

U.S. Steps up Missile Defense Marketing Abroad

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The Pentagon and U.S. arms companies have increased efforts following the June 13 U.S. withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty to get foreign governments and businesses more involved in U.S. missile defense programs, but their labors have yielded few tangible results as yet.

Lieutenant General Ronald Kadish, who directs U.S. missile defense programs, has repeatedly said in recent months that one of the chief benefits of withdrawing from the 1972 ABM Treaty was that it opened the door to foreign participation in strategic missile defense work against long-range ballistic missiles. The accord prohibited Washington and Moscow from transferring any strategic missile defense systems or components to other countries and, in Kadish's words, from sharing "blueprint data."

Germany, Israel, Italy, and Japan are all currently participating in theater missile defense projects with the United States to protect against short- and medium-range ballistic missiles, defenses the ABM Treaty permitted.

The Pentagon held a series of July meetings with foreign governments on ballistic missile defense, including a collective meeting with NATO members July 18 in Brussels. Pentagon officials presented briefings about the current ballistic missile threat as well as the status of U.S. missile defense programs. They also outlined possible ways in which foreign governments could contribute to or participate in various missile defense projects.

U.S. officials further pressed NATO's other 18 members to agree to include a statement endorsing missile defense in their final communiqué at the upcoming NATO summit in Prague, which is scheduled for November 21-22.

Foreign reaction to the U.S. missile defense push has been mixed, with Germany reportedly expressing the greatest reservation. Although several key European countries made public their skepticism and opposition to U.S. strategic missile defense plans a few years ago, most European capitals have softened their tone after the U.S. treaty withdrawal and Moscow's muted response.

Boeing, a top contractor for U.S. missile defense systems, signed agreements July 23 with three different European companies to explore possible future cooperation on missile defense, although specific projects or products have not been identified. The agreements, each termed a "memorandum of understanding," were concluded with BAE Systems, a British company; Alenia Spazio, an Italian company; and EADS, a joint French, German, and Spanish company.

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