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Foreign Ministry Complains About U.S. Warships

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The Foreign Ministry on Thursday warned that a U.S. agreement to deploy warships off the Spanish coast as part of a NATO-wide anti-missile shield this week was undermining Russia-NATO cooperation.

But a NATO official responded that the issue was not debatable.

The Foreign Ministry said in a statement that the presence of U.S. warships in Spanish waters "caused concern" and complained that Wednesday's agreement with Spain was "unacceptable" because it had been reached without a discussion with Russia.

The move represents "a significant increase in U.S. anti-missile capabilities in the European zone," the statement said.

The statement continues a crossfire between Russia and the United States over the missile

defense shield, which is designed to protect European NATO states and the United States from an attack from countries such as Iran. Russia strongly opposes the shield and agreed at a NATO summit in Lisbon last November to cooperate with the Western alliance on missile defense.

U.S. President Barack Obama's plan calls for an initial deployment of ship-based anti-ballistic missiles in the Mediterranean followed by ground-based systems in Romania, Poland and Turkey.

The NATO official said by phone that there was nothing to discuss.

"The problem is simply this: Our train has left the station," he said, asking for anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the issue with the media.

"We do want to cooperate with Russia, but we cannot stop the program," he said.

When Obama came to power, he scrapped his predecessor's plan for longer-range interceptor missiles in Poland and a radar installation in the Czech Republic, both of which had angered the Kremlin. The move helped to start the "reset" of the counties' relations.

But the Foreign Ministry said recent developments cast a cloud on the future.

"If events continue to develop this way, then the chance created by the Lisbon Russia-NATO summit to turn missile defense from an area of confrontation into a subject of cooperation will be lost," its statement said.

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