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Putin Warns of Response to Poland, Romania Hosting US Missile Defense

By Jason Ditz
May 27, 2016



Speaking today at a news conference in Athens, Russian President Vladimir Putin reiterated his criticism of the US missile defense shield that is built and being expanded along Russia's frontier, saying Russia cannot help but consider it a threat and that they will take "certain measures" to enhance security in response.

Putin singled out Romania, the site of the first US base in the program, and Poland, which is hosting the building site of the second base, saying those nations had put themselves in the "cross-hairs" by hosting parts of the US program, and could face retaliatory steps.

In practice, Russia has long suggested that the main retaliation for the missile defense program would be to deploy more missiles in Kaliningrad, an exclave bordering Poland. Recent tensions with NATO may also have Russia considering some economic moves against the nations hosting the program.

Putin noted that they'd been talking about the problem of the missile defense shield for "years" and that no one in NATO was willing to speak to them. This is indeed the case, as the program was started in the Bush Administration, and Russia was saying many of the same things then.

Though back then, US officials insisted the program was aimed at Iran, it has always been designed right along Russian territory, and much of it outside Iran's best missiles' range. More recently some US officials have conceded the move is meant as a "show of force" against Russia.