



## Press Conference with Lieutenant General Henry Obering Regarding U.S. Missile Defense

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**GENERAL OBERING:** I am very pleased to be back in Germany . You can tell from my last name it is where my ancestors came from. I am very much looking forward to discussions with the German government today and further consultations with other allies in the next several weeks. What I like to do is just provide some context and give some background and maybe that will open up and spurn some questions on your part and then we can go from there.



In the past several years the United States has been fielding a missile defense system that has been geared toward protecting the United States from North Korea . This certainly came to light into a tremendous emphasis in the United States last summer, when the North Koreans of course stacked the several missiles that they did and launched them on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July and the 5<sup>th</sup> of July. And we fortunately -- because of the investments we had made over the past two and a half years -- we were able to have a system that we could turn on to protect the United States had those missiles threatened the United States territory. One in particular we know was a long range missile that they were tempting to fire. And they weren't telling us what was on the top of that missile. Our strategy has been to provide the protection to the United States against North Korea and then to turn our attention to the threat that we see to emerging from Iran . That is why we are finishing up work this year on a radar system in the United Kingdom in Fylingdales and also beginning to work on a radar system in Greenland in Tula ; and we have been working with the government of Denmark on that. That protection will provide coverage of the United States .

Unfortunately it does not provide coverage for our European allies, our friends or deployed forces in this region. To that end we have begun -- gotten approval to begin -- discussions to place missile defense assets in the European region that would protect our allies and friends as well as the United States from what we see to be a very serious threat emerging from Iran . A very aggressive missile developed program there and a very aggressive missile test program in Iran .

What we would be proposing would be a very small interceptor site up to ten interceptors in Poland, a radar in the Czech Republic that would provide tracking for those interceptors, and that we would hopefully begin this work in the next year and have it completed --it is going to take us about four to five years to do this -- have it completed by 2011, 2012 timeframe. Because we believe certainly by then we are very much concerned about the ability of the Iranians to reach almost all of Europe by that point, and certainly they may also be able to reach the United States .

So what we are proposing is clearly geared toward that threat, the Iranian threat. This has caused what I consider to be consternation and misinformation on the part of some nations; and so one of the reasons that we want to try to visit the various governments -- make sure that all of this information is clear and is transparent as we possibly can be about it. And I would like to address just a couple of those.

First of all I want to make it very clear. These are defensive missiles, defensive interceptors. We have perfected a technology in the United States called "hit to kill" . It is where we actually basically drive what we call a kill vehicle into an enemy warhead. There are no explosives, there is no warhead on these interceptors. It basically is a collection of seekers and the associated rockets to be able to maneuver those seekers to intercept the enemy missile. So we're not proposing any type of offensive capabilities, these are only defense. Consequently the only time that one of these interceptors will be launched is if there had already been a launch of a warhead of an offensive missile by Iran , and so that's very important to

keep in mind.

Also, we have been asked about -- you're just doing this to protect the United States and it doesn't really protect Europe, and that's just not true. The coverage that these interceptors will provide would cover those nations that would be vulnerable to the long range threat that we see emerging from Iran. Nations that would not be covered farther to the East are so close to the Iranian threat that they would not be using long range missiles against those nations anyway. So this is not meant to in any way separate countries in terms of coverage. It covers those countries that would need to be covered against the long range threat.

There's also been a concern about debris, and I'd like to address that. As I said we've done extensive testing on all ranges of interceptors from the short to the long ranges interceptors. We fully understand what kind of debris is remaining from one of these intercepts and it is a tremendous amount of energy released when you have one of these intercepts. It basically pulverizes, if I can use that word, the warheads. We know that the particles are extremely small from the debris and it still has to come back to the atmosphere and most of that gets burned up. Certainly it's in any way shape or form is not a case of where and any missile is launched an interceptor is launched and debris falls just beneath it. What happens is after you intercept, the debris continues in the arcs that the two, the interceptor and the missile, are flying so the debris patterns for the most part do not fall straight down. We have done calculations to see whatever could make it back to the ground, what kind of casualties that we would have there, and even in the most densely populated areas you'd be talking less than one in a thousand chance. That's just a chance of a single casualty. One in two and a half million is more the norm when you get into most of the areas of population.

