

**CENTER FOR  
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**WHY SECURITY CHALLENGES IN CENTRAL EUROPE  
STILL MATTER**

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**SPEAKER:  
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STEPHEN FLANAGAN: Well, good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to this Statesman's Forum. I'm Stephen Flanagan, senior vice president here at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. And it's a delight to welcome back to CSIS Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek of the Czech Republic and also with him Ambassador Kolář, a distinguished representative of the Czech Republic here, and the rest of the prime minister's entourage.

The prime minister comes to us in the midst of a busy schedule here in Washington. He's been moving around town, making his way to meetings with, as you may know, with a number of cabinet members here and with leaders of Congress, where he's off to this afternoon. And we were delighted that he could make some time to come here, to share with us his views on European – a Czech view on challenges in Euro-Atlantic security.

Let me just make a few remarks about his biography to remind you of his career, and then we'll turn to his remarks.

Mirek Topolánek was born in Vsetín, in the Zlín area of central – historic central and eastern Moravia. Before getting into politics, like a lot of people of his generation, he had a different career, a career in engineering and in enterprise management. He was trained as an engineer, first in Brno University in mechanical engineering and then on to other training in management. And he began at a variety of positions in the '80s, in project engineering and mining and other enterprises before, of course, that siren call of 1989 came with – many people moved by civic forum and the desire, suddenly, of politics in the then-Czechoslovakia, of course, got a lot more interesting.

And so he became active in civic forum in 1989, a member of the Civic Democratic Party since 1994, and a member of – first in local government and then in the senate and as a member of parliament in the Czech Republic, where he went on to become vice-chairman of the committee on national economy, agriculture and transport; a member also of the committee on national economy. Then, in 2002 and 2004, vice-chairman of the senate of the parliament and elected to the leadership of the party, the ODS, in 2002 and finally, assuming his current duties as prime minister of the Czech Republic in September of 2006.

He has had a number of distinguished awards and serves on a number of boards. He's been active in both the various educational boards and aspects of European-Atlantic cooperation and he confided to me, as we might have suspected of any good Czech, he takes a – has strong interest in hockey and he was happy to have a chance to partake of a visit to the Verizon Center and watch the Caps take on – was it the Minnesota North Stars, I guess he said, so at least that part of his agenda has been fulfilled here.

So we are delighted to welcome Minister Topolánek to the platform. He will speak in English and then, after his remarks are finished, we will take some questions. He will – questions can be made in English, but as you all have earpieces we will allow him to give his responses in Czech. So Mr. Topolánek, welcome and we look forward to your remarks.

(Applause.)

PRIME MINISTER MIREK TOPOLÁNEK: Thank you very much for the introduction. It was very – (in Czech) – I listened, and it was very interesting.

Let me at first to thank you for the invitation to this institution and allow me to present my view to security problems in central Europe, and Europe generally. Allow me to add a subtitle to the headline of my presentation: “Why Security Challenges in Central Europe Still Matter: Is Cold War – (in Czech) – ?” I purposely chose a rather provocative subtitle for my talk. You may have read a similar kind of title in the Czech newspapers, but without the question mark. Why? The current security policy debate in the Czech Republic is marked, but the discussion on the stationing of the American missile defense, premises in Central Europe, and it’s geopolitical and strategic consequences.

The content of my presentation here today, as you may have already guessed, is going to be in contrast with the title. I would like to show you that such kind of headlines are nothing more than the good work of Russian PR experts who know the journalists will be happy to catch any sharp slogan.

The basic reason why antimissile assistance doesn’t mean the return of the Cold War, that the system is a response to a new security challenge after an era of rivalry between two blocs. It addresses another threat, differently defined and where the enemies are more hidden. You cannot have a Cold War if the antagonist of the Cold War is missing. That thinking is a logical mistake. That’s a case of – (in Czech) – a contradiction – (in Czech) – self-fulfilling prophecy.

In this case is 100 percent through for the antimissile defense. The system from the time of the Cold War was named SDI, Strategic Defense Initiative. The missing work strategy clearly suggests the bold aim and the philosophy on the antimissile defense have been revised. The base antimissile umbrella, there’s very little in common with the ambitious Star Wars project President Reagan embraced, except that it also excites valiant criticism both here in the United States and in Europe, where its effectiveness is especially challenged. So European and Russian politicians accuse it unjustly, I believe, of calling up on the spirit of the Cold War.

