

NATO Says Exclave Plan Wasteful

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NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen has warned Moscow against wasting money on an artificial enemy if it stations missiles in Kaliningrad in response to the Western alliance's missile defense plans.

But Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin insisted that the U.S.-led missile shield would threaten the country.

President Dmitry Medvedev has said the military would start deploying Iskander missiles in the western exclave of Kaliningrad if NATO and Russia reach no deal to build the European missile shield jointly.

Rasmussen said this amounted to a waste of financial resources "because it is a buildup of offensive military capacity directed against an artificial enemy."

That enemy does not exist "because NATO has no intention whatsoever to attack Russia," Rasmussen told reporters in the Lithuanian capital, Vilnius, on Thursday, Bloomberg

reported.

He said Moscow should instead invest its resources in economic development and the creation of jobs.

The United States and its allies say the missile plan will protect Europe from rogue states like Iran, but the Kremlin insists that it will undermine its strategic defense capacities.

Rogozin explained that Moscow views NATO missiles in Europe as offensive weapons because their range could never be restricted to the alliance members where they are stationed. If defense "creeps onto foreign territory, it is not defense but an attack," he said, speaking on Ekho Moskvyy radio late Thursday.

Rogozin was interviewed by the station's editor-in-chief Alexei Venediktov, a day after Prime Minister Vladimir Putin harshly criticized Ekho Moskvyy's coverage of the missile shield issue during a meeting of editors at his residence outside Moscow. Putin accused Venediktov of serving in "a foreign country's interests" — presumably the United States'.

Venediktov said at the beginning of the interview that he had decided to invite Rogozin after Putin's dressing-down because the prime minister "showed me with a spoon in a glass, a fork and a plate how missiles fly," an illustration "that was seen only by few people."

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