via interpreter.) First, I believe in the responsibility of the parliamentarians of Czech Republic. I know there are enough people who perceive this agreement for what it is, as another step of improving the security of the Czech Republic, as I mentioned before, together with the Lisbon treaty. It's a part of a single vote, single span which constitutes the security policy of Czech Republic. We lean both on Europe and on transatlantic cooperation. And thus, I believe there will be enough members of the parliament who are aware of the responsibility and vote for the agreement.

As to the recipe, I do not believe in them. Every man or woman has to be treated differently. This will depend on whom I am going to meet and how the process will evolve. But there is no cookbook I could (inaudible) and choose a recipe – specific recipe.

**MODERATOR:** (Via interpreter.) Ladies and gentlemen, the press conference time is over. Thank you for your attention and please do not leave your places before the Secretary and the Minister leave.

**2008/T20-3**

Released on July 8, 2008

 [BACK TO TOP](#)

Published by the U.S. Department of State Website at <http://www.state.gov> maintained by the Bureau of Public Affairs.