And also, one of the points I want to emphasize it is not whether you have debris or whether you do not have debris it is whether you have debris or you have a warhead impacting in terms of what you would choose to be able to endure. So we do not believe that debris is a significant issue. And I'd be glad to answer more questions about that.

In addition, there has been a strong Russian reaction to what we proposed. I'd like to clarify our engagement and hopefully clarify some of our future plans. First of all the Russians have announced that it changes the strategic balance between the United States and Russia, and we just outright reject that. Number one, you're talking about ten interceptors that we would place against potentially hundreds of missiles or thousands of warheads that the Russians maintain. This in no way shape or form threatens the Russian missile fleet. The numbers just don't add up. In addition, the reason we selected Poland and the Czech Republic for the potential positioning of these assets is because it was optimum for the Iranian threat. It is not optimum if we were trying to address the Russian missiles. In fact, they are not positioned to where we can even catch the Russian missiles with these interceptors. So again, from a numbers perspective, from a performance perspective, this does not present a threat to the Russian missile fleet.

And the final point in that is, we have nothing to gain by doing so. We had a stable relationship with the Russians for many decades. That's not what changed -- the Russians have not changed, the Americans have not changed. What has changed here has been the very aggressive development in testing of missiles by Iran. That's what has changed and that's what we have to move, we believe, to address that threat and that we need to do that in a fairly timely manner. One last point on that is we want to be as open and as transparent as possible. We have a standing invitation to the Russians to visit missile defense sites in the United States. As I said, we have actually now deployed interceptors in Alaska and in California, and we have invited them to be able to visit those locations; and it would also be acceptable to us if the Russians wanted to visit the European locations. Obviously it would be up to the host nation government for that to occur, but it's certainly okay with us, and we will continue consultations.

I have been to Moscow going back -- I've been to Moscow in November. I personally met with the Minister of Defense and the Chief of the General Staff where there have been discussions with the Russians ongoing about this for over a year and we will continue to do that. We will continue to engage with them to have discussions and talks with them to get experts involved and that we hopefully will begin to allay the fears that the Russians may have about this. Also discussions with allies. I have personally briefed the North Atlantic Council twice. I have briefed the NATO Russia Council twice. We are in consultations with our NATO allies. The purpose of my trip this week has been to continue those discussions on a bilateral basis. We will reengage at the NATO collective level in April to further the discussions here, so it is not as if the United States is trying to do this alone. We are trying to make sure that we are as collaborative and consultative as possible as we go through this. But as I said, we do believe there is an urgency with respect to this threat and we think that we have an obligation to protect the U.S. citizens from this threat and certainly our deployed forces and allies in this region.

Okay, with that I'd be happy to answer any questions.

**QUESTION:** How do you explain the obvious contradiction that on the one side you are telling us -- speaking about a long range threat and then say many experts disagree, they say Iran (inaudible) & What is your opinion? Do you also see the forthcoming development that the US with this position is dividing Europe and NATO or at least irritate Russia?

**GENERAL OBERING:** Okay, first of all, with the long range threat coming from Iran --let me tell you a little anecdote that occurred with North Korea . North Korea was testing short and medium- range missiles back in the 90s. They over flew Japan with a missile in the 90s. And then there were many experts that said that there would not be a capability of a long range missile from North Korea in many years. That was declared in 1998. Then the next month they launched a long range missile that showed multi-staged capability. It surprised the United States , it surprised all the experts around the world. So there is an element of uncertainty with respect to what we can predict and what we can not predict. We see -- and you can turn the television on and take a look at some of the testing the Iranians have done as recently as just this last month and certainly in the testing they did in the fall. Again showing several launches of short range missiles, launches of medium range missiles, and they have a stated intent to develop a space launch capability, which they believe, at least they say, is imminent. If that is true, if they develop a space launch capability, they have demonstrated all of the building blocks that you need for an intercontinental ballistic missile. Multi-stages begin with a control of missiles through stages, and with the ambiguity in their nuclear program it is not a risk that we feel is prudent to take. There is no rationale for leaving populations open to that threat.

