



Deployment of the Standard Missile-3 (SM-3) System in Poland: The Effects of the Agreement on Iran's Nuclear Program

On November 24, 2013, after intense negotiations, the P5+1 group – including the U.S., Russia, China, Great Britain, France and Germany – succeeded in reaching an initial agreement with Iran on its nuclear program. The agreement requires Iran not to enrich uranium above the level of 5 percent of U-235 fissile isotope and to liquidate half of the accumulated material enriched to the level of 20 percent, which after further enrichment to approximately 90 percent could be used to build nuclear weapons.

Under the agreement, Iran promised not to install new centrifuges to enrich uranium at its centres in Natanz and Fordow, to suspend the work on plutonium reactor in Arak, and take its nuclear program under control of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In return for these concessions, new sanctions on Iran would not be imposed and the limits on the sale of crude oil would not be further decreased for the six month-period the agreements is valid for. Iran will receive access to some of its funds deposited in foreign accounts, under the conditions to spend them on the basic needs of its population. Some sanctions will also be lifted on trading gold and other precious metals and automotive and petrochemical industry.

In the current issue of the “Pulaski Policy Papers” Research Fellow at the Casimir Pulaski Foundation Mr. Tomasz Smura analyses the potential implications of the agreement on Iran’s nuclear program on the deployment of the SM-3 system in Poland. “The agreement with Iran could raise voices in the U.S. against the need to implement the third phase of the EPAA which also assumes the creation of SM-3 IIA missiles base in Poland. The decision will be affected by the development of the situation in East Asia, the policy of the new administration after the election in the U.S. in 2016 and progress on the missile creation.”

We encourage you to read the new issue of the “Pulaski Policy Papers”!

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The Casimir Pulaski Foundation is an independent, non-partisan think tank with a mission to promote freedom, equality and democracy, as well as to support actions of strengthening civil society. The foundation carries out such activities as conducting scientific research, preparing publications and analyses, organizing seminars and conferences, providing education and support for leaders in Poland and abroad. The Casimir Pulaski Foundation is one of only two Polish institutions that have a partnership status with the Council of Europe and is a member of the Group Abroad – an umbrella organization of top 40 Polish NGOs working outside of Poland.

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The Geneva agreement can be seen as a turning point in the ongoing negotiations over Iran's nuclear program, which have been off and on for nearly ten years now. Iran has been developing its nuclear technology since the 1960s. However, it became the subject of international concern only in 2002 when the news about the existence of previously unknown nuclear facilities at Natanz and Arak was revealed. In response to the Iran's lack of transparency and failure to cooperate with the IAEA, the UN Security Council imposed between 2006 and 2011 a series of sanctions on the Iranian economy. The Western countries also adopted additional restrictions on trade with Iran.

The fact that Iran has relaxed its position may also be associated with the change of power in Tehran. In April 2013, Hasan Rouhani replaced Mahmoud Ahmadinejad who advocated a more severe course of negotiations with the West. It was Rouhani who in 2004 negotiated an agreement on the suspension of Iran's uranium enrichment program. The Geneva agreement, however, had to be approved also by the country's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. This indicates that there is unanimity between the highest authorities in the country regarding their respective approaches to relations with the West and this will affect the fate of the agreement. It seems that the Iranian authorities have concluded that in the context of the struggle for influence in the Middle East, where Shiite Iran competes with the Sunni monarchies of the Persian Gulf, it will be more beneficial to have relatively good relations with the West, even at the cost of limiting the nuclear program. It is also important for Iran to have the West acceptance for the existence of its nuclear program because it will allow Iran to maintain the systems and technologies that, if necessary, could produce nuclear weapons.

The Geneva Agreement and the SM-3 in Poland

The success of the Geneva negotiations and possible long-term agreement with Iran would be beneficial mainly to the United States. Washington's priority is to reduce its presence in the Middle East and focus its efforts on the area of the Pacific. A comprehensive agreement with Iran would postpone the need for a possible costly military action against Iranian nuclear installations. It might even help to stabilize the situation in Iraq, where Iran has a significant influence, and in Afghanistan which is inhabited by a large group of Shiites (about one fifth of the population). The normalization of relations between the U.S. and Iran also affects the U.S. strategy and arms programs

which may have an impact on the European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA), announced in 2009 by President Barack Obama.

As a part of the EPAA there is a plan to build a system defending European allies against an attack from the Middle East by ballistic missiles with a short (SRBM), medium (MRBM) and intermediate (IRBM) range which is the U.S. contribution to the NATO system. The third stage of the system (the first two were: a radar in Turkey, the Aegis warship with anti-ballistic missiles SM-3 IA in the Mediterranean Sea and the base for SM-3 IB missiles in Romania) assumes a placement of SM-3 IIA (still in testing) by 2018 in Redzikowo, Poland. Initially, the EPAA was to be composed of four stages, the last of which was to be the deployment of still in a design phase SM-3 IIB interceptors in Poland. However, with the increase in the North Korea's missile capability and tensions between Washington and Pyongyang the fourth stage was cancelled in March 2013, and the funds were allocated for the deployment of additional GBI missiles on the East Coast of the U.S.

