



U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

Briefing on the Missile Defense Agreement Between the U.S. and Poland

John Rood, Acting Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security

Loy Henderson Auditorium
Washington, DC
August 25, 2008

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(2:10 p.m. EDT)

MR. WOOD: Good afternoon, everyone. As promised, we have with us Acting Under Secretary of State for International Security and Arms Control John Rood, who is here to talk to you about the recent signing of the U.S.-Poland ballistic missile defense agreement. Under Secretary Rood will, you know, make a few opening remarks and then take your questions. So without further ado, let me turn it over to Secretary Rood.

ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD: Very good. Well, thank you for the chance to talk to you about this agreement and field any particular questions you might have. First, I should start off by saying the agreement – there are two pieces here. One is a ballistic missile defense agreement, and the second is a declaration on strategic cooperation between the United States and Poland. I think taken as a whole, these things represent a substantial step in the U.S.- Poland bilateral security relationship. By any measure, they will lead to a much deeper and broader security relationship between our two countries.

I think also it's fair to say this is a very important moment for NATO. This is something – the missile defense agreement that the United States and Poland reached recently is something that NATO had endorsed earlier in the year after the April meeting of heads of state and government at Bucharest. At that summit, which was really a watershed for the alliance, the heads of state and government said not only is there a missile threat which is growing; and, secondly, missile defense was an important part of a response to that; thirdly, an endorsement for the U.S. efforts with Poland and the Czech Republic to begin to establish a capability; and, fourthly, a call to expand this initial area by exploring options for greater NATO-wide – for a NATO-wide architecture for missile defense.

So this capability will be very important to our NATO allies for their security, just as it's very important for the United States and Poland. I think we all remain concerned about the growing missile threat we face. As if on cue, the Iranians just in the last couple of weeks have launched a space launch vehicle, which again demonstrates additional capabilities and underscores the concerns we have about the growing missile threat from countries like Iran. It's not limited to Iran, I should hasten to add, but it's certainly an additional matter.

With respect to the documents, firstly, just by way of background, in the missile defense agreement, this is an agreement that covers things such as how the base missile defense facility would be operated, what the respective roles of the different parties would be and their rights; for instance, requirements that the United States has undertaken where we've committed not to conduct flight tests of the ballistic missile defense interceptors that would be stationed there out of that site. This wasn't something we intended to do, but obviously this will fall on a populated area, so it's an area of concern. Issues of command and control, protection of the environment, how access to the base will be governed, security of the base – things of that nature are covered in the ballistic missile defense agreement.

There is also, as I mentioned – and I should say the ballistic missile defense agreement is a legally binding document between the parties. It's an executive agreement. In the strategic cooperation declaration, that's a political agreement between the countries, and one in which we have indicated our desire to deepen and expand our security relationship, indicated the commitment of the United States and Poland to the security of our NATO allies, talked about the threats we faced, and in a number of different areas of cooperation talked about establishment of a framework and structure by which we can further evolve this cooperation; for example, through the establishment of a high-level strategic cooperation and consultative group.

We also talk about the desire of the United States and Poland to pursue cooperation involving air and missile defense cooperation. The United States is prepared, and we commit in this document to deployment of a U.S. Army Patriot battery in Poland. We'll begin those deployments once, of course, we reach the necessary agreements with the Poles, and that could begin next year. And then we set the goal of establishing a garrison for the U.S. Army Patriot battery in Poland by the year of 2012.

And of course, other things such as information sharing, defense industrial research and technology cooperation, and so on, are discussed in the declaration. It's a pretty broad coverage in terms of the subject matter in that document, and I think it's befitting of the fact that this is going to be a very substantial – substantially changed relationship between the United States and Poland in that you will have a much greater level of defense cooperation.

So that's probably enough as a starter. I know you have questions, so I'll be happy to take any questions you might have at this point.

MR. WOOD: Susan.

QUESTION: How will the – well, will the Patriot battery remain a U.S. Army Patriot battery? That is, it will be in U.S. control? How long will it stay in Poland? And how will these costs of this deployment be handled? Who will pay them?

ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD: The Patriot battery in question will be a U.S. Army Patriot battery, so that it will be owned and operated by the United States Army. We have – as you'll see in the declaration, the Polish Government has agreed to furnish a site as well as infrastructure and necessary facilities for establishment of a Patriot garrison. We'll begin that work, as is stated in the declaration. The shared goal of the two countries is to be able to complete that work to allow for the establishment of that garrison by 2012. So you can expect there are a number of considerations that go into this, and there is some lead time required in order to prepare that kind of infrastructure. And there are some agreements that will need to be worked out between the sides with the details of how this would occur.

