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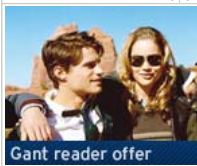
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Russia may deploy nuclear missiles in Belarus

By Duncan Hooper and agencies
Last Updated: 2:00pm GMT 14/11/2007

A Russian general has hinted that Moscow may deploy its latest nuclear missiles in Belarus in response to US plans for a missile shield in eastern Europe.

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Major-General Vladimir Zaritsky, head of Russia's artillery and missile forces, told the Itar-Tass news agency: "Any action inevitably causes a reaction."

"Under the right conditions and with the corresponding agreement of Belarus, it is possible that the Iskander tactical missiles could be set up."

The US wants to place 10 interceptor missiles in Poland and a radar station in the Czech Republic as part of a shield it says is designed to protect Europe from attacks by "rogue states".

Moscow believes this would upset the strategic balance and pose a threat to Russian security.

A war of words has escalated as Washington refused to back down on its plans and won support from a number of Eastern European countries.

Earlier this year Russia claimed to have developed a [weapon capable of breaching any shield](#) and President Vladimir Putin has warned that the plans [risk sparking a standoff as grave as the Cuban missile crisis](#).

The Iskander missile is able to deliver a 480 kg (1,058 lb) conventional payload within a range of up to 400 km (250 miles).



In May the Russians tested a missile it claims could breach any US defence shield

Gen Zaritsky warned that the range could be increased if Russia chose to withdraw from the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF).

The Belarusian government has fostered close ties with Moscow after being ostracised by many western nations following allegations of human rights abuses and election malpractice.

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