

Russia Conducts Long-Range Missile Test

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Russia conducted a test of a Topol-M Intercontinental Ballistic Missile, or ICBM, on Tuesday from a test range in the southwestern region Astrakhan.

The missile successfully hit its target at the Sary-Shagan test range in Kazakhstan, a Defense Ministry statement said.

Though the test was more widely reported than usual because of increased tensions between Russia and the West over the former's military presence in Ukraine, the launch was conducted in accordance with existing arms control statutes and was announced well in advance.

While the missile test was routine, media reports said that future warheads for the rocket could have an increased ability to maneuver during flight, dramatically reducing the possibility of a defense system intercepting it before reaching the target. The Defense Ministry said that the weapon in question "is able to overcome missile defense systems,

including future configurations, in all phases ... of its delivery to target," the BBC's Russian service reported.

On Wednesday, the Ukrainian Ambassador to Belarus, Mikhail Ezhel, said that Kiev might allow for the deployment of U.S. missile interceptors in Ukraine in exchange for an economic bailout, Interfax reported.

Russia has repeatedly voiced its opposition to U.S. plans to build a missile defense system in Eastern Europe, which it says is necessary to defend its NATO allies from nuclear threats in Iran and North Korea.

Some observers noted that Topol-M missile tests are normally conducted from the Arkhangelsk region to the Far East, rather than launching the rockets in Astrakhan, about 430 kilometers east of Ukraine. A Defense Ministry spokesman said that the test was conducted in southern Russia at a shorter distance because the target site in Kazakhstan has uniquely monitoring equipment that allows for the testing of future weapons systems, including the ability to evaluate its ability to overcome missile defense systems.

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