

Putin Labels Russian Baltic Threat as 'Nonsense'

September 05, 2016

The  **Moscow Times**

Russian President Vladimir Putin has dismissed fears of a Russian threat to the Baltic states as “complete nonsense.”

Speaking in an interview with the Bloomberg news agency, Putin claimed that “all straight-thinking people in politics understand that notions of a Russian threat to, let’s say, the Baltic States, are complete nonsense.”

“Yes, we are a nuclear power, but do you really think that we are planning to capture the Baltic using nuclear weapons or something?”, Putin said. “It’s just nonsense.”

The Russian president admitted that the country wanted “more substantial” economic influence in cross-border cooperation, but refuted claims that Russia wanted to gain new territory, asking “as if we need any more?”

Putin maintained that Russia “has practiced and will continue to practice an absolutely peaceful foreign policy, aimed at cooperation,” and that the country's foreign policy was driven by “the conviction that you must not resist the will of the people.”

The president also criticized the international community's refusal to recognize Crimea as Russian following its annexation from Ukraine. The peninsula was officially incorporated into Russian territory following a highly-disputed referendum in 2014.

“So in one place, Kosovo [which declared independence from Serbia following a referendum in 1991], you can accept the will of the people, but not here [in the case of Crimea],” Putin said, calling Western nations’ stance on Crimea “political gamesmanship.”

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