QUESTION: Did you say how long it will stay in Poland?

ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD: Once the garrison is established, it will be – that'll be the location for this Patriot battery. Prior to establishment of the garrison, we would look for ways to begin having the battery come to Poland and conduct training there, training of itself, also training in conjunction with other Polish units, air defense units. And so that's where the declaration speaks of beginning the cooperation next year with the aim of establishing by 2012 a garrison to support the U.S. Army Patriot battery.

MR. WOOD: Dave.

QUESTION: You talked about the option of taking this – making this a NATO-wide undertaking. Doesn't that play into the Russians' playbook in that they're saying that this is just only -- the 10 interceptors is only just a foothold and that this thing'll get bigger?

ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD: No. What's envisioned there in the NATO declaration, the summit communiqué by heads of state and government is, first of all, as I say, an endorsement that this initial system consisting of interceptors in Poland, a radar in the Czech Republic. There are also additional radars on UK soil, at a place

called Fylingdales, one in Danish soil, in Greenland, a place called Thule, as well as command and control elements in the United States. So you have a core system with those five NATO countries involved. And what was recognized in the summit communiqué was that that initial system already would provide substantial protection for allies. But there are some allies which will not receive as much coverage from this system. It can defend against all long-range missile launches from Iran. But, for example, shorter range missile launches, no on this system, won't have the capability to protect against.

And so establishing a NATO-wide architecture that can defend against the type of threats that allies face, and those vary by location, is not inconsistent with what we've told to the Russians. As a matter of fact, I see it as entirely consistent because what we have said to the Russians is that this is not a system which is aimed at Russia, but rather is aimed at the growing threats we see from places like the Middle East. And so the degree to which our missile defense efforts reflect the threat we face, I think, shows the fact that our statements should be taken at face value.

QUESTION: The Russian Government has taken to recalling what it said was a pledge given by the U.S. Government shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union and as efforts began to expand NATO. And that pledge, according to the Russians, was that the U.S. military would never put a base in a former Warsaw Pact state. NATO could, but not a unilateral U.S. base. Could you remind us, is that a true statement? It's not in treaties, but was this pledge given? And if so, does this new pact with – signed in Warsaw – not a Warsaw Pact, but this treaty, does – does it equal a rejection of that pledge? And I have a follow-up, too, if I could.

ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD: Sure. What we're undertaking here, firstly, is in no way intended to be aimed at Russia. When you have a missile defense facility, interceptors that would be established in Poland, 10 interceptors, first of all, we don't see as posing any credible threats undermining the Russian strategic offensive force. This is composed of hundreds of ballistic missiles. I think in their last START declarations, the Russians listed about 850 ICBMs, 10 interceptors versus that force with thousands of nuclear warheads. It's not a credible threat and it's not intended to be one.

You can get into technical arguments about how much capability even 10 interceptors would have against 10 Russian ICBMs. We don't think it has any substantial capability. All the modeling that we have showed, an interceptor in Poland cannot intercept an ICBM launch from Russia at the United States; just doesn't have the capability to do it. So we don't regard this as a threat to Russia. Now, with regard to our previous interactions with the Russians at the time -- I think, you're referring to the NATO-Russia Founding Act and things of that nature -- what we've done is not inconsistent with that. It's -- we are not establishing a new criteria. This is consistent with the agreements that we reached previously. So we don't -- I wouldn't accept that criticism.

QUESTION: And a follow-up, if I could. We were all in Moscow last for the 2+2 with Secretaries Rice and Gates and their Russian counterparts. That meeting ended with what the American side said was quite a success: the Russians agreeing to explore this missile defense European-wide architecture. Not trying to be ironic at all, but given the events of recent days, is any cooperation with Russia on a European wide missile defense architecture over and done with?

ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD: I think the effect of the recent events in Georgia on other issues, that still remains to be seen exactly how extensive that effect will be. I think a lot of that depends on our Russian colleagues, to be frank. The Russian Government has made some announcements in recent days on their relations with NATO, as an example, which I think were disappointing in the sense that they move away from cooperation. They move away from a desire to engage with NATO, to engage with their neighbors in Europe on security questions. I think in the area of missile defense, as I've mentioned in this briefing and we've said before, this is not aimed at Russia. Missile defense, we would have liked to have pursued a partnership in that area with Russia. And I think in areas of transparency and confidence-building, it remains to be seen the degree to which our Russian colleagues are willing to continue that cooperation. I would say since we were last in Moscow, some things have changed in the world, to state the obvious. And it remains to be seen exactly what posture the Russian Government will adopt towards questions like missile defense, like a START follow-on treaty, like a whole range of strategic security questions.

