### AMERICAN ANTI-MISSLE SHIELD, EASTERN EUROPEAN ASSET TO DISCOURAGE BALLISTIC ATTACKS

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***Abstract:*** *Air-missile defense is a mission of anti-aircraft missile troops known in the field as anti-missile shield. It describes an anti-ballistic area intended for research, discovery, interception and combat of surface-to-air or air-to-air missiles with ballistic trajectory. The existence of the anti-missile shield implies the creation of a security zone of allied states, institutional structures and population that can ensure their functionality and existence, deployed on an alignment (territories of several states), in order to maintain a state of normalcy and security. This defense system must include the threatened states, members of the politico-military alliance, regardless of their economic and military power. The security environment also concerns both the population of those countries and the objectives of great political, economic, strategic, critical and military infrastructure importance.*

***Keywords****: anti-missile shield; anti-aircraft defense; ballistic attacks; anti-ballistic screen.*

**Introduction**

The concept of missile defense system defines all the strategies, techniques, tactics, actions and measures by which a state actor designs, acquires, implements and uses various systems and means that can be used against hostile actions or manifestations of opponents, considered as risks, dangers, challenges and threats from air or space. Within the system of measures, the manufacture or purchase of ballistic missiles or subsystems, components thereof, with bacteriological, nuclear and chemical load, with a high degree of contamination and destruction, plays a special role. In essence, missile defense requires that Allied military structures be concerned with maintaining a high degree of freedom to use their own enemy air combat systems, as well as the benefit of the Allied forces' own anti-missile protection shield, territory or in the vicinity of the national territory.

The American anti-missile shield was designed so that, through the mission of combating and destroying ballistic missiles, to counteract their destructive effects in the area of action of the targets. The increased degree of effectiveness of this system also takes into account the possibility of destroying ballistic missiles during their evolution on the dynamic trajectory, a situation in which some components resulting from the impact could affect targets, territories or population of states, both those in the launch area, as well as those in which the target impact occurs. Given the existence of these dangers, as well as the increased degree of air threat, the Euro-Atlantic system was not indifferent, but took early ballistic countermeasures. Thus, both at the level of national actors and at the level of the NATO system, numerous debates took place that aimed at implementing a coherent and effective defense system against air threats generated by the possibilities of ballistic missile attack vectors.

If in the beginning, before the NATO summit in Riga (2006), only several European armies had complex systems to defend their national space, now the political will of all NATO member states to allocate funds is confirmed (2% of GDP) and to develop a complex and effective missile defense program against the dangers posed by ballistic missile attacks. This initiative was a priority, with the debate at system level covering the main areas of security that required concrete and objective responses from all Member States and decisions that led to the continuation and amplification of the process of transforming the Alliance system, to developing partnerships with some non-member states, even in relations with the Russian Federation, with the common goal of counteracting threats and dangers to the global security environment.

NATO BMD considers voluntary national contributions, based mainly on the means of the US Missile Defense system, adapted in stages, states such as: Romania, Poland, Turkey and Spain, “their contributions bringing robustness to the operation of the missile system”[[1]](#footnote-1). Thus, the USA announced their possibility and availability to extend the anti-missile shield on the eastern alignment of Europe, more specifically in the Czech Republic and Poland, by placing high-performance radar devices and means of intercepting ballistic attack components, located on the bases in Tehran or Pyongyang, thereby pursuing the widest and most efficient design of the security of the Eastern European territory.

**The American anti-missile system, a priority**

**of Eastern European collective defense**

The North Atlantic Alliance supported and continued the debate on the American anti-missile shield and concluded that the implementation of the American anti-missile system can only cover the center of the European continent and its eastern flank. This issue has generated many questions about the situation of other states in the southeast and south of the continent, thus reaching the conclusion of increasing the possibilities of combat of the missile defense system throughout the Euro-Atlantic area. The favorable answer came at the Bucharest summit (2008), where it was decided to create a complementary shield/screen that, from an anti-ballistic perspective, would cover the entire southern flank of the Alliance, including Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Greece and Italy.

