

Gorbachev Warns of Threat of 'Hot War' With U.S.

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Former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev Gorbachev

Mikhail Gorbachev, the last leader of the Soviet Union, warned that Russia and the United States may be teetering on the brink of a "hot war" in comments to Interfax on Thursday.

"If you call things by their proper names, [the United States] has already pulled us into a new 'Cold War' by trying to embody its general notion of triumphalism," said Gorbachev, who is widely credited with having brought an end in the 1980s to the decades-long Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States.

"What will happen next? Unfortunately, I can no longer say firmly that the 'Cold War' won't turn into a hot one," he said.

Relations between Moscow and the West have deteriorated to a point unparalleled since the Cold War in recent months over Russia's absorption of Crimea in March and Western

allegations of Moscow's support for east Ukrainian insurgents battling for independence from Kiev.

But while international media outlets have had a field day with talk of a new Cold War, the present diplomatic standoff has not been broadly accepted as such. This is "not a new Cold War," U.S. President Barack Obama told reporters at the White House in July. "What it is, is a very specific issue related to Russia's unwillingness to recognize that Ukraine can chart its own path."

While Gorbachev has voiced approval of Russia's annexation of Crimea, he has urged Moscow to refrain from involving itself in the Ukraine conflict.

"If our country gets involved [in the fighting], it could spark a fire so strong the whole world won't be able to put it out." Gorbachev said.

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