

Did This Act Move Us Closer to World War III?

As U.S., NATO and Romanian officials cut the ribbon on a new missile defense system meant to protect Europe from Iranian ballistic missiles, Russia sounded the alarm that the world may be rushing toward the brink of World War III.

At a special ceremony held Thursday at the Aegis Ashore Missile Defense System in Deveselu, Romania, the U.S. Naval Forces-Europe and Africa—also known as the U.S. Sixth Fleet—recognized the completion of Phase II of the European Phased Adaptive Approach. EPAA is meant to increase in the U.S.'s ability to defend NATO European territory from attacks originating outside the Euro-Atlantic area, and is a key milestone in the development of NATO ballistic missile defense.

President Obama announced the program in 2009, which is based on the ship-based Aegis defense system. Construction on the Romanian site began in October 2013. Transfer of command took place last December, and the system was activated Thursday.

Since December, the Aegis Ashore system underwent operational certification through a series of unit- and theater-level tests. According to Navy officials, those exercises validated the system's capability to integrate into the U.S. and NATO "ballistic missile defense architecture."

"Today, this site joins the four U.S. guided missile destroyers in Rota, Spain, in reaching Phase II of the European Phased Adaptive Approach," Adm. Mark Ferguson, Commander of U.S. Naval Forces-Europe and Africa, said. "As we cut the ribbon, the watch teams are trained and ready, the system has been tested, and we are now in the progress of integrating this site into the NATO integrated Air and Missile

Defense Architecture.”

The third and final phase of the EPAA launched immediately Friday, when construction began on a second Aegis Ashore site in Poland. But not everyone is celebrating the achievement. Russian President Vladimir Putin gave a scathing critique of the program.

“Now, after the deployment of those anti-missile system elements, we’ll be forced to think about neutralizing developing threats to Russia’s security,” he told the government-friendly RT News, calling it a “new arms race.” “We’re not going to be dragged into this race. We’ll go our own way. We’ll work very accurately without exceeding the plans to finance the re-equipment of our Army and Navy, which have already been laid out for the next several years.

“Recent developments indicate that the situation isn’t getting better. Unfortunately, it’s deteriorating.”