And one other point there. The Iranians would not necessarily have to even use these weapons. Just the threat of use of these weapons and the coercion they would try to be able to achieve, is something that we have to be concerned about. So it is not the Russians, the Russians is not the threat we are concerned about, it is the Iranians and it is the proliferation of what we see to be their threat. We saw last summer what happened when there were attacks by Hezbollah on Israel . 4000 rockets what we consider to be very short range rockets or missiles launched to them. The Israelis were not prepared for that. That shows what can be demonstrated from even the short range versions of these missiles being able to shut down entire regions of Northern Israel .

So I think it is a risk we have to weigh in consideration. And experts can agree or disagree as to timing. We know that there has been cooperation between the North Koreans and the Iranians, and that is another reason why it is hard to predict when they may have a certain capability or not. But most experts, at least in the Intel community agree, that they will have something about the early to mid next decade otherwise 2010 -2015 in that timeframe. And like I said before, even if we start this year we will not have the capabilities in place until 2011, 2012. And so I believe it is a risk that we need to try to address.

I would like -- in terms of dividing Europe -- I think what this actually does it can more unite Europe , if we think of this in a right way. Again, if we focus on the Iranians as being the problem what we should be doing is using the proposed capabilities that the U.S. would built along with the Czech Republic and Poland as the long range protection under which NATO provides shorter range protection. And we would be able to integrate those capabilities together. Now if we are able to do that and present and even include the Russians in that activity, what you would do is, you devalue these missiles in the eyes of the threat nations. One of the reasons I believe why you see the proliferation of these missiles around the world -- and that has been considerable over the past many years -- is because they are valuable when you do not have a defense against them. It is a way that they get asymmetrically challenged the United States and allies and friendly countries around the world that have conventional capabilities; they can asymmetrically challenge us. If we present a united front we begin to devalue those missiles and devalue those assets and hopefully dissuade them from investing further in the building and construction of them.

**QUESTION:** How reliable is the system, how accurate is it? And about the debris. Obviously we are talking about encountering nuclear missiles and interceptors. How about the nuclear warhead, what will happen if that rocket is intercepted?"

**GENERAL OBERING:** Okay, first of all on the reliability. This is something that is not very well known, I think, certainly worldwide and even to some degree in our country to the extent that it should be. We have had tremendous success in this program in recent years. And it has been because of the investments and the hard work of thousands of Americans and frankly some of our allies working on this. For example, we are building a capability against short range missiles, medium range missiles and long range missiles. So we have the Patriot System to handle the shorter range missiles, we have the Aegis sea-based system to handle the medium range and shorter range, and then we have what we call the ground-based Midcourse System to handle the long-range threats. We also have in development what we call the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense Interceptor, that is a very mobile interceptor that can operate in the very upper reaches of the atmosphere far greater than patriot and just outside of the atmosphere as well.

Now between those programs last summer, we were able to successfully intercept in the low atmosphere with Patriot and the upper atmosphere with the Terminal High Altitude area defense, outside the atmosphere with the Aegis sea-based as well as with the ground based system. With that long range test, we launched a target from Alaska , we flew it down into the South Pacific and we intercepted with an interceptor out of Vandenberg. And that test that was a very threat representative target; we flew across an operational radar in California; we had an operational fire control system that was operated by soldiers, and we had an operational interceptor identical to the ones that we have on the ground in Alaska and California. Achieved that intercept. And so we believe that we have been very successful and that we are proving that this technology is reliable.

In fact, since 2001 we have now had 24 successful "hit to kill" intercepts among those programs. So we are confident that technology works. And it is a technical challenge but we think that we again we have invested almost 100 billion dollars in this effort. So we are beginning to see the rewards of this investment over these past many years. And to talk about, again, debris. Again, I want to make sure everybody understands we are not talking about whether we have debris or whether we don't have debris. We are talking about whether we have debris that comes down or whether we have a warhead that impacts on European or U.S. soil. That is important to keep in mind. Having said that though, what we precisely want to do is, if you have a nuclear warhead inbound you want to intercept that as high as you can, and get it to detonate in the upper reaches well outside the atmosphere and the upper reaches of space.

**QUESTION:** Will it detonate?

**GENERAL OBERING:** We don't know. We don't know that it will or that it won't. There is a likelihood it will but we don't know since we don't know what that construction would be, etc. We know it will probably not be a very high heeled weapon coming from the Iranians if they develop those. So we believe that it is worth building that defense to be able to take that out. It is clearly better to do the intercept than to not do the intercept and let the warhead hit."

