

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Abedin, Huma <AbedinH@state.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, November 29, 2011 11:27 AM
To: H
Subject: FW: Russia opens new radar in warning to U.S. and NATO (Reuters)

From: OpsNewsTicker
Sent: Tuesday, November 29, 2011 10:50 AM
To: NEWS-Mahogany
Subject: Russia opens new radar in warning to U.S. and NATO (Reuters)

DUNAYEVO (Reuters) - President Dmitry Medvedev opened an early-warning radar station on Russian territory bordering two NATO nations on Tuesday, in a bid to press the United States to back down in a dispute over U.S. plans for a European missile shield.

Medvedev visited the facility in Kaliningrad -- Russia's westernmost point, sandwiched between Poland and Lithuania on the Baltic Sea -- and said Moscow was prepared to take other measures to counter the developing shield.

He said opening the station showed Moscow's determination to build up its offensive and defensive capabilities if the United States and NATO pushed ahead with an anti-missile shield aimed against Iran that Russia says is a threat to its security.

"I hope this step will be perceived by our Western partners as the first signal of our country's readiness to respond adequately to the threats which the missile defence system poses to our strategic nuclear forces," he told military officials.

The visit was the latest display of Russian resolve by Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin ahead of a parliamentary election on Sunday in which polls show the ruling party could lose ground.

Opening the radar station was one of the steps Medvedev announced last week in a stern statement outlining Russia's response to the European missile shield that the United States plans to put in place by 2020.

Defence Minister Anatoly Serdyukov said the radar would reach 6,000 kilometers (3,700 miles) westward, a reach Air and Space Forces chief Oleg Ostapenko said exceeded that of existing early-warning stations near St. Petersburg and in Belarus.

The United States says the missile shield is needed to counter a growing threat from Iran. But Moscow says it could be used to shoot down the nuclear missiles it has relied on for security since the Cold War.

"The European missile defence system that is currently being deployed ... creates significant problems for the security of the Russian Federation," Medvedev said in remarks at the radar station, a blocky facility surrounded by barbed wire.

GEOPOLITICAL GAMES

Talks aimed at forging cooperation on a European missile shield appear deadlocked over Russia's demand for legally binding limits on the system, a non-starter in Washington because of opposition to any restrictions on missile defence.

Medvedev said NATO could use the radar station as part of a missile defence system if the Cold War foes can agree to cooperate, but repeated last week's threat to deploy weapons targeting the NATO system "if our signal is not heard".

Most of the measures Medvedev outlined last week, including the station's opening, had already been planned.

Medvedev's tough talk is aimed in part at a domestic audience ahead of the election.

But analysts say Russia is also overstating the threat from the NATO missile defence system to use the issue as a bargaining chip with the West.

Medvedev, who signed the landmark New START nuclear weapons limitation treaty with Obama in 2010, said last week Russia's appetite for further arms control would depend on whether its concerns about missile defence were addressed.

On Monday, Russia's NATO envoy Dmitry Rogozin suggested Moscow could reduce its support for the alliance's campaign in Afghanistan if the United States and NATO did not heed its warnings about missile defence, Russian news agencies reported.

Russia currently lets the United States and NATO transport supplies headed for Afghanistan across its territory.

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