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Congressional Appropriators Should Not Undercut U.S. Negotiators on Missile Defense in Europe

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The United States has entered into negotiations with Russia regarding the placement of missile defense systems in Europe. While the U.S. is working with the governments of the Czech Republic and Poland to place missile defense radar and interceptors in those countries, Russia has proposed an alternative that includes the use of one of its radar in Azerbaijan and U.S. deployment of sea-based defenses.¹ Negotiations with Russia on missile defense will be tough, and Russia may seek to drive a wedge between the U.S. and its European allies. Unfortunately, the House of Representative recently approved a Defense Appropriations Bill that reduces funding for the missile defense installations in the Czech Republic and Poland.² If not reversed by the Senate, this move will undercut U.S. negotiators and encourage Russian intransigence.

Undermining Diplomacy. Russian negotiators participated in two days of talks with an interagency team representing the U.S. at the State Department in late July.³ According to a State Department spokesman, the discussions focused on the nature of the ballistic missile threat and possible areas of U.S.–Russian cooperation in missile defense, and the exchange represented an initial stage in these negotiations.⁴ The next round of the negotiations is tentatively scheduled for later this month in Moscow.

While the motivations behind Russia's objections to the placement of the missile defense radar and interceptors in the Czech Republic and Poland are uncertain, the Bush Administration is wise to engage in these negotiations.⁵ Logically, the U.S. and Russia both face risks to their respective national security posed by the proliferation of ballis-

tic missile delivery systems. Further, strategic stability is best supported in this kind of proliferated environment by the fielding of a combination of offensive and defensive strategic forces.⁶ This includes the fielding of inherently non-threatening defensive forces in cooperation with other states.

The action by the House of Representatives to reduce the Bush Administration's \$310 million request for the European missile defense site by \$139 million only serves to undermine this diplomacy with Russia, as well as diplomacy with the Czech Republic and Poland regarding the placement of the missile defense sites.⁷ This is because the reduction cannot but encourage Russian intransigence. This is particularly the case if Russia's opposition to installations in the Czech Republic and Poland is motivated by an attempt to drive a wedge between the U.S. and its two NATO partners.

Given that strong bipartisan majorities approved the expansion of NATO to include the Czech Republic and Poland in the 1990s, it is unclear why Congress would encourage steps by Russia that could undermine the U.S. security relationship with these two allies in a very tangible way. It is also puzzling why the new Democratic Congress, which has criticized the Bush Administration for not using diplomacy energetically enough in order to further U.S.

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national security interests, would seek to undermine the use of diplomacy in this instance.

Three Steps to Further Diplomacy. As Congress continues the appropriations process following its August recess, it needs to be more supportive of the diplomacy behind further missile defense cooperation with U.S. allies in Europe and Russia and should take the following three steps:

1. **Restore funding for the program to place missile defense radar and interceptors in the Czech Republic and Poland.** Because the House of Representatives has already acted on this legislation, this will require countervailing action by the Senate. The Senate should restore the \$139 million to the program in its version of the defense appropriations bill and insist that the House accept its provision in a House–Senate conference.
2. **Require that funding for the sea-based missile defense be used to give the Navy’s Standard Missile the ability to counter longer-range missiles in the midcourse phase of flight.** Among the Russian proposals is one for the deployment of sea-based defenses. The Bush Administration, for its part, should declare that it accepts this portion of the Russian proposal and will move to deploy sea-based missile defenses in the Black Sea. Congress, in turn, should fund the sea-based missile defense program to improve the Standard Missile-3 defense interceptor to intercept long-range missiles in the midcourse phase of flight as well as to intercept missiles of different ranges in the boost phase or ascent phase of flight. This improvement to the Standard Missile-3 is consis-

tent with the recommendations of the Independent Working Group on missile defense.⁸

3. **Fund the missile defense space test bed.** The Bush Administration has proposed a modest \$10 million effort as a first step in creating a space test bed for missile defense. Space-based defenses are the most effective option for defending the U.S. and its friends and allies against missile attack. Support for this program will also give U.S. negotiators greater leverage with their Russian counterparts. The House’s defense appropriations bill, however, withholds the funds for this effort.⁹ The Senate should support funding for the space-based missile defense test bed for both foreign policy and national security reasons.

Conclusion. Congress should welcome Russia’s decision to explore missile defense cooperation with the U.S. It must also provide full support to U.S. negotiators for this diplomacy to result in tangible benefits to the security of the American people and U.S. friends and allies. The Russians have always been tough negotiators, and there is no reason to believe that they will be any different now. To put the U.S. at the strongest possible position at the negotiating table, Congress must provide robust funding for the missile defense program. This includes the defensive capabilities to protect NATO allies in Europe against longer-range missile attacks.

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1. For analysis of the Russian proposal, see Richard Weitz, “A Bush-Putin Discussion on the Radar,” *The Washington Post*, June 20, 2007, at www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/06/19/AR2007061901806.html.
2. *Congressional Record*, August 4, 2007, p. H10014.
3. Department of State, Daily Press Briefing, August 1, 2007, at www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2007/aug/89914.htm.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Baker Spring, “Putin’s Missile Defense Proposal Leaves Key Questions Unanswered,” Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 1493, June 7, 2007, at www.heritage.org/Research/NationalSecurity/wm1493.cfm.
6. Nuclear Stability Working Group, *Nuclear Games: An Exercise Examining Stability and Defenses in a Proliferated World* (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, 2005), at www.heritage.org/upload/NuclearGames.pdf.
7. Committee on Appropriations, U.S. House of Representatives, “Report on Department of Defense Appropriations Bill, 2008,” H.Rept. 110-279, p. 382.
8. Independent Working Group, *Missile Defense, the Space Relationship, & the Twenty-First Century* (Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis: Cambridge, 2006), pp. 20–22.
9. Committee on Appropriations, “Report on Department of Defense Appropriations Bill, 2008,” p. 379.