**QUESTION:** I wonder whether you can use the missile that you already have or whether you are developing a new system to (inaudible) to protect, for example, Portugal or Spain.

**GENERAL OBERING:** We are using the missiles that we have. There are some modifications that are made to adapt to the European, what we call the battle space -- otherwise how far you have to go. It would cover Spain , and what the other -- Portugal , you said? -- yes, it would cover those regions. I would like to say it would cover all of the nations that would be vulnerable to a longer range attack from Iran ."

**QUESTION:** Two questions. In your consultations over the past year, what were the reactions that you were getting anything like the public reaction that (inaudible) President Putin last month or were they saying something different prior to that? And have you brought up this idea that Russia might participate somehow in this effort, and what is the reaction to that? And I just want to clarify. Would Israel be protected by this system?

**GENERAL OBERING:** Israel would not be protected by this system. First of all, the directional coverage is not conducive to covering Israel , but there other assets that could be used to cover Israel . Of course, Israel has developed their own aero system and they have their patriot missiles as well that they work in combination with each other, so it would not cover them.

With respect to the Russian reaction. When we first started talking about this there was discomfort is the way I describe it and a level of suspicion, but not to the degree that we saw the reaction when we announced that we are going to begin the discussions with the Czechs and the Poles. So again, I think that a lot of this is continuing that engagement with Russia , explaining exactly what we are doing, getting into the technical details. We are scheduling a meeting of technical experts so that we can get to that level of degree that will give them more understanding of the capabilities and limitations. And I am hopeful that that will alleviate some of their concerns. I can't guarantee that but I hope that it will.

And we are open to participation by the Russians; in fact, there are ongoing discussions with the Russians as to how they could participate in missile defense over all and what types of things that we could do together in partnership. Those talks have been stalled to some degree in terms of what I would consider to be some bureaucratic measures that have been taken. On both sides we need to get by that and get on with that discussion. Things like, for example, data sharing, where there are radars that could be useful to, you know, if we could share data from the Czech Republic or radars that the Russians may have. That is one way just on the service to participate. There was a development program that we have with the Russians called Ramos, which was a satellite program that we were co-developing that ran into some cost problems that we had to basically walk away from. But I think this is a time that we can renew that partnership to see what we can do for the future with being able to provide protection."

**QUESTION:** General, do you think the system should be brought into NATO?

**GENERAL OBERING:** I believe that this system would complement NATO very nicely, if you mean should it be brought into NATO in terms of capability, defensive capability. Historically how has NATO defended itself? There are only a handful of programs that NATO has actually developed. The NATO AWACS program, for example. There are several programs that are in the works, like the NATO Air Command and Control System, the NATO air to ground surveillance system, but the majority of the NATO defensive capability is provided by member nations that come together in a cohesive defensive force.

I see this being very much in the same vein, where the US is providing along with the Czech Republic and Poland a

contribution to a missile defense capability for NATO that could protect against a long range and what we call intermediate range missiles. And that NATO has started, by the way, an active layer theater missile defense program that would handle the shorter range missiles. So you can see this as being complimentary of what NATO is doing, and that is the type of discussions that we are having within NATO, within the council, and within our NATO allies, bilateral discussions.

So I am not at all against that and in fact I personally briefed the North Atlantic Council twice. I will continue to do consultations. That is the purpose of this trip; we have others planned to try to gain as much understanding as we can of what our plans are and why we think they can be complimentary to a NATO future and not to try to divide Europe or divide NATO in any way, shape or form.

**QUESTION:** What is the most important item of the consultation? Please talk about the difficulties in regard to Russia ?

**GENERAL OBERING:** The most important items of consultation have been first of all gaining an understanding from our perspective, trying to convey what the capabilities and limitations of the system are; make sure that folks understand that this is a defensive system it is not an offensive system. We talk a little bit of the operation of the system, how it operates, how the mechanics work. We also talk about coverage, we talk about timetables and that type of thing. We also -- this is not a one-way conversation -- we also are there to listen to what our allies have to say, to make recommendations. And we take those to heart, to listen to their recommendations on both, the way we may go about this as well as the key points that they are concerned about; what are their issues, what are their concerns. That is how, for example, the whole discussion of debris came up. And what does that mean and what is the extent of that? There was a discussion at one point that was geared at what the gentlemen asked about the electromagnetic pulse effects and those types of things with intercepts and what does that mean.