And for our part, we're prepared to be constructive. We remain interested in working on this potential area of disagreement with the Russians and trying to find a mutually acceptable way to resolve it. You know, we have to see how that's seen from this Russian side of the equation.

QUESTION: Going back to the garrison issue, would this be a battery that shifted from another part of the world or the creation of a new one? And how many U.S. personnel would the garrison involve and what kind of personnel would they be? And you -- in your description of it, I mean, is it permanent, indefinite, temporary?

ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD: First, in terms of the -- your first question, where would the U.S. army Patriot battery come from, it will come from one of the existing ones. It's still a matter for the Secretary of Defense to determine exactly how he'd like to do that. But for example, the United States maintains a battery in Germany, we have some in other parts of the world. We have some in Texas. There's a whole number of ways that could be done. And I don't believe, that while there's some -- there's some thinking that's been rather evolved on this subject, I don't believe that the Secretary of Defense has yet formalized a decision on that. And we have some time yet.

Your second question was: Would the garrison be established in Poland? And I think there -- it's -- this is not a moveable military installation. This is -- it will be the location for it there in Poland. It will be deployed in that location. The garrison would involve both those that are responsible for -- you'll have a base commander, plus some responsible for maintenance and security and things of that nature. And then you'd also have the personnel who would operate the Patriot battery. Air defenders would be their specialty in the U.S. Army. Specific number hasn't been set yet. But a battery of this size should be a little over a hundred people if you -- for the air defenders, adding in the rest of the complement responsible for security and maintenance and things of that nature would add people. I don't have a specific number for you on that.

MR. WOOD: Please.

QUESTION: The -- as you know, the Democratic congressional leadership is less than enthusiastic about the missile defense program and is talking about holding up funding in the next fiscal year because they say the system is still unproven. How do you intend to work around that obstacle in order to put in practice the agreement that you've just signed with the Poles?

ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD: Well, I think in general, missile defense has enjoyed broad bipartisan support. The reason I say that is in terms of the funding requested by the president for the missile defense program, the vast majority of it has been provided. I think in last year's spending bills, both authorization and appropriations bills adopted by the Congress, which, at the moment, is led by the Democratic Party, we received -- I want to say all but three or four hundred million of the over \$9 billion request that the President put forward. So it's certainly in excess of 95 percent of the funding requested by the President, including authorization and appropriation for the establishment of sites in Poland and the Czech Republic.

Obviously, the Congress has not completed its appropriations and authorization bills for this year. But we do intend to engage with the key leadership there. And some of the concerns that they've expressed in the past, I think we've made some real progress on. For instance, there was a substantial issue for some that NATO clearly be seen to be endorsing this project and that have roots in NATO. And I think we've made a lot of progress there over the last year.

Secondly, concerns earlier in the year, when the marks were prepared and the committees spoke of real concern that the U.S. and Poland wouldn't complete the negotiations or that these agreements would not be signed with the Czech Republic and Poland in time, prior to completion of the Committee's actions on these matters. That, as you can see in the last week, we've completed that.

So I think we're moving closer. Some of the other concerns -- will the system be tested, well, they are the missile defense agency. The Defense Department has added tests. The test will be conducted prior to deployment of the system. We have a -- this is a derivative -- it's over 90 percent common to the system that is presently deployed in Alaska and California. So it's a -- but there will be additional tests of the exact version prior to their deployment in Poland.

QUESTION: One quick follow-up. Does Russian behavior in the Caucasus over the last couple of weeks, will that make it easier to get funding out of Congress? Will that make -- or to turn it around, will that make the democratic leadership more reluctant to hold up this funding for fear of sending the wrong signal to the Russians?

ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD: I don't know. We'll have to engage with them on their specific concerns. But I will say I would be concerned about the signal it would send to our allies should the Congress not back the agreements. And the reason is that I think our allies, particularly in NATO, are concerned about the ability of the United States and – I should take a step back and say, we have a commitment to our allies in NATO, and it's one that we take very seriously. And I would be concerned by any sort of implication that that security commitment from the United States is not something that the United States Congress is going to back. I think that our security relations with them, particularly the newer members of NATO, are very important. And we all have to consider carefully how our actions are going to be read internationally right now.

MR. WOOD: Charley.

