The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

NATO Missile Defense Is No Threat to Russia

By Alexander Vershbow

November 12, 2013



On Oct. 29, Rossiiskaya Gazeta reported that "according to NATO information," surface- and sea-launched interceptor missiles in the U.S. national missile defense system "are designed for the total destruction of the warheads of short-, intermediate- and intercontinental-range ballistic missiles." The article then implied that the Ballistic Missile Defense system being deployed in Romania would have the same capability against intercontinental ballistic missiles, or ICBMs, as the U.S. homeland defense system.

The attribution of this information to NATO is wrong. So is the implication that NATO's missile defense system will be able to destroy ICBMs.

Let's focus on the facts and physics. NATO's entire Ballistic Missile Defense system, including the future site in Romania, will defend against short- and intermediate-range ballistic missiles. The interceptors to be deployed in all three phases of this system are not designed to defend against intercontinental missiles.

Even if such interceptors were deployed in Romania, their location would render them useless against Russian ICBMs aimed at the U.S. Washington's cancellation of Phase 4 of the European Phased Adaptive Approach confirms that NATO is not planning to deploy any systems in Europe designed to intercept ICBMs.

Interceptors in Romania, however, are ideally situated to defend against medium-range ballistic missiles launched not from Russia but against NATO territory in southeastern Europe from outside Europe — in particular, from the Middle East. Similarly, the planned site in Poland, to be operational in 2018, will defend against intermediate-range ballistic missiles launched from the Middle East against NATO territory in northern and central Europe.

The facts and physics demonstrate that NATO's Ballistic Missile Defense system cannot pose any threat to Russia's strategic deterrent forces. And Russians do not need to take NATO's word for it. This assessment has been substantiated by many well-respected Russian generals and scientists.

For more than three years, NATO has offered to cooperate with Russia in building a missile defense architecture that would protect both NATO and Russia from the growing ballistic missile threat from rogue countries. That offer still stands, and we hope Russia will accept it. Russians participating in the NATO-Russia missile defense system could then see for themselves that NATO's system is not directed at Russia. By working together, we could overcome the mistrust and suspicion that still surround this issue.

Alexander Vershbow is deputy secretary general of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The views expressed in opinion pieces do not necessarily reflect the position of The Moscow Times.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2013/11/12/nato-missile-defense-is-no-threat-to-russia-a29497