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Rogozin Says U.S. Missile Defense No Longer a Threat

By The Moscow Times

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In an apparent reversal, Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin said a proposed U.S. missile shield posed no threat to Russia and could easily be penetrated by Russian forces, RIA-Novosti reported Tuesday.

"We have solved the issue of penetrating the missile shield," Rogozin was quoted as saying in a speech at the Russian Embassy in London.

"We regret that the United States is wasting their money on missile defense and compelling us to do the same. The missile shield is nothing for us, it's a bluff. It poses no military threat, but remains a political and economic problem," he said.

The remarks by Rogozin, who oversees Russia's military-industrial complex, could signal a turning point in Russian criticism of U.S. missile defense plans. Russia repeatedly has denounced the Europe-based shield as an attempt to undermine its national security, and it

has spent months trying to convince the U.S. and its allies in NATO to allow it to participate in the plans.

The U.S. and NATO have replied that the shield is aimed at countering the threat of a missile attack from Iran and has nothing to do with Russia. Talks on a possible compromise have gone nowhere.

Rogozin, who has shown a flair for bravado in the past, said in his speech that the missile defense plan had riled Russia mostly because it was "provocative" and "excessive by nature," forcing other countries to boost their arsenals. He said the focus on new weapons has diverted money from other important programs such as the need to build a defense against a possible asteroid strike.

"Scientists are baffled by how billions that are being spent on a missile shield ... while a space threat to the whole humanity is being ignored," he said.

An asteroid exploded in the sky above the Urals city of Chelyabinsk earlier this year, causing hundreds of minor injuries, mostly from flying glass from broken windows.

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