

Georgia Says Russia Put Missiles in South Ossetia

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TBILISI, Georgia — Georgia's Foreign Ministry on Wednesday accused Russia of deploying high-precision S-300 air-defense missiles in breakaway South Ossetia in an effort to fence off the strategic South Caucasus.

The Russian Defense Ministry said earlier this month that it had deployed the mobile missile system in Georgia's rebel region of Abkhazia, as well as other air defense systems in South Ossetia, the epicenter of a five-day war between Russia and Georgia in 2008.

The Russian Air Force dismissed a statement by Georgian Foreign Minister Grigol Vashadze on Wednesday that the S-300 had also been deployed in South Ossetia.

Vashadze said Russia had "packed" its Gyumri military base in Armenia — bordering Georgia — with long-range S-300 missiles.

"And be sure that they have brought the S-300 to the Tskhinvali region as well, although they have not announced it yet," Vashadze told reporters. Tskhinvali is South Ossetia's capital, 116

kilometers from Georgia's own capital, Tbilisi.

"So the Russians created a triangle in the Caucasus region, which they think they would need for possible confrontation with NATO," Vashadze said.

In Moscow, a Defense Ministry spokesman would not comment on Vashadze's statement, but an Air Force official denied that the system had been deployed in South Ossetia.

"There are no S-300s in South Ossetia," the official said on condition of anonymity.

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