

Gates Fails to Bridge Gap on Missile Defense

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U.S. and Russian defense leaders said Tuesday that they are still divided over the planned missile defense system in Europe but will continue talks to try to resolve the differences.

The issue, which has been simmering for several years, was a major topic during a meeting between U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Russian Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov, although the ongoing military strikes in Libya — and Russian opposition to them — grabbed the headlines. “We continue to have an intensive discussion on missile defense cooperation, and although we still have differences that need to be resolved, we continue to make progress,” Gates said after the meeting. Moscow leaders have said the proposed missile defense plan, which is aimed at countering future Iranian threats, could be aimed at Russian missiles or could undermine Russia’s security interests.

The plan, which is under way, begins with ship-based, anti-missile interceptors and radars, and would add land-based radars in Southern Europe.

Speaking through an interpreter Tuesday, Serdyukov said there is no simple answer to the

missile defense debate, but he added that the two countries are sharing views on a possible way to resolve it. Cooperation, he said, is better than confrontation. The four-phase plan would put land- and sea-based radars and interceptors in several European locations over the next decade.

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