

NATO to Offer Medvedev a Warm Embrace at Summit

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When President Dmitry Medvedev visits the NATO summit in Lisbon on Saturday, he should be prepared for some unusual courting from the alliance's leadership.

Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen has made it clear that he wants the summit to be a turning point in NATO's often-stormy ties with Moscow.

"My strong sense is that Russia shares our view that the time has come to stop worrying about each other. The time has come to work together," Rasmussen said in a [video address](#) released late Wednesday on his web site.

Rasmussen, who has made improving NATO-Russian ties a hallmark of his tenure, has said he wants to widen cooperation over Afghanistan and invite Moscow to join a U.S.-sponsored missile defense shield.

But a senior State Duma deputy cautioned that NATO should be judged by its actions, not by the words of its leaders.

The first challenge for Russia will be to analyze a new strategy that the 28-member alliance will unveil at the summit, which opens Friday, said Andrei Klimov, deputy chairman of the Duma's International Affairs Committee.

"President Medvedev is going there to get a firsthand account of how NATO's leadership sees the future of the organization," Klimov, a member of United Russia, said in an interview in his Duma office.

Expectations have been high, and in his remarks Rasmussen dubbed the summit "the most important in NATO's history." He said the new strategy would guide NATO for the next decade.

A first draft published in May said NATO should focus on improving ties with Moscow, which has assisted the alliance by opening overland supply routes to Afghanistan. Medvedev is expected to sign an agreement in Lisbon allowing NATO to use more supply routes through Russia.

The expert group under former U.S. Secretary of State Madelaine Albright that prepared the draft strategy held consultations with Moscow, but the final version to be presented at the summit is expected to differ significantly.

Klimov said that once the new strategy is known, it will be easier for Russian policymakers to formulate future relations with NATO.

Apart from areas where NATO's and Moscow's interests have long been close, like Afghanistan, terrorism and piracy, Rasmussen has called for Russia to join a planned missile defense shield that roiled U.S.-Russian relations under former U.S. President George W. Bush.

Russia had complained that those plans, which consisted of launch pads in Poland and a radar station in the Czech Republic, were too close to its borders and undercut its own nuclear deterrent.

As part of his "reset" policy, U.S. President Barack Obama replaced Bush's shield with a downscaled and more mobile version, but the revamped plans still feature stationing elements in Turkey and Romania, also close to Russia's borders.

At the Lisbon summit, NATO members are expected to accept Obama's missile plan and transform its European dimension into a NATO project.

Rasmussen has said cooperation with Moscow on missiles will be discussed at a later stage.

Pavel Zolotaryov, a retired general and deputy head of the Institute for the USA and Canadian Studies, said Obama's concept was less controversial because it focuses on protection from short- and medium-range missiles, while Bush included long-range strategic missiles.

But he said any progress depends on Washington's willingness to make it a cooperation of equals, including sharing sensitive technology.

"If they look at Russia as a potential ally, possibly we can go ahead," he said.

Klimov, the Duma deputy, cautioned that hopes for a NATO-Russia reset should not aim too high.

"We do not see NATO as an enemy — but we understand that it is a military organization with live nuclear weapons and carrier systems," he said.

He noted that the most serious disagreements with NATO — the 1999 war over Yugoslavia and the 2008 conflict in Georgia — occurred long after the Cold War ended and continue to influence current relations.

"We have not forgotten that NATO bombed the Balkans and killed civilians. And we remember very well that [Georgian President Mikheil] Saakashvili hoped for NATO protection when he decided to attack South Ossetia," he said.

Rasmussen has said the fact that both sides continue to have disagreements should not be an obstacle for cooperation.

Klimov agreed, saying he would prefer a world without NATO, where security policy is made by the UN Security Council and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe — both of which have Russia as a member.

"My belief is that there is no place for this organization in the 21st century," he said. "But as a realist, I understand that it won't go away."

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