

U.S.-Czech missile shield talks

by UPI

PRAGUE, Czech Republic -- The United States might delay putting in operation a planned missile shield system in Eastern Europe until a threat from Iran is confirmed. U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates told reporters in Prague Tuesday Washington informed Russian leaders earlier this month the United States may consider tying the activation of the anti-missile system in the Czech Republic and Poland with proof of a possible Iranian threat. Gates is visiting Prague for talks with Czech officials on positioning the planned missile shield system. The U.S. idea is to complete negotiations, build the radar and missile sites in the Czech Republic and Poland and perhaps delay activating them until there is concrete proof of the threat from Iran, Gates told a news conference. Washington plans to install a radar facility in the Czech Republic and 10 interceptor missiles in Poland to counter the potential threat from Iranian long-range ballistic missiles. The idea of an anti-missile system has drawn strong criticism from Moscow despite Washington's assurance the system is not aimed at Russia. Russia insists Washington should build an anti-missile system closer to Iran and suggested facilities in Azerbaijan and southern Russia.

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