There is a significant difference between the criticism of 20 years ago and that of today. The Soviet Union and its European satellites protested against SDI right from the very beginning. The Soviets knew well that this technologically demanding and expensive project presented a threat of strategic significance. Concerning the antimissile

defense, Moscow was keeping silent as long as the assistance elements were being installed on the U.S. territory or in Western Europe. It was only when the redder side in the Czech Republic and the interceptors in Poland started to be considered that the propagandistic machinery began firing rounds. This makes it clear that it is totally propose-oriented criticism, further evidenced by the fact that Russia itself is building similar systems. The criticism is not addressed so much to the government of the United States as to our swaying public opinion in European countries.

Therefore, the strong media rhetoric; therefore, too, the entire range of activities funded by Russia, which focused on playing of the emotion of citizens. The aim is to bring about fear, fear that because of the antimissile system, the Czech Republic and Poland will become targets of terrorists; fear of Russian revenge; fear of the power reach of the U.S. It needs to be admitted that this cocktail, mixed from appeasement, pacifism and anti-Americanism, is working and it is hard to face down because media, in the free world, is a tool of criticism not of explanations. These are, however, only political problems and it is up to us to be able to deal with them.

I would like to focus on the wider safety discourse which is outside the scope of the antimissile defense, the physical and philosophical confines. No matter how many questions the antimissile umbrella may justly inspire we must not forget that it is only a means by which to reach a goal, not the goal itself, and that there surely must be another way leading to the same goal.

As a politician responsible for the funding and installation of the antimissile shield of the territory of the Czech Republic, I carefully followed the debate which is being carried out in the United States. Points of view, like functionality, effectiveness, concerning the elimination of potential threats, closer integration into NATO structures; all of these will be vital in the decision-making process of the Czech government and the parliament.

I do not, however, want to talk about this today. As I have said, the antimissile defense is only a means of a part of the security policy, not the security policy itself. It is, however, a highly advanced technology, and modern Czech technologies do somehow influence and change our behavior and actions. The security policy naturally changed after the end of the Cold War. Instead of two more or less equal and clearly defined blocs, we are now facing asymmetric, more-dimensional threats, which have been caused by sub-state or transnational players. Even during the Cold War, it was understood that victory cannot be brought about solely by military means and although the Soviet bloc was arms-racing up in the end and defeated, especially thanks to SDI, democracy could come about only because of the existence of dissident structures who are ready to take over the power and launch the transformation of the totalitarian system.

The support of the West of democratic opposition, and its enforcement of the Helsinki process, were significant for speeding up the internal origin of the system and for the ability to build democratic institutions, preventing the return of totalitarianism. Of course, everything was easier because even after 40 years of owning the countries of

Central and Eastern Europe, have never ceased to belong to the Western civilization and thus, they had something to return to and to build upon.

Today, the situation is different. The significance of no military or force needed for the victory of liberal democracy and especially for its maintenance has not decreased. But the way to apply, it's more complicated. The disadvantage is that democratic institutions usually do not have a tradition in the countries where the terrorist threats originate. The advantage, on the other hand, is that unlike the countries of the Soviet bloc, which were tightly closed against any institutional influence from outside, these cases are different. Thus, we have a chance to participate in the building of democratic and civic institutions. And in the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan, we even have the responsibility for their foundation and operation. If anything is failing, it is not military operations but ability to build democratic institutions and alerting civic administration to introduce a rule of law and order, and to ensure citizen safety. It is a long and difficult process but we must go through it, otherwise our military victories will turn against us.

I follow the debate on foreign policy within the American presidential race, and I dare say that the reflection on the balanced use of hard power, military force, coercion; and soft power, civil force, persuasion, fully reflect the change in the security and strategic environment. We understand the antimissile umbrella to be a part of greater politics which is far from being pro-military. This is yet another denial of the Cold War mentality, which practically excluded any civil cooperation.

Threats which we have to face in the era after the Cold War are different, but the question which we must answer in order to efficiently eliminate them remains the same. First, we must correctly designate the threats. Second, we must be able to analyze them. Third, we must be determined to achieve victory. Fourth, we must be persistent to maintain the new status quo.

The terrorism itself is nothing new, but it gains completely new dimensions in the world after the Cold War, when the iron bands of the bloc system fell apart. It is no longer an isolated phenomenon, whether in space or time; it is turning into a permanent global campaign owing to modern communication means. Contrary to ideologically motivated terrorism of the Cold War, the identity of today's terrorism is formed by the extreme and violent jihadism. It is much more malignant, especially because it does not fear self-destruction and is thus irrational and unpredictable. It is also more persistent and determined than the communism because it draws force directly from cultural rules.

