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Russia Concerned by U.S. Proposal for Missile Shield in South Korea

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Russia voiced concern on Thursday over a U.S. proposal to station elements of a missile defense shield in South Korea, saying the move could provoke an arms race in the region.

The commander of U.S. troops stationed in South Korea last month said he had proposed deploying a THAAD advanced missile-defense system to the country to counter the threat of North Korea's weapons capabilities.

"Such U.S. statements cannot but cause concern," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement. "This development will inevitably have a negative impact on the strategic situation in the region and could provoke an arms race in Northeast Asia."

Moscow, whose ties with Washington are at their lowest point since the Cold War over the Ukraine crisis, reiterated long-running opposition to U.S. plans to deploy a global missile shield, including in Europe, which it fears will weaken its nuclear arsenal and shift the balance of power.

"It is impossible not to see that this [U.S. proposal] is really about the prospect of further expanding the geography of the deployment of the U.S. global missile defense system," the ministry said.

The U.S. has carried out a site survey in South Korea for possible locations for the THAAD battery, but no final decisions have been made to deploy the system, local media has reported.

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