

U.S. and Romania Sign Missile Deal

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WASHINGTON — U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has signed an agreement to base anti-missile interceptors in Romania under a NATO missile defense plan that has angered Moscow.

The Kremlin has agreed to cooperate on the initiative but disagrees with its implementation, saying it should be a single integrated shield rather than two separate defense systems.

Clinton said Tuesday that the United States expected to deploy the interceptor missiles at a Romanian air force base in about four years.

The deal is part of a larger NATO missile defense plan for Europe that has caused friction with Moscow, which wants a bigger role.

At a NATO summit last November, the allies agreed to develop a new missile defense shield linking systems in the United States and Europe to protect member states against long-range attacks from states such as Iran.

The plans involve the stationing of ship-based interceptors in the Mediterranean beginning this year, followed by land-based interceptors in Romania from 2015 and in Poland from 2018.

The U.S.-Romania deal calls for the United States to construct, maintain and operate a facility at the Deveselu Air Base near Caracal in southern Romania for the land-based SM-3 ballistic missile defense system.

The facility is expected to house between 150 and 200 U.S. military personnel as well as government and civilian contractors.

A State Department factsheet underscored that the SM-3 interceptors are for defensive purposes only and carry no explosive warheads, operating instead by colliding with and destroying incoming missiles.

"The agreement we have just signed will position Romania as a central player in NATO's evolving missile defense capability," Clinton said, noting that the agreement must still be ratified by the U.S. Senate.

"With this missile agreement we are jointly building a safer, more secure future for us all," she said.

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