In March 2007, NATO, through its Secretary-General, said that “there are many issues to be addressed”[[2]](#footnote-2), and “the principle we must be guided by is the indivisibility of the security concept”[[3]](#footnote-3) [3]. Through these messages, the Alliance tried to switch the effort of the debate from a national area to a collective area, thus avoiding the creation of gaps between the USA and some Member States. Subsequently, the summit in Bucharest (2008) confirmed the concept of indivisibility of the security system and established that the deadline for resolution should be 2009, the next NATO summit. Through the positions expressed before the Bucharest summit, at national level or through the officials of the Alliance, a few sensitive conclusions resulted at the level of the Euro-Atlantic community. Thus, some voices supported the US version of the missile defense and in NATO, and others of leaders of the European parliamentary group claimed that “the missile defense system will send the international community into a new arms race”[[4]](#footnote-4), divergences that have amplified tensions throughout the system of international relations. At the same time, in March 2007, German Defense Minister Franz Josef Jung emphasized that “it would be smart to integrate this whole system into NATO”[[5]](#footnote-5), specifying that “the German federal state is not yet against or in favor of this hypothesis, but it is clear that the Alliance needs to do much more to address F. Russia's concerns about the US plan.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

Thus, the signals regarding the start of the plan to implement the American anti-missile system were divided covering different aspects, being a rather sensitive issue, even for the public opinion in some NATO member states. Moreover, in countries such as Poland, opinion polls had shown that the population did not agree with the deployment of anti-missile combat components in their country, and serious debates are needed in Polish civil society on this issue[[7]](#footnote-7). In fact, at NATO level there are some differences in the approach to the missile defense system, as follows:

*- first and foremost, it was the importance of defending theaters where NATO troops conduct crisis-specific operations, which can be an integrated operational system for responding to ballistic missile attacks, a defense program known as Active Layered Theater Ballistic Missile Defense (ALTBMD)*;

- secondly, it was about the integrated defense of the NATO space, through a plan of measures adapted to the entire Euro-Atlantic territory, designed by a firm decision and will of the allied states, with multinational logistical support and a clear mission of countering ballistic threats.

It was very important for the Allies to show understanding of the missile shield, each contributing to the development of this project without further explanation or clarification. Thus, those unpleasant situations related to the ISAF mission, in the south and west of the capital Kabul, were avoided, when a decision taken at the NATO Council level, to extend the mission's mandate, through new troop allocations and additional funds from all states. Member States, was delayed, jeopardizing the continuity of that mission.

Today, the Alliance benefits from a strong missile defense system designed to protect its members against short- and medium-range ballistic missile attacks. This system will be developed throughout the European continent, will be an effective security umbrella against ballistic threats outside NATO and a step forward in support of the Alliance's transformation program[[8]](#footnote-8).

The period 2010-2015 was the period of operationalization of anti-missile systems in the ALTBMD category, with the mission of eliminating any ballistic threat, by intercepting and destroying missiles on any phase of the target trajectory, as follows: first phase, launch time; the second phase, the interception of the rocket to the impact area and the final phase, the moment of impact with the target.[[9]](#footnote-9) During this period, NATO member states provided sensors and interception systems, and the Alliance established the Command and Control Center, facilitating the timely integration of all elements specific to the anti-missile system[[10]](#footnote-10). Thus, in an interview in May 2007, Peter Flory, NATO's Assistant Secretary-General for Defense Investment, gave the public specialized explanations on missile defense (appreciating, among other things, that the scope for this defense system is around 3,000 km).[[11]](#footnote-11)

Asked about the impact of the US initiative on the deployment of missile shield elements on NATO's European ballistic defense project, he said: "Well, we need to find out. The feasibility study did not take into account current US missile defense systems because the US initiative to deploy a third missile shield had not been announced. As you can imagine, the proposal that could provide substantial protection for Europe by US and US systems operating outside the Czech Republic and Poland would substantially change the equation on NATO's missile defense project. It is safer to say that by taking over much of the Alliance's territory, this would allow it to develop its own systems to protect the remaining areas”[[12]](#footnote-12), areas left outside the US missile shield and unprotected by the current shield.

The concept of the complementarity of the Alliance's project with the American anti-missile system is very often encountered at the level of speeches given by NATO officials. The purpose of the anti-missile shield promoted by the Americans is well established (protecting the US in the event of ballistic threats), based on the decisions of some state actors (few in number) who have been permanently involved in this project. However, the NATO project affirms the need to fully protect the Euro-Atlantic area, in accordance with the wishes of all allied states, through firm defense missions (out-of-area), specific to the various operations planned in the NATO system.

