

'Reset' Is Threatened By Missiles

By [Alexandra Odynova](#)

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Correction: An earlier version of this misstated the name of the editor-in-chief of Natsionalnaya Oborona (National Defense) magazine. His name is Igor Korotchenko.

President Dmitry Medvedev warned Wednesday that Russia would quit the New START nuclear arms reduction pact with the United States if America continues plans to deploy a missile defense shield in Eastern Europe.

If Washington and Brussels do not cooperate with Moscow on the matter, it could also result in Russia targeting shield sites in Europe with its own ballistic missiles, Medvedev said.

The threats, which come days before Russian parliamentary elections, endanger the "reset" in bilateral relations that was started with the New START treaty.

Russian analysts called Medvedev's promises "adequate," given the United States' reluctance to compromise, but some also voiced doubts that added pressure would solve the impasse.

Russia would implement a multistage upgrade of its missile forces should the United States proceed with plans to deploy elements of its missile defense in Europe, Medvedev [said](#) in a video statement released by the Kremlin.

"Sadly, the United States and its NATO partners ... have no intention, at least for now, to take our concerns about the European missile defense into account," a stern-looking Medvedev said in the video.

Military reaction would culminate in the deployment of Iskander missile complexes targeting U.S. missile defense sites on Russia's border, he said.

Among the sites to house the Iskanders — which have a range of 500 kilometers — is Russia's Baltic exclave of Kaliningrad, which borders on Poland, he said.

Medvedev did not explicitly list any demands for the United States or NATO, but urged dialogue. He also reminded that Moscow requested last year that the U.S. missile defense system in Europe be run jointly.

A NATO spokeswoman [said](#) following the speech that the alliance would "thoroughly study" Medvedev's statement, RIA-Novosti reported.

The White House said late Wednesday that it would proceed with missile defense shield plans despite Medvedev's statement.

U.S. missile defense shield plans for Eastern Europe, discussed since 2002, envision deploying missile interceptors and radars in new NATO members near the Russian border. Romania has agreed to host U.S. interceptors starting 2015, and Poland starting 2018. Talks with Bulgaria are ongoing.

American officials insist that the missiles in Europe would be meant to fend off a potential threat from Iran, which is pushing forward with long-range missile and alleged nuclear arms programs.

But Russian officials say that despite Iran being a target, the shield would also be capable of intercepting Russian missiles, crippling the military parity between the two former Cold War rivals.

Though military experts have voiced skepticism about whether current military technologies allow for the interception of any long-range ballistic missiles, the issue has soured relations between Moscow and Washington in recent years.

Tensions rose again last month after NATO rejected a Russian request for legal guarantees of the shield's safety for Moscow. Medvedev hinted earlier this week that the Kremlin was planning "sensible measures" in reaction to the stalemate.

Russia's ambassador to NATO, Dmitry Rogozin, echoed the president at a news conference in Moscow on Wednesday, announcing that "the diplomatic means [for solving the deadlock] have run out."

"We won't let anyone take us for fools," Rogozin, who is known for his hawkish stance, was

quoted as saying by Interfax. But he also followed Medvedev in saying the harsh measures were to prompt a dialogue with the United States.

The military reaction outlined by Medvedev is "adequate," said Igor Korotchenko, editor-in-chief of Natsionalnaya Oborona (National Defense) magazine.

"Russia gives the United States a fair warning about its plans four years in advance," Korotchenko told The Moscow Times by telephone.

But "dropping out of the New START treaty is a radical measure," he added.

However, military analyst Alexander Khramchikhin [said](#) upping the ante in the standoff is unlikely to solve the problem because neither side is ready to compromise, RIA-Novosti reported.

Improving ties with the United States, which grew strained in the last years of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's presidency in the mid-2000s, was touted as one of Medvedev's main achievements.

But after the duo's decision to swap jobs after the presidential election in March, many analysts questioned whether Medvedev, a longtime subordinate of Putin, had any independent foreign policy at all.

The hard-line stance may also be intended for the domestic populace, which is to elect a new State Duma next week. Medvedev is topping the party list for the ruling United Russia party, which is struggling to maintain its unchallenged domination in the lower chamber, and saber-rattling is seen as likely to add votes to the party.

The Iskander threat also follows the United States announcing on Tuesday that it would stop providing data to Russia on non-nuclear military forces in Europe.

Russia and the NATO states agreed to exchange such information before the end of the Cold War in 1990, signing the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty.

But Moscow suspended its observance of the treaty in 2007, also over concerns about the U.S. missile defense shield in Europe. The United States and its NATO allies, however, continued to provide their data to Russia until this week.

"After four years of non-Russian implementation ... we think that it's important to take some countermeasures vis-a-vis Russia," State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland [said](#) Tuesday.

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