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Russia Says Iran Breaking Nuclear Resolution

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NEW DELHI, India — Iran's nuclear program is growing, breaching United Nations resolutions amid an "alarming" escalation over the country's plans, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said Thursday.

"The scale of the Iranian nuclear program is expanding, which is in direct violation of UN resolutions," Ryabkov said in New Delhi, where he attended the BRICS group emerging market summit.

Even so, the Iranians "have done a lot to show their constructiveness" and world powers "shouldn't be tempted into using military force."

Iran faces growing economic and financial sanctions over its nuclear program, which the United States and its allies say is a cover to make atomic weapons. Iran says the program is for civilian purposes.

If tensions over the nation's nuclear plans escalate into a military confrontation, a conflict

would trigger a new global economic crisis, Ryabkov said, adding that he doesn't rule out that strikes may be carried out against Iran. The situation there isn't "irreversible," he said.

"An escalation is under way, and that's very alarming," Ryabkov said. "In that sense, the situation is worse than last year." A new round of talks over its disputed nuclear program should begin by the middle of April, he said.

Ryabkov also said a U.S. plan to build a missile shield in Europe will be past the point of no return by 2020, when it reaches the fourth phase of its development.

"There's no chance now of us reaching an agreement" with the administration of U.S. President Barack Obama, whose position didn't change during talks with President Dmitry Medvedev at a nuclear security summit in Seoul this week, Ryabkov said.

The United States isn't sharing any secret data on missile defense with Russia, he said.

As for Syria, Russia wouldn't oppose the ouster of President Bashar Assad if his overthrow is initiated from within the country.

"We never defended Assad," Ryabkov said. "If his exit becomes part of some internal Syrian solution, initiated by all Syrian sides, then why not?"

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