

Moscow demands clarification from U.S. over Gates remarks about targeting Russia

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Russia has demanded an explanation from the United States over Defense Secretary Robert Gates' remarks, which suggested that Russia was being identified as a potential threat, the Foreign Ministry said on Monday.

Russia has asked the United States to clarify whether Gates' remarks represented the official position of the U.S. administration, said Foreign Ministry spokesman Mikhail Kamynin in a statement.

On Feb. 7, Gates addressed a committee meeting of the U.S. congress, suggesting that Russia poses a potential threat to U.S. security.

He said: "We don't know what's going to develop in places like Russia..., in North Korea (DPRK), in Iran and elsewhere."

Kamynin said Russia had noticed what Gates had said, which were among a series of recent remarks by the U.S. military and intelligence officials that has greatly bewildered Russia.

Over the past few days, there have been a series of verbal battles between the United States and Russia.

Addressing a high-profile security conference in Munich, Germany on Saturday, Putin condemned the United States for "almost uncontained" use of force.

He said the United States "has overstepped its national borders in every way" and is fostering a new global arms race.

In response, Washington immediately dismissed Putin's accusations as false.

In a statement later on Saturday, White House national security spokesman Gordon Johndroe said, "We are surprised and disappointed with President Putin's comments."

On Sunday, Russian Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov justified Putin's accusations against the United States after the security conference in Munich.

Ivanov said that Putin's remarks were simply "a reminder" of the fact that the United States is breaking its promises it made a decade ago that NATO would not move any closer to Russian borders.

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