Global terrorism has no central authority. It does not need great military forces, massive employment of machinery and complicated logistics. It's mobile, strictly decentralized, and highly conspiracy-motivated. Terrorists do not have their own state, although some countries do support terrorism and therefore they must account with revenge. Terrorism utilizes ethnical, tribal and sectarian conflicts and points of frictions, and encounter a (self-idealization?). This gives it new recruits and at the same time provides it with a base and ideal cover. The security issue is further complicated by a rise in new powers whose regimes are as hostile and unpredictable as the terrorists, and the

fact that they are going to behave pragmatically, like Soviet Moscow used to, cannot be relied on.

On the other hand, many states are falling apart and get divided according to ethnical or regional differences which create another hotbed for terrorism. Based upon this re-designation of the facts, I can see the differences between the present time and the Cold War. There is no deterrent force which would keep the terrorists tamed. On the contrary, during the Cold War the West eliminated Soviet dominance in conventional arms by a more powerful strike as in now. Today's situation is reversed. The terrorists can negate our military dominance by settling to employ arms of mass destruction against civilians. There is no clearly divided time of peace and time of war; borders between them get blurred. Tension is permanent and violence can break out any time, and the nature of military operations must reflect this. It puts new demands on strategic planning, on reforming the armed forces, and on employment of army units. There is no solution in slowly defeating the opponent. The arising conflicts are usually long-term; peace is difficult to achieve, and fights are easy to start over. And even in cases where an effective military victory is possible, it is only the beginning of a journey which doesn't end with a defeated country, but with a working democratic society.

It's clear that the significance of the connection of military, civic, and economic forces doesn't diminish, but rises. It is also necessary to carefully consider the employment of forces and the division of risks, not to get exhausted in non-effective operations, and not to use – (in Czech) – to create new threats. Light relationships, which not only assist military operations but more importantly lighten the potential of the soft force, gain a special meaning.

The threats of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are different from those during the Cold War. One of them is in effect by individual ballistic missiles launched from the territory of one of those unpredictable regimes, or by one of those sub-state players. Antimissile umbrella, in its present form, does not change the strategic balance of forces but it is a response to one particular effect, a response which comes after the designation and analysis of the risk, and is an expression of our determination to face it.

I'd like to stress again that we do not consider the antimissile system to be the final response not even from the military point of view, let alone from the civil one. The Czech Republic is aware the new threats require new approaches to prevent them, therefore we positively reacted to the offer of placing antimissile defense elements on the Czech territory.

We have four main reasons to enter the negotiations about the system. First, we see that there's a manifestation of confidence in the Czech Republic which has proved to be a competent ally, including joint missions and which is able to undertake new tasks for the joint defense. Second, we see it is a manifestation of our will to honor these commitments, today and any time in the future, as payment of our debt which incurred when we were accepted to NATO. We want to be a country which not only uses a defense of others, but which actively partakes on the defense of the Euro-Atlantic area.

The complex antimissile defense system will also provide protection for advanced American troops and allies. Third, there is a geo-strategic aspect. If there are two defense sections created within NATO, a section with the defense system and a section without it, the alliance would then become diffused and its unity broken. There would be first-class countries and second-class countries as far as security is concerned. If the antimissile elements are not built in Poland and the Czech Republic, and the United States goes on without us, we would perceive it as a risk. Therefore, we strive that there is a comprehensive united antiballistic missile defense system within NATO.

Last but not least, the antimissile defense has a geopolitical significance. Central Europe has always been an object of struggle over its powers. Many conflicts have arisen here in the past which also affected other countries, including the World War the second. Russia, which is re-finding its power ambitious, despite its having vacated this region. The failure of the antimissile defense project would undoubtedly strengthen the pressure which Russia expels up in the region, and would move us closer to the sphere of Russian influence.

I should go more in detail on the specific relationship between the antimissile defense and security challenges in Central Europe. As I have said, in the course of past century this region has been vital for world security and remains so. Whenever there was a power vacuum in Central Europe the world powers had a tendency to feel it, which led to many wars. And on the contrary, the stability of the region contributed to the security of entire Europe. Now, Central Europe is a part of the zone of stability and security, NATO. Any casting of doubts, any weakening of the role of Central European countries as full-right members of the alliance, uselessly creates new risks and fights. Of course, the antimissile defense project is a confirmation of the region's security position and thus contributes to our stability. I point out that I do not specifically mean the antimissile umbrella now. It does not exist, and other defense systems are built instead. We would also like to be a part of them, together with Western Europe. Whether to station the antimissile defense elements or not on our soil, that must be our sovereign decision made about concerning our own security interests and commitments to our allies.

