

Bush considers Russian missile plan offer

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- U.S. President George Bush Tuesday indicated he will take Russia up on its offer to site a European missile shield in Azerbaijan and southern Russia. In a speech at the National Defense University in Washington, Bush ran through a litany of administration moves to strengthen defenses, especially in terms of protecting the United States from a missile attack. Bush said the threat was posed by Iran and pushed for setting up a missile shield in Europe. "Today we have no way to defend Europe against the emerging Iranian threat, and so we must deploy a missile defense system there that can," Bush said. "The system will be limited in scope. It is not designed to defend against an attack from Russia. The missile defenses we will deploy are intended to deter countries who would threaten us with ballistic missile attacks. We do not consider Russia such a country. The Cold War is over." "For his part, (Russian) President (Vladimir) Putin has offered the use of radar facilities in Azerbaijan and southern Russia. We believe that these sites could be included as part of a wider threat-monitoring system that could lead to an unprecedented level of strategic cooperation between our two countries." Russia has expressed reservations about the missile shield proposal and earlier Tuesday, Defense Secretary Robert Gates in Prague indicated the United States is considering a delay in construction of such a system.

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