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Russia to Revamp Missile Warning System With Space-Based EKS Satellites

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Russian President Vladimir Putin (R) takes part in a video link with Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu onboard the Vice-Admiral Kulakov anti-submarine warfare ship in Novorossiysk, Russia.

Russia will replace its existing missile-warning system with a space-based alternative to help protect the country from nuclear attack, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said Thursday.

The so-called "united space system," or EKS, will comprise a new generation of missile monitoring satellites and modernized command centers, Shoigu said, the state-run RIA Novosti news agency reported.

"The creation of the united space system is a key developmental direction for Russia's nuclear deterrence forces," Shoigu was quoted as saying.

The new system will be able to track ground and ocean launches, including of prototypes unfamiliar to Russian forces at the time of the launch, the minister said.

He did not say when the "unified space system," which was first announced in 2011, would go

into operation or how much it would cost.

Russia's early warning system, developed between 1960s and 1980s, currently comprises only three satellites and is considered obsolete and insufficient by most experts.

In comparison, the U.S. has at least 16 satellites in orbit watching for missiles and is planning to add up to 24 more.

The global Outer Space Treaty from 1967 prohibits the use of weapons of mass destruction from outside the planet, but not conventional weapons.

The space race is considered an important contributing factor to the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1980s, after Moscow embarked on a coffer-draining attempt to match the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative — a program for a satellite-based anti-missile shield nicknamed "Star Wars."

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