Of course, we need to maintain a dialogue with Russia and we do so, like the U.S. government, but we cannot let the antimissile defense system be partially decided in Moscow. That would mean the return of Cold War mentality, of rivalry of two powers, of principle of revenge and deterrence. The antimissile defense does react to particular security threats; for us, however, the primary focus in incurring of values of Central European region within the Euro-Atlantic area. The one-for-all, all-for-one principle which was the basis of the Washington treaty has more significant meaning than the military one.

The alliance has been more than the community of defense since its beginning. It has been a safeguard of common values; it does not only represent the most powerful military force in the world. That is not the goal, but a means for the defense of liberal democracy. Alliances, hard military force, always served to one goal: the defense of the soft power of civic society. We do not underestimate the potential threat of an attack by

ballistic missiles, but the basic significance for us in the negotiations about the antimissile system is the non-military scope. It is a political decision expressing an allegiance to civilization and a unified will to defend ourselves. Central Europe, Europe, and NATO need this unity. The threat of the terrorist attacks by arms of mass destruction is significant; however, it is only a part of the issue. It is also suggested by an increased activity of intelligence agencies in the region.

In the future, we will need to proceed together in a unified manner, not only at preventing terrorist threats but also at enforcing energy security, solving immigration issues, strengthening democracy in the world and providing foreign aid, addressing issues of war, trade, and the global economic operation. One of the benefits which we hold the antimissile defense would bring is the transfer of top technologies and scientific research and industrial operation; ensure development of the soft civil environment, which the antimissile umbrella should protect, and the circle closes. The antimissile system is not only a result of the will to maintain the united Euro-Atlantic area, but at the same time it brings more reasons why this unity has sense.

I could summarize my opinion on the relationship between Central Europe and the antimissile defense into one sentence. The question is not why the elements of antimissile defense should be installed here, but why they should not be. Why not, if the system is functional and works well in other NATO countries? And this brings me to the end and to the final answer to the question, does the antimissile defense system mean a return of the Cold War. I can briefly recapitulate the reason why I believe that it doesn't.

The antagonist from the Cold War is missing. The system is a response to new threats. The antimissile umbrella is a part of a wider, not only military, politics, and its final goal is not competition but cooperation and aid to countries about terrorists have their bases. The antimissile system is for a dominantly defensive nature; it does not change the strategic balance of the forces, but responds to one particular threat. The elements of the antimissile defense in Central Europe are an expression of overcoming the Cold War mentality. Failure of this project, however, would encourage revisionist force and a de facto drop, a new iron curtain, this time across the NATO countries.

With your permission, I would end my talk with a question mark. Why does an antimissile defense system in Central Europe stir up such passionate response while there are large American bases, including antimissile elements, and employing thousands of soldiers functioning with no problems in the rest of the continent? Why does the criticism always are from military and technical parameters, and possibilities of the system? Is this not the best proof that we are on the right track?

Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MR. FLANAGAN: All right. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Prime Minister. We will now have ample time for questions. I would just ask you to please identify

yourself and then we'll have simultaneous translation here, so that the – speak slowly so we can have a good translation and make sure that your intent is clear.

And let me also just welcome a couple other members of the diplomatic corps that I hadn't noted earlier. First of all, Ambassador Kacer from the Slovak Republic, who is sitting in the front row, and Deputy Chief of Mission Daniela Gitman from the Romanian Embassy, and there may be others. I'm sorry. I was blinded by the light here when I came in; I couldn't see.

But I think there was a question in the middle here. Yes, sir. And wait for the microphone, please.

Q: Zalewski from the Polish Press Agency in Washington.

Prime Minister, before you arrive here you had said that your government would coordinate your moves –

(Off mike.)

Q: Tomasz Zalewski from the Polish Press Agency.

Mr. Prime Minister, before you arrived here you had said that your government would coordinate your moves on the antimissile shield with the Polish government. Does it mean that in case Poland doesn't sign, doesn't finalize its agreement with the United States on its part of this system, and the negotiations are still ongoing, as you know, does it mean that the Czech government will delay also the finalizing agreement with the United States?

(Mr. Topolánek's comments through translator.)

MR. TOPOLÁNEK: Thank you very much for your question. I am certainly consulting all of these matters with Donald Tusc (ph) and we are on the phone constantly and permanently.

However, let me make a difference between negotiated contract and a contract signed. We will certainly want to sign the agreements on the same date, or around the same date, as the Polish side. The fact that at this moment we're a little bit ahead of the Polish side, that's our advantage, but that does not change anything on the importance of concluding those negotiations together.

