

Missiles no threat to Russia, Bush says

by UPI

KIEV, Ukraine -- A planned missile defense system in Europe isn't a threat to Russia, U.S. President George Bush said Tuesday during a visit to Kiev, Ukraine. "The missile defense system is not aimed at Russia," Bush said during a news conference after talks with Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko. "It's viewed as an anti-Russian device. Well, it's not." Russia opposes U.S. plans to install interceptor missiles and radar in Poland and the Czech Republic, respectively, CNN reported. Bush's comments come two days before a NATO summit in Bucharest, Romania. Bush also reiterated his support for the Ukraine and Georgia to initiate the process that would prepare the two countries for NATO membership, the Ukraine Journal reported. Russian officials oppose an eastward expansion of NATO, saying it threatens security. Although Bush supports Yushchenko's aspirations to join NATO, the Ukrainian public is divided over the issue, The Washington Post reported. Western governments, concerned about Russia's reaction, also are divided about Ukraine and Georgia receiving the membership action plan, a years-long blueprint. During the NATO summit, which begins Wednesday, the alliance is poised to offer membership to Croatia, Albania and Macedonia.

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