

U.S. Uses Iran Pretext to Globalize Its Defenses and Threaten Russia

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U.S. Uses Iran to Globalize Its Defenses, Russia Says

Bloomberg. U.S. plans to base a missile-defense system in eastern Europe are a pretext to encroach on Russia's borders, said Dmitry Rogozin, the Russian envoy to NATO.

"Maybe it's against Iran, but that same system can be targeted against any other country, including Russia's strategic nuclear potential," Rogozin said in an interview on state broadcaster Rossiya 24 today. "The U.S. is using Iran's actions to globalize its system of missile defense."

Rogozin, a nationalist politician who was dispatched to NATO two years ago, was reacting to Romania's decision yesterday to join a proposed U.S. missile shield. Romania, a former Soviet ally, joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 2004.

Russia objected to plans by the Bush administration to set up a missile defense shield in Poland and the Czech Republic, designed to fend off an Iranian attack. President Barack Obama scrapped those plans in September as part of his "reset" to improve U.S.-Russian relations.

Russia's new military doctrine, published on the Kremlin Web site today, names NATO's eastward expansion and foreign missile defense systems among the country's biggest security threats. International terrorism is second to last on the list of 11 threats.

"Our military shouldn't believe some promises or intentions," Rogozin said. "We need to go on the assumption that a foreign military potential is approaching our borders."

'Increasingly Alarmed'

While relations have improved under Obama, Rogozin said a future U.S. administration may retarget its missile defense system at Russia. Attempts by Western countries to establish bases closer to Russia are more worrying than possible Iranian plans to obtain weapons of mass destruction, he said.

Konstantin Kosachyov, head of the foreign relations committee of the lower house of parliament, yesterday said his country was "increasingly alarmed" after Iran launched a rocket into space.

Russian leaders often give contradictory signals over issues such as nuclear arms control or

Iran's nuclear program.

President Dmitry Medvedev is spearheading a new arms control agreement with Obama and has indicated a willingness to toughen sanctions on Iran. Prime Minister Vladimir Putin has said the arms agreement must include missile defense and has held off from new threats against Iran.

"We insist that the issue of developing missile defense is tightly linked to cutting strategic offense nuclear weapons, which is currently being negotiated in Geneva," Rogozin said.

He also said Russia would be reserved in helping the NATO mission in Afghanistan until the alliance does more to control the flow of drugs out of the country.

"Technical issues" concerning different air control standards have prevented U.S. military planes from flying more supplies across Russian territory to Afghanistan, according to Rogozin. He said he expected a solution to be reached shortly.

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