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World

Lithuania confirms willingness to host U.S. missile shield

13:03 | 19/07/2008



BUENOS AIRES, July 19 (RIA Novosti) - Lithuania's president, currently on a visit to Argentina, told a national paper that his country is willing if necessary to host elements of a U.S. missile shield.

The United States said earlier this month that tentative discussions had been held with the Baltic country on hosting an interceptor missile base, after talks with Poland, Washington's first choice of host country, stalled.

Nacion quoted Valdas Adamkus as saying: "Lithuania is not currently engaged in negotiations with the United States on deploying a missile shield on our territory. However, we believe that this anti-missile system is an important element of European and international security. Therefore, if necessary, we are ready to work with our partners to deploy it."

The president declined RIA Novosti's request for a comment on the interview.

Moscow strongly opposes the possible deployment by the U.S. of 10 interceptor missiles in Poland and a radar in the Czech Republic as a threat to its national security. Washington says the missile defense system is needed to deter possible strikes from Iran.

Poland has taken a tough stance in talks with the U.S., demanding that Washington upgrade the country's air defense systems as a condition for the deployment of an anti-missile base.

Ex-Soviet Lithuania joined the European Union and NATO in 2004.

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