

## **Going Ballistic: Causes and Consequences of a US deployment of the Missile Defense Component in Europe**

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Since the US Missile Defense Agency (MDA) announced at the beginning of the year that it wanted to begin talks with the Czech and Polish governments over the possible deployment of radar and interceptors for their missile defense system, the old continent and particularly Russia seems to have gone ballistic. The Russian militaries, and foremost the Chief of Staff, had declared that any such deployment would trigger a possible Russian withdrawal from the 1987's INF treaty<sup>1</sup>. While apparently trying to steam down its military, the Kremlin has repeatedly stated its doubt that such a system was aimed at a possible Iranian missile threat, that in fact such a threat did not exist and that a European extension of the US missile defense was indeed targeting Russia's nuclear assets while it had no defensive value for Europe.

Most of the European capitals took notice of the growing Moscow-Washington tensions over the possible deployment, especially after President Putin's speech at the February Munich's Conference on Security Policy. The reaction was of surprise and concern especially in Berlin where the Foreign minister asked for consultations between the US and Russia to be held. In the two foremost interested countries, the Czech Republic and Poland, polls showed the absence of popular support for such a deployment even though both governments demonstrated their interest in the project<sup>2</sup>.

But a lot of questions need to be asked to try to understand why the US have undertaken such a project and what consequences it will have on

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Sieff, « Russian threat to Withdraw from INF not Bluff », UPI, February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> « Le bouclier antimissile américain : un débat délicat en Pologne », *Les Echos*, 7 mars 2007.