I personally think that the Polish side is very close to arriving to the conclusion, and the package of requirements and conditions. Their stake in it should not be directly related to the stationing of the interceptors in the Polish soil. Modernization of the Polish army is not directly related to the stationing of the interceptors on the Polish soil, therefore I am not afraid that we would get into a situation in which the Polish side would not be able to timely conclude the negotiations, and that it would not be able to NATO-

ize, i.e., to put this whole missile defense system under the umbrella of NATO, at the Bucharest summit.

MR. FLANAGAN: Middle of this side, if you could just wait for the microphone, please.

Q: Georgeta Pourchot, CSIS.

What is the actual state of bilateral negotiations with Washington?

MR. TOPOLÁNEK: As you probably know, there are two basic agreements. We usually refer to it as the greater agreement and smaller agreement with NATO SOFA. And as far as the greater agreement, we radically arranged for all the details. There's actually one outstanding point still pending to be resolved, however, it is a technical issue; it relates to the protection of environment, natural environment. And we actually agree on the principle that we should follow the legislation on environmental protection, which is stricter. So it is actually to be decided which legislation is kind of tougher or stricter, and there are actually just three or four words that we have to fine-tune. But I'm sure that within a few coming weeks, we are going to finalize it.

As far as the NATO SOFA agreement, the smaller agreement or the minor agreement, we've not reached that far in terms of the greater agreement. But we are moving ahead. This agreement is not so important as the greater one, but we're going to work on it further and it will take a few more months to finalize it; and I do not envisage any major problems on the way.

As far as the Polish side is concerned, I can't really answer you. From the top of my head, I don't have so much detailed information on this. So this answer relates only to the Czech side. Let me actually add on this note that I am not – we should differentiate this process from the ratification and signing of this agreement because the agreements have to be signed by the president and also they have to be ratified by the parliament. So there's a long way ahead of us.

MR. FLANAGAN: Questions on the missile defense issue? It looks like there is one in the back, perhaps.

Q: Yes, hello. I'm Susan Cornwell (ph) with Reuters. Will you put your missile-defense agreement before your parliament for its approval and how soon do you expect to do that? And, secondly, what will the radar cost that's going into the Czech Republic and who is going to pay the bill? Thank you.

(Laughter.)

MR. TOPOLÁNEK: Well, you are asking about bills or payment of the bills. First of all, we should think about paying the telephone bills because there have been a number of telephone calls to arrange and negotiate this agreement. So, first of all, the

cabinet should approve this agreement and then it should be presented to the parliament. It is exactly the same way as you would do it in the United States of America. I can't envisage any other way.

But, permanently, we're in touch with the parliamentary members. We communicate with the parliamentary committees and we update them on the development of the negotiations, about various aspects: about studies, feasibility studies; impact studies on environment. We're talking about various other studies regarding the health impact on the population. We're talking about negotiations with Russia and RC or bilateral related. So the parliament has been, up until now, very well informed. The movement – it is signed and approved by the cabinet. It will be presented to our parliament, to the two chambers of our parliament. There will be the reading rounds and, pursuant to our legislative constitution, these agreements should be approved.

And as far as the financing and funding of this, well, we should not realize that this is not the first base, military base, ever built by the United States in Europe. There are 14 nations, 14 countries which host American equipment, American sites. So we should not really pretend that this is a different case. So it will follow the same pattern and the American side is going to pay for the whole investment. So, of course, the details have to be précised in those individual contracts in relation to the respective countries, but the model is the same. The model is the same.

Q: Caroline Persutti (ph) with Voice of America TV. Welcome, prime minister, first of all. And during the briefing after your meeting with President Bush, you mentioned that there were three words that kept you apart from the agreement. And now we hear there is one point. Can you elaborate on that? And, also, what is the next step? Would this involve another meeting with the president and another visit to the United States?

MR. TOPOLÁNEK: Well, I think I have already provided as much detail as I actually originally wanted – (chuckles) – or intended. But these three words or these outstanding issues only relate to the environmental regulations and we I think found common language and we agreed that we will use the stricter environmental norms and standards. I obviously didn't want to tackle this issue on the phone and that's why I have to go back to Prague to finalize this issue, but there's nothing serious, I assure you.

My trip to the United States has been often presented by the media as for the purpose of arranging the missile-defense system, it's stationing in the Czech Republic and exchange of those missile-defense system for the visa-waiver program. But I think there is a more important purpose of my visit and that is the promotion of human rights or protection of human rights. I met the dissidents from various countries – from Iran, from Cuba, Byelorussia, Burma – and I met a number of our emigrants, a number of Czechs living in the United States.