QUESTION: Hi, Charley Keyes from CNN. Back to Russian concerns, are there provisions for Russia to be allowed to inspect the system as it is installed?

ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD: The agreement with Poland, like our agreement with the Czech Republic, allow for that possibility. What would need to occur is that we still have not negotiated specific provisions for transparency and confidence-building measures, including personnel access to the facilities with the Russians. We would need to do that. Both of these agreements allow for that. There are legal provisions that allow for visits by third parties, from whatever country they may come from, including Russia.

The issue would have to be, the Polish and Czech Governments, of course, need to approve those visits. It is their sovereign territory. These bases exist in Poland and the Czech Republic, and therefore, they would need to be a party to any arrangement we reach. From our perspective, that doesn't pose any difficulty. Obviously, it's their country. And the same kind of – by the way, we ourselves, we Americans as guests in their country as well, should these governments ask at a later date for the United States forces to leave, we would – we would certainly accommodate that request.

And so for the Russian Government in terms of whatever we might work out by way of transparency and confidence-building measures, including personnel access, I think these agreements provide a legal framework in which that could occur.

QUESTION: But are you and the United States going to push for that?

ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD: We're – we have had a lot of discussions with the Russians. The premise of your question could be read that we haven't been pushing. We've been working very hard on those kinds of arrangements. Myself personally have spent – I have spent dozens and dozens of hours discussing this with my Russian counterparts in the Foreign Ministry and as well as with representatives from their general staff and Ministry of Defense.

So I think we have been pursuing some ideas. We have made some progress on those in our discussions with our Russian colleagues, but nonetheless, we don't yet have agreement on what those would consist of.

MR. WOOD: Please, sir.

QUESTION: Following the Russian-Georgian hostilities and the statements that have come out of Russia in relation to NATO and the WTO, are you concerned that Russia would renege on some of the arms reduction treaties? Or has there been any indications from Moscow on this?

ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD: I think we don't have any indications that the Russians plan to move away from agreements like the START Treaty or the Moscow Treaty or the INF agreement. I think, obviously, were the Russians to do that, that would – that would be crossing a new – a new threshold that we've not seen them contemplate to date. And I think that would have obvious implications not only for the United States relationship, but for relations with a lot of other countries.

But instead, I do think the Russians, they – prior to the recent conflict in Georgia, the Russians expressed strong interest in a new treaty as a follow-on to the START agreement. We in the United States are interested in pursuing that. We remain interested in negotiating such an agreement with Russia. I don't think that has changed. And also, I would hasten to add what we have said is that we're not going to conduct business as usual with Russia.

However, conversations on issues of security and strategic security, I would point out, occurred even in the toughest times of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. Russia is not the Soviet Union. But nonetheless, I think we would still want to have a dialogue, have an ongoing conversation with the Russian Government about strategic security issues. And in – as I say, in that area, there has not been – I've not seen any indications of the Russian Government moving away from its treaty-based commitments.

QUESTION: But current rhetoric now – I mean, current rhetoric reflects an unprecedented move by both sides in terms of post-Cold War rhetoric, right?

ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD: Well, relations have been better and I hope they get to be better than they are right now. But that being said, I think there's – we should continue to work on the areas where we can with the Russian Government to address what are some very serious subjects in the security realm. And that's not merely limited to the ones you mentioned with regard to arms control treaties on nuclear weaponry.

I'd say we have important areas of cooperation: things like combating nuclear terrorism, dealing with the threats from proliferation, dealing with the challenge posed by Iran's nuclear program and other steps. We have – the Six-Party Talks in North Korea in which Russia has been a partner. We have a number of things which are important where Russia's interests and U.S. interests, I would argue, are – are the same or very similar.

QUESTION: You said a minute ago that you had worked very hard with the Russians to try to get some transparency measures agreed. But you haven't got those yet, and I wondered when you will see them again now to talk about this. Has there been any suggestion, since you've signed this agreement, that they will get together with you to talk about that again?

And I do have one other question, which is, I'm wondering what you intend not to do with the nuclear 123 Agreement. Will the Bush Administration withdraw that agreement?

ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD: I think with regard to the first part of your question and getting together with the Russians and so on, I haven't seen them indicate a lack of willingness to get together. And so I don't – I mean, I think it would be too early to conclude that the Russians are disinterested in trying to explore transparency and confidence-building measures to assuage their concerns about deployment of missile defenses in Poland and the Czech Republic.

