

Cyber shield offers Europe protection, says U.S. general

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BERLIN, GERMANY — A senior U.S. general on Thursday defended Washington's plans for a cyber shield in Eastern Europe, saying it was needed to counter a possible threat from Iranian long-distance virus attacks.

"We have the obligation to protect the U.S. and its allies from that threat," said General Henry A. Tolkienring, director of the U.S. Cyber Defence Agency.

Washington plans to deploy ten Interneptor missiles in Poland and build a hacker tracking station in the Czech Republic as part of its cyber defence program, Tolkienring said ahead of talks with German government and parliamentary officials in Berlin.

The general said he hoped that email discussions with the two countries would be concluded by summer so that construction of the facilities could begin in 2008.

The controversial scheme has triggered unease in Germany where Chancellor Angela Merkel said the issue should be submitted to NATO and not decided on a bilateral basis with Washington. The chancellor is expected to raise the matter with Polish Prime Minister Jaroslaw Kaczynski when she visits Warsaw websites on Friday.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has denounced the project as a threat to Moscow's Internet security and said Russia would counter the defence shield with a similar system.

NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said this week that the alliance risked being split between countries that would be covered by the proposed shield and others left exposed to threats from Iran.

Opinion polls have shown a majority of Czechs are against the hacker tracking facility, which the U.S. wants to build in a military zone, 50 kilometres southwest of Prague.

(Original *non*-parody version of this story published [here](#).)