So I don't think that we should limit my trip or its significance only to the missile-defense negotiations. I think that the memorandum of understanding on the visa-waiver

program has got much wider implications and ramifications. Hopefully, we'll be able to also access to – gain access to research and development in the field of military-defense system. So all of these are added values to my trip, but that's definitely not the main purpose of my visit or my trip to the United States of America.

MR. FLANAGAN: (Off mike) – just to close up on this missile-defense question, perhaps one other point which is, I wonder if you could give us a sense of what impact the national intelligence estimate on the Iranian nuclear program has had on the internal Czech debate about deployment of the X-band radar and, in particular, the question of the timing as to how that should proceed. And what is your government's current position on when the initial construction work should begin or how it should unfold? And what consultation process should exist with other countries that have expressed concerns about this?

MR. TOPOLÁNEK: Well, first of all, I would like to say that following the feasibility study that was approved in Riga during the NATO summit, there is another study being carried out regarding the various threats based on which we are basing this program on, defense against middle – sorry – short, middle-range, and long-range missiles. And this study clearly shows that the threats identified are even bigger than we thought or at least we realized that there will be many more threats. It's not just about Iran. It's not only about the countries which today are capable of devising such weapons. But I tried to actually explain during my presentation that there are also countries who could take hold on these weapons or maybe these might not be even countries. It might be organizations, groups. So it would be funny to claim that we are building this system against Russia or any particular country. We are actually building this to defend ourselves against any dangers appearing in the past and I think that our objective in this enterprise should be to devise this missile-defense system in collaboration with Russia and also under the NATO umbrella.

As far as the practical implementation details are concerned, I don't think that neither of the sides would give you any specific dates because, first, the ratification process has to take place. Without ratification, we can't continue and even think further. It is not possible to get any further budgets from the United Nations – sorry – United States Congress unless this program is ratified. So we know how much time is needed. We know how much time will be needed from the moment of decision, how much finances would be needed. But the date itself and the practicalities regarding – but let's say the originally announced date should be – we should be able to fulfill it.

MR. FLANAGAN: Yes, sir, in the second row.

Q: Mr. Prime Minister, if you permit me, my question will be from a different kettle. The day before yesterday saw a very sad anniversary: 60 years of the communist putsch in Czechoslovakia. And we know what followed: 40 years of terror, oppression, brain-washing. And, yet, Mr. Prime Minister, there is a substantial part of the Czech nation that vote communist again. Shouldn't we be worried about that? What is the

danger that the Communist Party will eventually get a foot in the door and get in the government? Can you perhaps take a position on this? Thank you.

MR. TOPOLÁNEK: Well, that's I think a topic which would deserve a full-fledged talk, a talk in its own right. However, today we are commemorating – or a few days ago we commemorated – this very sad anniversary.

Number eight plays a very important, almost, you might say, fatal role in our history. Number eight appears in some of the most important dates of the Czech Republic's or Czechoslovakia's history. In 1918, Czechoslovak Republic was founded by Tomas Garrigue Masaryk with the assistance of Woodrow Wilson. In 1938, unfortunately, without the Americans on our side, the Munich agreement was signed between England and France and Hitler. In 1948, it is the mentioned coup d'état by the Communists. In 1968, we were invaded by the Russians.

Of course, there always debates. Should Edward Benes, our president then, should he accept the demise of his ministers or not? Could the coup d'état of the communists have been avoided efficiently or not; 1968 I've mentioned already. It is the spring time, spring period, and the following occupation. So number eight really plays an important role in our history.

In 1991 – the 30<sup>th</sup> of June – 1991, that's not a very long time ago, it was in 1991 when the last Soviet soldiers left the soil of the Czech Republic. If you really consider all of these historical implications and aspects, you will readily realize how important these things are for us. So now there is 26 MPs in our parliament who represent the Communist Party, but that is an improvement because, originally, I think one or two years ago, it was only 40. Obviously, there is a group of old people, pensioners, who still commemorate communist times, but, unfortunately, there's also a new generation of people growing up in the Czech Republic, which is now enjoying prosperity and relative leisure and easy life.

And these people, again, dream about equality; they dream about those ideals which are at the grassroot of the communist thinking. And as the communists wanted to command wind and rain – that was one of the slogans of the communists in the '50s – you still see some of these ramifications today be it the environmental movement, be it the efforts to combat the climate change. So I think there is always a risk of history repeating itself. Therefore, in the parliament, we pushed through the establishment of something similar to the Glox institute (ph), an institute which researches on the horrors of the totalitarian regimes. And this institution should be here as a living memory of the crimes of communism. And we believe that it is our obligation to leave this to the posterity of our – I think, you know, we should be able to draw on these examples to learn our lesson of history, to show how democracy, how fragile can democracy be and that freedom is not for free.

