

Romania Says Anti-Missile Interceptors to Be Deployed

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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BUCHAREST — Romania's defense minister said Tuesday that U.S. plans to deploy anti-missile interceptors in his country were going ahead and that Romania had an "exceptional" partnership with the United States.

U.S. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said last week that plans to place long-range missile interceptors in the final stage of the European system were being abandoned. U.S. officials have stressed that they would deploy shorter-range missiles to Poland and Romania.

Mircea Dusa said in an interview Tuesday that "I have very serious assurances from the American side that the investment in Romania will continue," and interceptors would be deployed in 2015. "Our military cooperation [with the U.S.] since we joined NATO is an exceptional one."

He said the changes in the defense system plans were caused by spending cuts, not political

considerations.

"There is a worldwide problem with the economic crisis, and in 2013 very many states are spending less on their defense budgets," he said.

He says Romanian officials were informed three weeks ago followed by confirmation "two to three hours" before the U.S. announcement.

He refused to comment on Russia's opposition to the anti-missile interceptors beyond saying Romania had "normal" relations with Moscow.

Russia has complained about the U.S. missile system, with the Kremlin saying it believes the plan is aimed against Russia's missile program. Washington adamantly denies that and says the system is meant to stop missiles from Iran and North Korea.

Romania's relations have cooled with Russia since Romania joined NATO in 2004 and also over the former Soviet republic of Moldova, which used to be part of Romania. Some three-quarters of Moldova's 4.1 million citizens are of Romanian descent and tens of thousands have Romanian citizenship, but Russia continues to wield economic and political influence in the former Soviet state.

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