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Russian Nuclear Missile Trains to Reappear as Tensions With West Grow

By The Moscow Times

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A Russian general on Tuesday confirmed that Russia will revive the Soviet tactic of launching nuclear missiles from trains in order to combat Washington's efforts to upgrade the U.S.'s attack capability.

Lieutenant General Sergei Karakayev said Russia's Strategic Rocket Forces would create a missile group using three launch platforms — underground missile silos, truck-mounted missile units and train-mounted missiles, which, Karakayev said, "proved their effectiveness in the Soviet period," news agency RIA Novosti reported.

The Soviets first deployed missile trains in 1987, and by the fall of communism four years later 56 missiles criss-crossed the country by train. But years of underfunding for the military meant that by 2005 all had been decommissioned.

The trains' revival comes as Moscow pursues a huge rearmament program that will see

Russia's entire arsenal of missiles upgraded by the end of the decade.

Karakayev said last year that Russia was being forced to consider reintroducing missile trains by the U.S. Prompt Global Strike program, which is developing hypersonic missiles capable of fast, high precision strikes anywhere on the globe.

A key part of nuclear war planning is nuclear forces' ability to survive an opponent's first strike. Missile trains would increase the survivability of Russia's nuclear arsenal by complicating enemy efforts to locate its missiles by moving them quickly and constantly around the country.

Russia's military prowess has roared back into headlines this year as tensions with the West have spiked over Ukraine.

Russian tabloid Moskovsky Komsomolets on Tuesday ran the story on nuclear missile trains under a headline saying: "Headache for the U.S."

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