So, obviously, democracy, freedom, those are very nice flowers. But they need to be watered in order to flourish. And it is a never-ending battle. It is a never-ending

struggle. It is a never-ending story. You always have to go forward. You always have to defend those values. You have to combat and resist various attacks on and attempts on freedom and democracy. Thank you very much for this question because I think it very well fits into the scope and significance of my trip to the U.S. And, for me, the missile-defense system is yet another important step which, in its importance, can be compared to those which have number eight in their date.

Q: Ana Moya (ph), Russia Today TV. First of all, thank you, and I would like to go back to missile defense actually. We had a chance to speak to Joe Cirincione. He is a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. And this is what he said, quote:

"Neither the Czech Republic nor Poland want to say no to the United States, but they also don't want to say yes. So it's what we call slow-rolling. They are talking about it and they are indicating they might be able to get a deal, but there will be no deal."

In fact, he went on to say that after the Bush administration is over, the United States will completely drop the idea of a missile-defense shield in Eastern Europe.

MR. TOPOLÁNEK: I think that this is a wishful thinking. I don't want to disappoint you, but it's wishful thinking. I think that there is a certain wrong – there is a certain misconception of who really lost the Cold War. I don't think it was neither the Americans nor the Russians who lost the Cold War. Communists – communists and the communist regime lost the Cold War and that is a great chance for Russia.

And I'm an optimist. I believe that Russia, especially in terms of those values that they can agree on with the U.S., which is mass destruction, weapons proliferation, and other issues, I think I'm sure that they will be able to find common language at the end of the day with U.S. on the missile-defense issue because I think that, you know, it is for the benefit of Russia because this will not allow Russia to be blackmailed by those rogue states. It doesn't really make any logic; it doesn't give any logic for Russia to refuse the system. The only logic I find behind that is a kind of geopolitical fight for Central Europe. I would like to recommend you to read the energy policy issued by the Russian Federation in 2003. Then you will understand some of the worries and concerns of countries like the Czech Republic, worries that we might once more again fall under the influence of Russia.

We want Russians to enjoy democracy and we want Russians to cooperate with us on building a system which is going to defend our people. That's all.

Q: Do you feel like you're stuck in the middle, you and Poland, the Czech Republic and Poland, like you're stuck in the middle between Russia and the United States? We know that Poland – I don't want to say afraid – but there's some concerns that Russia said that they will not exclude the possibility of a preemptive attack to defend their territorial integrity. So and some experts that we've spoken to also said that the

Czech Republic and Poland are kind of – feel that they are stuck in the middle. How difficult of a decision this is?

MR. TOPOLÁNEK. Well, I just tried to explain who, in my opinion, the losers are, in terms of the Cold War. I don't think that the Russian Federation is the loser in the Cold War conflict. When you actually study some of the rhetoric of some of those generals, well, of course, if some generals say things which are beyond any logic, then you can find the same example everywhere in the world. But I do not think that we should really believe in it, and we should actually take it at its face value. And I think that this rhetoric is very much the same rhetoric as the Cold War rhetoric.

But let me actually continue in my answer. I'm not afraid that we would not be able to strike the deal with the Americans and finalize the process. The only worry I might have is that we'll not be able to ratify the process. But I'll do all my best so that this process or so that this agreement is ratified by our parliament. To be even more specific, for me, the presence of Americans in the Czech Republic is a guarantee of security of the whole region. Even if it is – only if takes one American soldier, I think it is the guarantee of security in our area. Thank you very much for your question indeed.

MR. FLANAGAN: Is this another question in the back row there?

Q: Yes, Mary Birdman (sp) from AER in Germany. There is a very rapid movement to have the Lisbon Treaty ratified throughout Europe. Although the fact, of course, this is the substitute for the European Constitution, though it was rejected by the populations of France and Germany. How do you see the future of such agreements as you are now trying to come to with the United States in the context of this new European treaty, which does reduce the sovereignty of European nations significantly. And what role do you see NATO playing in this? And what effect can this have on European relations with Russia?

MR. TOPOLÁNEK: I don't think that the Lisbon Treaty has anything to do with my trip to the United States or that it would relate to this trip. We signed the Lisbon Agreement with a weary heart. Unfortunately, we're not able to incorporate in that agreement everything we had originally wanted. But, for me, it is just a, kind of, rational compromise. For that reason, I have been a little bit sorry that the European Parliament had expressed its disappointment that a number of things had changed in regard to the former institutional agreement.