Details on the two major missile defense systems (the US proposal and the Alliance project) were also provided in Brussels by the NATO Secretary General at a press conference (2007), held after the NATO-Russia Council meeting. A BBC journalist from the Financial Times asked if complementary missile defense systems, operational at different times, could affect some member states, the secretary general replied: "Concrete parts of the European territory of the Alliance will not have much to be won because they are too close geographically. These states need protection in the event of a short- and medium-range ballistic threat. The only thing that is certain is that there is a US system that will have consequences for NATO, because NATO as an alliance no longer needs to develop a system against the threat of ballistic missiles”[[13]](#footnote-13).

According to the details provided on the two missile defense concepts, the North Atlantic Alliance was in a special situation generated by the confrontation with a unique crisis created by the attempt to strengthen the internal relations between the Member States, tense as a result of the problems raised by the implementation of the American anti-missile shield; the concern to re-establish and strengthen the relationship with the Russian Federation on a balanced and solid path; stepping up efforts to raise strong arguments that can clearly steer the Moscow-Washington debate on the US missile shield and the Alliance's future missile shield[[14]](#footnote-14).

The Bucharest Summit brought some news regarding the maintenance and crystallization of the concept of indivisibility of the Alliance's security system, the problem of complementarity against missile defense being beneficial for the states in the southeast and south of the European continent. This required the consolidation of the Poland-Czech alignment and its continuation (since the 2009 summit) in the direction of Romania - Bulgaria - Turkey - Greece and Italy.

Since the Lisbon summit (2010), the American anti-missile strategic concept has been adopted by NATO, and the list of states covered by the innovative anti-missile shield program has been completed by the Alliance, taking into account the member states, the US administration making public the intention to address, in the European area of NATO, a gradual treatment, on 4 phases of the missile shield configuration, as follows: until 2011 - phase 1; until 2015 - the second phase; until 2018 - the 3rd phase and until 2020 - the 4th phase.

Since the NATO summit in Chicago (2012), the history of the Alliance has recorded the most complex and important meeting of its kind, attended by heads of state and government, foreign ministers and defense ministers from 50 states. NATO leaders presented the operational, technical and tactical capabilities of the shield and pledged to ensure the operational capability of the anti-missile shield, the NATO variant, by 2018. Given that missile defense was only one segment of the broad gear supported by this hybrid threat, it was established that “the Alliance should develop a missile defense system in order to achieve its fundamental objective of collective defense”[[15]](#footnote-15).

The entire analysis of NATO's capability, specific to the field of missile defense, was carried out based on the principles: solidarity of allied states; the indivisibility of system security and the correct and balanced distribution of tasks and risks. Other elements were also taken into account: the level of threat; technical feasibility and affordability, all in line with the level of risk approved by the Alliance. Moreover, it was decided to extend the missions of the stratified air defense system against active vectors represented by ballistic missiles in the theater (ALTBMD), simultaneously with the operationalization of the system of protection measures for both NATO troops (deployed in the area of theaters of operations) and the population and NATO forces deployed in Europe and allied territories. In this sense, “the adaptive US approach, in stages, is welcome as a valuable national contribution to NATO's future missile defense architecture, as well as other possible voluntary contributions by the Allies”[[16]](#footnote-16). Moreover, the new NATO Strategic Concept (2010) is a programmatic document of the Alliance debated and adopted in the medium and long term, during the Lisbon summit. He notes that "the development of a NATO capability to defend Allied territories and populations against ballistic missile attacks, as a fundamental element of collective defense, which will contribute to the indivisibility of the Alliance's security“[[17]](#footnote-17).

NATO continues to be concerned about this growing threat posed by the continued proliferation of ballistic missiles. During the Lisbon summit, Member States agreed to “develop a NATO missile defense capability to fulfill the major collective defense mission”[[18]](#footnote-18). If global efforts are to halt or reduce the threats posed by the unprecedented development of ballistic missile systems, the Alliance's ballistic missile defense system will be able to adapt to the new global trend, “including the reason for completing the role of nuclear weapons in deterrence, a purely defensive capability“[[19]](#footnote-19).

It can be appreciated that NATO has achieved an important Interim Capability, performing in the field of missile defense. This ensured a decisive operational step, ensuring full compliance with the decisions taken in Lisbon and “providing maximum coverage, with the means at our disposal, to defend the population, territory and forces of NATO in southern Europe against a ballistic missile attack”[[20]](#footnote-20). Thus, the main objective for the near future was to achieve an operational missile defense system, able to ensure the protection and full coverage of all NATO targets, population, territories and forces in the European space, at the expense of voluntary contributions from Member States in acquiring systems, interceptors and sensors, facilitating the installation of components and developing layered missile defense technical capabilities in the theater of operations.

