

Russia Overhauls Nuclear Missile Forces as Tensions With West Flare

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A Russian Topol-M missile launcher rehearsing for the 2012 Victory Day Parade in Moscow

Russia's land-based strategic nuclear forces will go through a top-to-bottom overhaul, as the rift between Moscow and the West over the conflict in Ukraine grows, Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin said Monday.

One hundred percent of Russia's nuclear arsenal — the biggest in the world — will be modernized by 2020 as part of a massive rearmament campaign, news agency RIA Novosti quoted Rogozin, who oversees Russia's military-industrial complex, as saying.

Moscow's current rearmament program, into which the government is pouring \$700 billion through 2020, says the military should replace 30 percent of all its hardware with "cutting edge" weaponry by 2015, and 70 percent by 2020.

But the nuclear forces — the backbone of Russia's military might — appear to be getting

an extra boost.

"The formation of the technical base for the strategic nuclear forces is proceeding at a faster rate," Rogozin was quoted by RIA Novosti as saying, "in fact, we will renew not 70 percent of the [strategic nuclear forces], but 100 percent."

At odds over the conflict in Ukraine, relations between Russia and the West have hit a post-Cold War low. The West's military alliance, NATO, is rejuvenating itself in the face of potential Russian aggression against former Soviet countries, while Moscow has increasingly painted the bloc as Russia's gravest national security threat.

Rogozin, an outspoken minister who headed a nationalist party named Rodina, or Motherland, in the early 2000s, cautioned against an over reliance on nuclear forces, however, saying that Russia needs a compact and streamlined army that can be quickly deployed to "any threatening theater of war." He also hinted at other military reforms that will not be made public: "Something must be preserved as a quiet secret to surprise [the enemy] at the most critical moment."

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