But the process is not going to be easy in our country. We never claimed that it would be easy. I think that Robert Fitso thought it would go even smoother in Slovakia. I don't think that our parliament will pose any problems, but the senate will probably turn to the Czech court of justice, and they will ask the court of the justice – the supreme court of justice for its opinion on this agreement.

I think that this Lisbon Treaty must be judged by the Czech court of justice. And I think that the Czech court of justice should have precedence over the European court of

justice in methods of protection of human rights and freedoms. I think that the NATO Summit, which is going to take place in Bucharest, is not going to pose any threats to the European Union. The discussion we're going to hold there is going to relate to countries such as Croatia, Albania, Macedonia, whether they are ready to join NATO, whether Ukraine and Georgia should be invited into the, sort of, roadmap process. And in what way do third pillar, i.e., the missile defense, should come under the umbrella of NATO? These are going to be the subjects.

And I think that the EU is going to – that the European Union should actually concern itself with one particular issue and that is Kosovo. Once the European Union failed already and we can afford making another mistake of this kind. So I think that most of the discussion evolve around the recognition of Kosovo, the implementation of Ahtisaari's plan, et cetera, et cetera. I don't really see a direct relation between the Lisbon Treaty and whatever has been mentioned here.

Q: The subject of the NATO Summit, Mr. Prime Minister, I wondered if you could – and undoubtedly, this was some subject of your discussion with President Bush this morning. I wonder, did you feel that you both had a common perspective on your hopes and aspirations for the Bucharest Summit? And if not, how would you categorize your priorities for the NATO Summit? What is it that you hope most to see beyond some of the things you just listed?

MR. TOPOLÁNEK: Well, I've already mentioned that there should be – or we should see quite a strong statement of the third pillar of missile defense, and this how this summit is being prepared. I think that without NATO accepting this third pillar as a part of its own defense structure, it would become very difficult for us to have it approved by the parliament. As far as the other activities are concerned, we actually discussed this in detail with President Bush. And I actually support both enlargements, i.e., the invitation of Georgia and Ukraine to MAP with all the risks involved and the membership of the three mentioned countries, Croatia, Macedonia, and Albania, I believe.

So I think that, obviously, there are going to be – that is, discussions on the importance of NATO, its role in the future, et cetera, so of course a number of issues will be discussed there. But I do not expect any major surprises in Bucharest, so I think that it is very well predictable, what is going to happen in Bucharest.

Q: (Off mike) – Afghanistan and the NATO deployment there?

MR. TOPOLÁNEK: Well, it is a very long and painful process and the end is not very clear, but we have to do all it takes. We really have to cooperate; we have to share responsibilities and divide responsibilities as well. But we should be slowly moving from the pure military operations to peacekeeping operations and reconstruction, so we should actually help the country to rebuild its institutions, to establish the rule of law. And obviously, if we want this country to function independently, then we really have to help them a great deal. At the end of this year we're going to have over 500 military people present in Afghanistan; we just started the PRT, project reconstruction team, in Logar.

We are cooperating with the German PRT in FISA, but we are still present in the Kabul airport. Qurya (ph), we've got a chemical unit there and we also have our military hospital located in Qurya, and we're also ready to deploy our special troops as well, whenever needed.

I think that Afghanistan is a laboratory for future projects like that because there are so many organizations, so many parties, so many organizations involved and we are really building a new country. We're building civil society; we're building police forces; we're building the institutions. And the idea is, I think, to help them to build their own institutions to help themselves.

As far as Iraq, which is of course related to this issue, we still stay in Iraq; we're not withdrawing. We also had a very lengthy discussion with President Bush. The issue in Iraq is very similar to the one which exists between Afghanistan and Pakistan border. It is the Turkish-Kurdish border where we see some problems. And we cannot leave Iraq; we only have to become more efficient, more effective, create conditions and later foundations for the reconstruction of the country, but we should not leave it. There's no way we should leave it.

MR. FLANAGAN: (Off mike) – for time, but we want to thank you for your candor and for your clarity in giving us a very good, I think, sense of insights and perspectives on Czech thinking about security and trans-Atlantic relations. And we congratulate you on the signing of the MOU, movement on the visa waiver program, and we hope that you have a very successful remainder to your trip and particularly in your meetings on Capitol Hill later today.

So please join me in thanking the prime minister of the Czech Republic.

(Applause.)

MR. TOPOLÁNEK: I look forward for next meeting, and I hope will come back to the United States to your institution, too. Thanks.

(Applause.)

(END)