For our part, we remain open to exploring those ideas with the Russians. And I think you'll see us continue to show a willingness to – to engage in a dialogue in those areas. I would say, though, in this area, some of the statements from Russian officials such as threatening to target Poland with nuclear weapons and things of that nature have certainly made this a much more difficult issue to deal with.

As I mentioned to our colleague here, the host governments retain the sovereignty and the legal right to decide who visits their territory. Threatening to target them with nuclear weapons is not something that's generally viewed positively to say the least. I say that tongue-in-cheek. This is something that we have expressed our deep disappointment about and indeed, you know, Secretary Rice, I think has been very clear in saying how strongly we disapprove of that kind of rhetoric from the Russians.

And that being said, it just – it makes the challenge, I think, a lot more difficult. But certainly, we're still open to trying to explore those conversations with our Russian colleagues. We're hopeful we can reach an accommodation. But that – we'll see what can be done over the next coming weeks.

On the 123 Agreement, that's something that obviously, we're going to have to evaluate given the current situation. I don't have any announcements for you on that one way or the other.

QUESTION: Could I just ask a quick follow-up to the first question when you said that obviously, the host government would have to approve, you know, any visits by observers? And your agreement that you've got with the Poles is a framework allowing for you to negotiate this with the Russians.

But aren't you going to, whatever – if you do ever agree anything with the Russians on this, aren't you going to have to take whatever it is back to the Poles and Czechs and say, is this all right?

ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD: If it –with respect to the activities of Russian personnel in Poland and the Russian personnel in the Czech Republic, ultimately, the government in Poland and the government in the Czech Republic will have to concur, agree with whatever that arrangement is. And by the way, you know, as -- the fact we've negotiated these agreements, the governments in the Czech Republic and the governments in Poland had to ultimately agree to whatever activities the American personnel will undertake in those countries. This is not a different principle that would be applied to the Russians.

QUESTION: But what if it's cameras? What if it's not personnel?

ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD: Well, I think whatever arrangement we do in those countries, the host governments are going to have to know about it and the host governments are going to have to agree to it.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR. WOOD: Over here, please.

QUESTION: Thank you. A quick follow-up on the Russians' rhetoric to this deal. My memory says that the Russian Foreign Ministry issued a relatively harsh statement right after the deal was signed in which they said they might consider to invoke some military sort of options to counter this deal. Was that what you envisaged before it was published?

ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD: I think the Russian Government understands the limited capabilities of this system. We have had unprecedented discussions that have explained the technical capabilities of the system. I think on the face of it, they understand 10 interceptors in Poland would have no impact on the Russian strategic offensive forces. They know the capability system and they know it doesn't pose a threat to Russia.

Their rhetoric is disappointing and I think it – you know, it's just born of frustration on their part. But it is not – I don't regard it as reflective. Again, Russia knows the system the United States is not – is deploying is not a threat to Russia. And so this kind of rhetoric I really think is counterproductive, though, for them. Because you've seen the reaction throughout Europe. You've seen the reaction internationally. And I don't think – as I said, that's why I said I don't believe it's productive. I think, rather, it's counterproductive, this kind of rhetoric from the Russian Government.

QUESTION: Was that – was that what you expected before it was published? Thank you.

ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD: Well, Russia has made strong statements in the past, and so it's regrettable that there are additional strong statements that in our eyes are not – don't have merit. And so in that sense, these statements don't go that much beyond previous ones. But, you know, we're hoping for something that was, you know, less belligerent.

QUESTION: So they didn't inform you of, you know, publishing that kind of statement, caustic statement prior to the deal?

ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD: No.

MR. WOOD: Last question over here.

QUESTION: A follow-up on 12 – your answer to the 123 question. You said it's something we're going to have to evaluate. Does the Administration want to go forward with this deal? Does it – and want – does it want Congress to approve this deal? Or are you saying to Congress, in effect, put it on hold and we'll wait and see Russian behavior?

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

QUESTION: My question is about the Administration's attitude, if you could clarify that. Do you want Congress to go forward with this deal and approve it or not?

ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD: As I mentioned in the earlier question, I'm not seeking to make any announcements with respect to the 123 Agreement right now at this briefing. I think it's something we're looking at. But at this point, I'm not making any calls on anyone to do anything in particular; rather, quite the opposite, which is just saying I'm not seeking to comment substantively on the 123 Agreement, other than to say it's something we're looking at.

QUESTION: So are you comfortable with Congress, in effect, doing nothing about it right now and wait for events to play out?

ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD: I don't think I have anything to add to my earlier answer.

MR. WOOD: Thank you all very much.

ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD: Okay, thank you.

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Released on August 25, 2008

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