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### World

## U.S. asks Czech Republic to deploy missile defense radar

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WARSAW, January 20 (RIA Novosti) - The United States has officially proposed to deploy a missile defense radar on the territory of the Czech Republic, the Czech prime minister said Saturday.

The U.S. has long been considering the possibility to deploy elements of a national missile defense system in the Czech Republic and Poland citing the need to intercept intercontinental ballistic missiles of so-called "axis of evil" states, namely Iran and North Korea.

"The talks on radar deployment could last for several months," Mirek Topolanek told the local media.

According to Poland's Radio Z radio station, the Czech prime minister will discuss the U.S proposal with his Polish counterpart Jaroslaw Kaczynski in a telephone conversation later today.

The cost of building a "missile shield" in Central Europe in the next five years is estimated at \$1.6 billion. Poland has yet to decide on the deployment of a U.S. missile defense system on its territory.

Commenting on a U.S. proposal, Czech Defense Minister Vlasta Parkanova said the deployment of a U.S. missile defense system in the country "could be a very sensitive issue for citizens of the Czech Republic" and the government should take into account national security interests in the first place.

"We have to consider this proposal very seriously and responsively," she said.

Russia has always strongly opposed U.S. plans to deploy an anti-missile shield in Central Europe, saying the move may adversely affect global as well as European security.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov dismissed in December last year the argument that the U.S. missile defense system in Central Europe is designed to protect U.S. and European national security interests.

"I have every reason to say that there are no ICBMs in Iran or North Korea, nor are there going to be any [in the foreseeable future]. So the real question is, against what countries will this system be used," said Ivanov, who is also a deputy prime minister.

He said these plans do not make "political sense, to say nothing of military sense," adding that the deployment of a U.S. missile defense system will not affect Russia's security in any way.

"The Topol-M ground based missile complexes that we demonstrated recently reliably overcome any missile defense systems. So we take these [U.S.] plans in stride," Ivanov said.

Russia currently has five missile regiments equipped with silo-based Topol-M missiles,

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and one regiment equipped with mobile Topol-M systems.

As of January 1, 2006, Russia possessed 927 nuclear delivery vehicles and 4,279 nuclear warheads for strategic offensive weapons, while the United States owns 1,255 and 5,966, respectively, according to the Russian Defense Ministry.

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President Vladimir Putin said Thursday the deployment of mobile Topol-M intercontinental ballistic missile systems contributes a great deal to Russia's national security.



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