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Rogozin Proposes Defense Partnership With Brazil

By Alexander Bratersky

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Small arms produced by Izhmash, which is expected to be merged into a conglomerate called Kalashnikov.

Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin said Wednesday

that Russia would be interested in starting a long-term military partnership with Brazil, following talks on the sale of Russian air defense systems to the South American country.

"I don't rule out military cooperation with Brazil," Rogozin

told reporters Wednesday at a closed session of the Federation Council, the upper house of parliament, while reporting on defense spending in 2012.

But the deputy prime minister said he couldn't confirm or deny plans to sell Pantsyr air defense systems to Brazil, a subject that might be discussed during Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev's visit to the country, planned for the end of February.

Jose Carlos de Nardi, chief of the joint staff of Brazil's armed forces, told the Associated Press earlier this week that his country is interested in buying technology to make Pantsyr systems locally. He said Brazil would also like to produce Igla surface-to-air missiles domestically.

If a contract is signed, it would allow Brazil to sell the systems to other Latin American countries, military analyst Igor Korotchenko said Wednesday.

"This is a big step forward compared with previous modest ones," Korotchenko said.

Brazil purchased 12 Russian-made Mi-35 helicopters under a contract worth $250 million that was signed in 2009.

The Pantsyr system, called SA-22 Greyhound under the NATO classification, has been sold to such countries as Syria, the United Arab Emirates and Oman.

But like most Russian weapons, it is based on Soviet technical achievements rather than modern technology, a situation Rogozin intends to change.

"[Soviet science] was an advanced one, but we need a new science of our own," he said.

Rogozin will also oversee the newly created Foundation for Advanced Research, an agency modeled after the U.S. DARPA. He said its spending would be monitored by the Audit Chamber.

"Everything that can be made public will be made public, while the rest will remain secret," Rogozin said, replying to a question from the Moscow Times.

The first political appointee in years to oversee the defense sector, Rogozin said the government intended to merge defense companies into larger conglomerates.

He said firearms makers Izhmash and Izhmekh would be merged into a conglomerate called Kalashnikov by 2013. Both companies will have a unified design bureau to produce new types of firearms, Rogozin said.

Analysts said earlier that Rogozin would get more tools for overseeing the military, which is expected to get 20 trillion rubles ($650 billion) by 2020. The monitoring of defense contacts was transferred in May from the Defense Ministry to Rogozin.

The government has experienced numerous problems with defense contracts in the past, which led to the conflicts between the Defense Ministry and arms producers during the tenure of the previous defense minister, Anatoly Serdyukov.

The ministry had complained about the quality of weapons being supplied.

Contact the author at a.bratersky@imedia.ru

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