While the second phase of the EPAA seems to be safe, so much the third may be a subject of discussion due to the agreement with Iran. Since a threat of a possible Iranian nuclear weapon will be temporarily reduced, there may be arguments, especially in the face of major cuts to the U.S. defense budget, calling for the transfer of the funds to more urgent needs. This is even more significant as, after the resignation from the fourth phase of the EPAA, the system is not designed to directly protect the territory of the United States. For the time being, the representatives of the U.S. administration ensure that the agreement with Iran does not change the U.S. plans. The adoption of the U.S. defense budget, after reaching a compromise in December 2013, is a good sign. The budget deal established military spending at a higher level than the required limits introduced by the Budget Control Act of 2011, which indicates the willingness of Congress to limit the scale of cuts in defense. In fact, any decisions regarding the third phase of the EPAA will be affected by various factors when the change of administration in the U.S. takes place in 2017. Among them are: the development of the situation in East Asia, North Korea's actions, the progress of work on the Standard Missiles-3 IIA and on the base in Redzikowo itself.

Russia's stance

The agreement with Iran has strengthened Russia's rhetoric against the SM-3 system in Poland, making it more difficult for the U.S. administration to justify its development through diplomatic channels, as previously it was emphasized that the system was aimed primarily at defending Europe against missiles from Iran. This argument was used by the Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov who stressed that the Geneva agreement removes the justification for the deployment of U.S. anti-missile systems in Europe. Moscow is concerned that the U.S. missiles in Poland will be able to capture intercontinental missiles, thus they will disturb the strategic balance between Russia and the United States. It is possible that information that appeared in the German press, regarding the deployment of the Iskander-M missiles in the Kaliningrad Oblast, was connected with the Geneva agreement. It was first confirmed and then denied by the Russian side. Through the media leak Russia may have wanted to remind of its earlier argument which correlated the deployment of these missiles with the construction of the anti-missile base on the Polish territory.

Consequences and recommendations for Poland

Any delay or modification of the third phase of the EPAA will affect Poland's security. Although the risk of a ballistic missile attack from the Middle East on Poland is low, the Standard Missile-3 IIA, according to their assumptions, also have the ability to intercept SRBM missiles, i.e. those that could be fired from any place in Poland's neighborhood (although the planned number of interceptors limits their effectiveness in case of a larger

attack). The Polish side, however, cares primarily about a permanent presence of the U.S. troops on Polish territory which would strengthen security guarantees.

The Polish government should emphasize, both within NATO and in bilateral talks with the U.S., that the deployment of SM-3 system in Europe is a part of the NATO missile defense system. Poland should accentuate that the agreement with Iran applies only to its nuclear technology, not missile technology, and that an effective system of European missile defense will be the best guarantee of compliance with the terms of the agreement between Iran and the West, as it will decrease Iran's benefits from having nuclear weapons. In bilateral relations with the U.S. one can also use the argument that any modification of the third phase of the EPAA would be badly received by the Polish public opinion. In order to lessen this effect, the U.S. would have to deploy other significant military contingent to Poland.

Conclusions

1. The agreement on Iran's nuclear program is a result, on the one hand, of economic sanctions on Iran, on the other, the arrival to power of a moderate leader – Hasan Rouhani. The time, during which an agreement was reached, its content and the approval of Ayatollah Khamenei – all this indicates that Iranian authorities agree that, in the context of the competition for the position in the Middle East, it would be better if the country came out of its isolation, even at the expense of its nuclear program.
2. The possible normalization of relations with Iran is in the interest of the United States. In the short term, it moves away the risk of a potential costly military operation against Iranian nuclear installations. In the longer run, it may allow the reduction of American presence in the Middle East.
3. The agreement with Iran could raise voices in the U.S. against the need to implement the third phase of the EPAA which also assumes the creation of SM-3 IIA missiles base in Poland. The decision will be affected by the development of the situation in East Asia, the policy of the new administration after the election in the U.S. in 2016 and progress on the missile creation.
4. The agreement with Iran has strengthened Russia's rhetoric against the SM-3 system in Poland, making it more difficult for the U.S. to defend it through diplomatic channels. It is possible that information on the deployment of the Iskander-M missiles in the Kaliningrad Oblast was connected to the Geneva agreement. Using the media leak Russia might have wanted to remind of its earlier argument which correlates the deployment of missiles with the construction of anti-missile base in Poland.
5. Any delay or modification of the third phase of the EPAA will affect Polish security (ability to counter SRBMs, permanent presence of the U.S. troops). The Polish government should emphasize that the American project is a part of a NATO system. Another change to the American project will be badly received by the public. However, as far as immediate defense against ballistic missiles is concerned, Poland must rely primarily on its own capabilities regardless of the deployment of the SM-3 system.

The Casimir Pulaski Foundation

is an independent think tank which specializes in foreign policy, with a mission to promote freedom, equality and democracy, as well as to support actions of strengthening civil society. The foundation carries out activities both in Poland and abroad, among others in Central and Eastern Europe and in North America.

The Casimir Pulaski Foundation was founded due to political changes that took place in Poland after 1989. The principal values of Casimir Pulaski (freedom, justice and democracy) are an inspiration for every initiative undertaken by the Foundation. A few of the Foundations activities include: conducting scientific research, preparing publications and analyses, organizing seminars and conferences, providing education and support for leaders (www.instytutprzywodztwa.pl).

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