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U.S. Fears Russia's Missile Deployment Could Destabilize Europe

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An Iskander missile in launch position. **Evgeny Stetsko**

U.S. officials have said that Russia's reported deployment of nuclear-capable missiles in a western region that borders two NATO countries could destabilize Europe, and have urged Moscow not to further heighten tensions.

Russia's Defense Ministry said Monday that the deployment of the short-range Iskander missiles does not violate any international agreements. Lithuania and Poland, which border the Kaliningrad region, a western exclave of Russia where the missiles are reportedly stationed, have expressed concerns.

"We've urged Russia to take no steps to destabilize the region," U.S. State Department deputy spokeswoman Marie Harf said, AFP reported.

"We certainly know the countries in the neighborhood have expressed concerns over it, and we'll keep talking to them about it," Harf said.

Russia declined to provide details of the deployment, which was reported by Germany's Bild daily. A Defense Ministry spokesman said only that Russia had stationed the Iskander missile systems "in the Western Military District" — a broad area comprising much of Russia's west and northwest — adding that the deployment was in line with international treaties.

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