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# Serdyukov Hopes NATO Plan Leak Is Fake

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Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov, right, seen in this file photo with President Dmitry Medvedev, said Monday that the alleged Baltic defense plan may become an issue in the ongoing joint assessment **D. Grishkin**

Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov said Monday that he hoped a recent WikiLeaks report about NATO's contingency plan to defend the three Baltic states from potential Russian aggression was false.

"We still hope that these publications have nothing to do with reality," Serdyukov said on Rossia-24 television.

He added that the deployment of NATO's forces near the Russian borders would draw a similar response from Russia.

U.S. classified diplomatic cables published by the WikiLeaks' whistleblowing web site earlier

this month also indicated that the United States offered to deploy naval forces in Polish ports and additional military aircraft in Poland and Germany.

Moscow expects NATO to formally deny the reports, Serdyukov said.

But hours later, the head of the NATO Information Office in Moscow, Robert Pszczel, said the alliance has contingency defense plans for every member state.

A collective defense alliance, NATO would be a "strange organization" if it did not develop defense plans for all its allies, Pszczel said, Interfax reported. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania became members of the group in 2004.

Top Russian officials, including Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, have rebuked NATO for the Baltic plans, reportedly drafted earlier this year, and hinted at the alliance's hypocrisy in view of last month's Russia-NATO summit in Lisbon, the warmest in years.

At the November summit, which took place shortly before WikiLeaks began publishing the cables, Russia agreed to expand cooperation on a transit route to Afghanistan and start sensitive negotiations on the possibility of joint European missile defense.

Serdyukov said Monday that the Baltic defense plan may become an issue in the ongoing joint assessment of missile threats by Russian and NATO experts. The results of the assessment are to be released in June.

NATO's Washington-led effort to build a missile shield in Europe is supposed to provide protection against a potential strike from Iran, but Moscow claims that the country will not have the technologies to deliver such an attack in the foreseeable future.

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