And also that is -- to the technical side and also to what I would consider to be the communicated side is -- how can we better explain what we are doing, how can we better interact between our NATO partners and ourselves on this. And then again the difficulties with the Russians, I think, primarily center around the location. They are just very concerned, I think, because of the nearness of Poland, the nearness of the Czech Republic and not quite understand about why those nations were chosen. And, like I said, we are willing to explain to the Russians. I actually showed trajectories from Iran to Europe, from Iran to the United States, why the Czech Republic and Poland would be important, and they have positioned assets there. It is not aimed against them. As I said earlier, it is actually too close and not in a very good position at all for any kind of direction against Russia. And nor do we want to and nor do we need to. There have been some suspicions that, 'oh, well, this is just a ploy to get offensive missiles instead of defensive,' and clearly that is not the case.

There are significant differences between offensive missiles and defense missiles. These defensive missiles, because these interceptors operate on this "hit to kill" kinetic energy principle, they are very light weight -- the kill vehicle, by the way, for these interceptors only weighs 150 pounds, so about 70 kilograms. It is not very big. So this is not a massive nuclear warhead that would go on to an ICBM and, plus, there would have to be significant modifications made if we tried to do that. That would be easily observable and recognizable. So there is not a concern we believe there.

Another difficult point was, 'the U.S. is just attempting to take the first step and then they are going actually deploy many, many more.' And that is just not true. As much as I would like to have more money in our budget, we don't. You can look out through 2013 in our budget and see that [we don't] have any more money for other than the ten interceptors that we propose, which we think would be adequate to handle the Iranian threat in the timeframe that we are talking about. We don't have any plans to further expand or to add into the system with any type of dramatic land-based components.

**QUESTION:** General, a question about the debris. Is there a chance that debris might fall on Germany and so how high is it? And the second question. Have you been in talks about debris with the German government already?

**GENERAL OBERING:** Part of my discussions today will be concerning that topic with the German government. Where debris falls is all contingent upon where the missile is being aimed. It turns out that a lot of the debris that would occur from intercepts from Iran that target in the United States do not come in Germany at all or into this region or nor Russia; a lot of the debris patterns will be out over the ocean. But there are targets in Europe of which you could have debris patterns that could fall in Europe; but there again it all depends on the trajectory, it depends on what the target is. There is a different debris pattern for London, if they were a target, than there would be for Berlin or whatever. So it all depends. But again, I want to emphasize debris is not the issue. Debris is not the issue. You are not talking about whether you choose to be under debris or under a potential warhead impact. So there that is a very easy decision."

**QUESTION:** You have been to Georgia two weeks ago, I think. Would it make sense to station radar or interceptors in Georgia or the Caucasus? And would it make sense place the installations that are planned for Poland and the Czech Republic in the East of Germany?

**GENERAL OBERING:** First of all, no, I had not been to Georgia. No I have not. I have been to Georgia in the United

States , but (laughter). No, it does not make sense to place interceptors there. That is far too close. That is something else that we were asked: □ Why don't you move your interceptors much farther forward and be closer to the threat? The physics don't work that way. We do not have the ability to intercept a missile in what we call the "boost phase." And that is what you would be attempting to do is to intercept the missile in the boost phase if you move that close to these threat missiles.

We do not have any plans for any type of radar site in Georgia . What I have said in the past is there are three parts to this capability: there is the interceptors in Poland , there is the radar in the Czech Republic and then we have a very small rapidly transportable radar system that can be moved and set up in a matter of days and hours. It's a very small footprint. That would augment the system that is something we would put closer to Iran , but that is not something we are worried about right now. That is something that we have several years to work through were we can work out pre-positioning; so if we had to move it there we could. But we haven't asked any country to host that; it is something that is several years away anyway."

Germany could have been considered as an option. Again, however, from the standpoint of the maximum coverage of trajectories from Iran to U.S. and from Iran into Europe in terms of this coverage, Poland and the Czech Republic came out in the best regards there. Also the battle space, what we call the distance back from Iran .

