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China, Allies Back Russia on U.S. Missile Shield

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Ahmadinejad, left, meeting Medvedev on the sidelines of a SCO summit in Astana, Kazakhstan, on Wednesday. **Mikhail Klimentyev**

ASTANA, Kazakhstan — Russia won the backing of China and other members of a regional security body in criticizing U.S. plans for a missile shield, saying Wednesday that it could undermine global security.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, a security bloc grouping Russia, China and four Central Asian states, signed a declaration condemning any unilateral buildup of missile defenses after their leaders met in the Kazakh capital.

"The unilateral and unlimited buildup of missile defense by a single state or by a narrow group of states could damage strategic stability and international security," the six members of the SCO said in the declaration.

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said SCO members had been unanimous in their criticism of the missile shield and that the declaration referred not only to a planned European system.

U.S. officials say the proposed shield is meant to reduce the threat of a missile attack by Iran and could not neutralize Russia's vast arsenal.

"If we tried go in that direction it would not work, it would bankrupt us, it would not be in our interests ... and it is not going to happen," James Miller, U.S. principal deputy undersecretary of defense for policy, said at a panel discussion at London's Royal United Services Institute attended by Russia's NATO envoy, Dmitry Rogozin.

Russia and China have often voiced unity in opposition to perceived U.S. global dominance.

Nevertheless, the two have supported four rounds of UN sanctions against Iran, effectively blocking full Iranian membership in the SCO when Tehran tried to join last year.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who has upstaged previous SCO meetings, delivered a fiery 10-minute speech calling on members of the bloc to unite against Western powers.

"I believe that, through concerted actions, it is possible to change the general course of the world order in favor of peace, justice and people's prosperity," Ahmadinejad said at the end of a tirade against Western countries.

President Dmitry Medvedev urged Ahmadinejad on the sidelines of the SCO summit to be "more constructive" in his cooperation with global powers on nuclear issues, Lavrov said.

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