In order to develop the command-control system for the common territorial defense ALTBMD, its funding was declared eligible, and the Turkish state, as part of NATO's missile defense capability, facilitated the installation in its territorial space of an advanced radar specialized in warning early. “We note potential opportunities for cooperation in missile defense and encourage allies to explore possible additional national contributions, as well as to use potential synergies in planning, procurement and deployment.”[[21]](#footnote-21)

The Allies will ensure full political control, in all NATO operations, over all military operations that will be conducted by interim structures and capabilities. Given that ballistic missiles have a very short flight, the NATO Council agreed with the rules, pre-established procedures and consequences of interception, in relation to coverage and protection requirements, aspects for which the Council was mandated to “periodically review the implementation of interim capability, including before the meetings of the foreign and defense ministers, and to prepare for the next summit a comprehensive report on the progress made and the issues to be addressed for the development of the system”.[[22]](#footnote-22)

The NATO system is ready to cooperate with third state actors to strengthen transparency and trust, in relation to the situation, acting in the direction of increasing the effectiveness of missile defense. Given the common interests with Russia in the field of zonal security, in the spirit of mutual trust, the Alliance will “remain committed to the development of the missile defense cooperation program, as during the NRC missile defense exercise in the theater”[[23]](#footnote-23). After sustained efforts, the Russia-NATO Council has developed a study through which the two major missile defense systems (that of Russia and that of NATO) can act together, as a unitary whole, in order to strengthen European security. "We look forward to establishing the two proposed joint NATO-Russia centers (missile data merger and joint operational planning) to cooperate in the field of missile defense"[[24]](#footnote-24).

At the level of the NATO system, it was proposed to use a transparent communications regime, based on a rapid exchange of information about the current missile defense capabilities held by Russia and NATO. Such a system of pragmatic cooperation will be an effective means of assuring Russia of NATO's missile defense capabilities and plans. In this direction, too, assurances have been given that NATO's missile defense system in Europe will not affect Russia's strategic stability and undermine it. “Missile defense is not directed against Russia and will not undermine Russia's strategic deterrent capabilities. NATO's missile defense is intended to defend against potential threats from outside the Euro-Atlantic area”[[25]](#footnote-25).

It is very clear that NATO will have a strong and effective anti-missile system designed to defend allies against short- and medium-range ballistic missiles, a system that will provide a concrete security shield against the action of all ballistic threat vectors, especially on during the deployment of forces and means in theaters of operations outside NATO, measures that will represent an important step in the process of improvement and transformation of the Alliance. “If international efforts reduce the threats posed by the proliferation of ballistic missiles, NATO's ballistic missile defense can and will be adapted accordingly”[[26]](#footnote-26).

NATO's ballistic missile defense (NATO BMD) capabilities will remain purely defensive in the future, with the possibility of complementing the nuclear weapons system in deterrent air actions, without the possibility of replacing them. In this system, full airspace surveillance and arms control by Allied actors will be essential, and their full implementation will be constantly monitored and ensured. They will have unchanged policy principles and objectives from 2010, including availability, reasonable challenge, joint threat assessment and technical feasibility.

Another argument for NATO's more conciliatory position on Russia, the statement at the NATO Summit in London (3-4 December 2019) states that the North Atlantic Alliance “remains open to any dialogue, and to a constructive relationship with Russia when Russia's actions make it possible.”[[27]](#footnote-27). In response to these statements, at the same time, Putin said he is at any time available to resume dialogue with the North Atlantic Alliance.

**Conclusion**

The main objective of the implementation of the US missile shield is to achieve an operational missile defense system, capable of ensuring the protection and full coverage of all NATO forces, territories and the population of Europe, at the expense of voluntary national contributions, especially through national interceptor and sensor systems, by facilitating the installation of technical components and by developing layered missile defense capabilities in the area of theaters of operations.

Russia's recent statements on possible measures against NATO's missile defense system are unfortunate, but Moscow's openness to maintaining and continuing the high-level dialogue in order to establish a future framework for cooperation on missile defense can be appreciated.

The Alliance will step up efforts to re-establish relations with Russia on an equitable basis, on a solid and balanced path, as well as broaden the discussion to promote viable arguments in order to relaunch the Washington-Moscow debate on equitable positions, especially on issues related to the future NATO anti-missile shield and the American anti-missile shield.

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