**QUESTION:** What do you say to suggestions that in the end you can not prevent the proliferation and you cannot prevent other nations to develop new technology; and therefore the issue has to be tackled from a different angle and that is that you have to go back to the deterrence strategy and (inaudible) that we have been told basically and being from the Cold War. What happened to the deterrence strategy?

**GENERAL OBERING:** First of all the deterrence strategy is still very alive and very well. And I believe that that has a place in this as well. We often times tend to want to draw what I consider to be false selections. To say you either do this or you do that -- for example, it has been described that missile defense is an enemy of arms control. I could not disagree with that more. I view this as a spectrum. The first thing we have to do is try to prevent the spread of these weapons through talks, discussions, through proliferation security initiatives, through arms control treaties, where that is possible. That is important to do and I think we should continue that activity. But if that fails, as you say, if that fails to stop the proliferation, if it fails to stop the use of these weapons, then you have to come to what is your last option. I think deterrence is important. And I think that there are nations and organizations that can be deterred. But then what happens when you run into an organization or nation that can not be? What if they are not taking the same rational way that you are? Then what do you do? So I see this as a continuum.

We have arms control measures, we have non proliferation initiatives, we have talks and discussions, we have deterrence; but then when all of it fails and you have a warhead that is inbound your population, are you willing to loose tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of lives and in retaliation take out hundreds of thousands and millions of lives because you did not have a way to stop that? So I think this provides an extra blanket of security, it provides an extra option with respect to that protection that I believe is morally bound for governments to provide to their citizens.

**QUESTION:** General, one of the criticisms that is being made here in Germany is that this project was initially conceived and discussed as pretty much a bilateral project or one that involved only a small group of countries. And only very late in the game, countries like Germany and others in the European Union, being included in the discussion. Wouldn't it have been better to come to NATO at the beginning to discuss this so you don't make yourselves vulnerable to the allegation that NATO is being sidelined and so it becomes unnecessary complicated, because of that?

**GENERAL OBERING:** We actually have been in a discussion with NATO for quite a while. One of the briefings that I gave to the NATO council was over a year ago. So I would not describe that as coming late to the game. As you all know, by the way, within the United States government, there are discussions that have to take place on whether or not there is approval to move forward on these types of initiatives, do we have funding to be able to build the interceptors and to be able to provide the construction and that type of thing for these sites. And that takes a while to be worked out. So before last year, for example, it would have been premature, because we got permission just in this last year's budget to be able to have the money to begin looking at analysis and potential locations and that type of thing. So there is not an attempt of the United States to move unilaterally and to bypass things here. What there is an attempt to do is to -- basically we waited until we felt like we were going to get supported with our Congress and we did get money appropriated this fiscal year for that. Once that became apparent, we began our discussions with NATO in terms of our plans and what we are proposing and then we began the consultations that I talked about."

**QUESTION:** What areas will be protected by the interceptors -- Spain , Portugal . (inaudible) covered? All over Europe ?

**GENERAL OBERING:** Yes. It protects. I do not have a map with me. If you can think about this, the line is almost down about to the Ukraine , it cuts across part of far western Russia and it encompasses down across the south eastern part of

Europe . I say that it covers all of the European nations that need to be covered, because anything on the other side of that line is too close for a long range weapon to be able to be launched against it. So you are talking about inside about 1500 kilometers from Iran . And I have to get the exact coverage for that. It depends on the radar coverage and it depends on the trajectories that we are analyzing.

**QUESTION:** Is there a chance any debris would be radioactive from (inaudible) in the warhead?

**GENERAL OBERING:** It depends on first of all -- well, would there be a chance if it was a nuclear warhead? -- there would be a high chance that you are going to have some type of radioactive debris. But, there again, how much of that makes it back to the ground and gets burned up in the reentry, so to speak, is questionable. But more importantly again, you'd rather have that than you would a nuclear warhead impact in the ground where it operates as designed and causes mass destruction and casualties or a electromagnetic effect in optimum altitude."

**QUESTION:** You have just started negotiations with the Czech Republic and Poland . When do you expect the conclusion of these talks?

**GENERAL OBERING:** We are hoping this year. We are hoping that we can complete these discussions and reach an agreement so we can move ahead this year.

**QUESTION:** Within this year?

**GENERAL OBERING:** Within this year, we would like to have that agreement. 2007.

End

