

NATO Seeks Strategic Partnership With Russia

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NEW YORK — U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton urged NATO and Russia on Wednesday to expand cooperation in areas such as missile defense, military doctrines, narcotics control and conventional arms limits in Europe.

But Clinton rejected a Russian initiative for a new security architecture in Europe proposed by President Dmitry Medvedev last year.

"We believe that the best way to achieve this is by reinforcing the pillars that have supported European security for decades, not by negotiating new treaties, as Russia has suggested," she said.

Clinton was addressing a meeting of the NATO-Russia Council, a panel formed in 2004 to improve ties between the former Cold War rivals. Foreign ministers of all 28 NATO nations attended the meeting, along with their Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov.

The meeting on Wednesday was intended to prepare the groundwork for a NATO-Russia

summit on Nov. 20 in Lisbon, Portugal.

"This summit offers an opportunity for us to take a fresh look at the security challenges that all our countries face, reflect on what our cooperation has already achieved and begin to chart a common course of action for the next decade," Clinton said.

She said the focus should be on addressing specific issues such as resuming missile defense exercises and linking NATO's and Russia's early warning radar systems, agreeing on a joint counter-narcotics strategy, updating the European conventional arms treaty and enhancing military transparency between the alliance and Moscow.

NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen described Wednesday's meeting as "very positive and a reflection of the substantive progress we have made in our relationship in the last 12-14 months."

He said a joint review of 21st-century threats would focus on Afghanistan, cooperation in combating terrorism and maritime piracy and on an anti-missile system that would protect North America, Europe and Russia.

"The future of Russia lies in cooperation with the European Union and NATO," Fogh Rasmussen said. "It makes sense from an economic point of view and from a security point of view."

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