The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Putin Wants Russian Defense Industry to Be Self-Sufficient

May 14, 2014

President Vladimir Putin said on Wednesday Russia's defense industry should stop relying on foreign components and become self-sufficient following Western sanctions imposed on Moscow over the crisis in Ukraine. ⊠

"We need to do our utmost for anything used in our defense sector to be produced on our territory, so that we are not dependent on anyone," he told a meeting of defense officials at his Black Sea residence.

⊠"I am sure that our defense industry will benefit from that and one needs to adjust our scientific hubs for that," he said.

⊠Washington has threatened to target some high tech exports to Russia as part of sanctions, in addition to visa bans and asset freezes that are already in place. ⊠

Putin has said previously that replacing the components used in the defense industry would require funding and that it would take up to 2 1/2 years to switch to entirely domestic

manufacturing. ⊠

Russia is the world's second-largest arms exporter and its defense industry has close ties with Ukraine.

⊠Contacts between the two former Soviet republics have been affected by Russia's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine and Western charges that it is orchestrating pro-Russian separatists in the east of the country, close to the border with Russia. Moscow denies the accusations. ⊠

The crisis has led to the worst East-West standoff since the Cold War, with Washington and Brussels threatening new sanctions on Russia if it attempts to disrupt a presidential election due in Ukraine on May 25.

Original url:
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