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Russian Program to Build World's Biggest Intercontinental Missile Delayed

By The Moscow Times

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Development of Russia's massive new nuclear-armed intercontinental missile is running into snags that will delay completion of the first prototype by several months, an unidentified defense industry source told news agency TASS on Friday.

The Sarmat missile will become the largest intercontinental ballistic missile in the world when it goes into service. The head of Russia's Strategic Rocket Forces, General Sergei Karakayev, said in February its development was being fast-tracked and deployments should begin in 2018, Reuters reported.

The accelerated schedule came as Russia pumps cash into a rearmament program amid a confrontation with the West over Ukraine that began last year.

But the production schedule is already slipping. A prototype was supposed to be ready this month, TASS reported, but an unidentified defense industry source said the new schedule is the end of September or early October.

At the Krasnoyarsk Machine-Building Plant, where serial production of the ICBMs will take place, the weapons are only 60 percent complete, according to TASS.

“The plant is doing its work,” the source said, “everything now depends on whether or not contractors deliver the [remaining] components on time.”

“The red line that cannot be crossed is the end of October,” he added.

Sarmat's size will allow it to be packed with 10 tons of nuclear warheads, as well as equipment designed to confuse missile-defense systems deployed by nations such as the United States.

Sarmat will also be able to fly non-traditional flight paths over the South Pole. Typically, Russian missiles targeting the U.S. — such as the Soviet SS-18 Satan — take a shorter and more direct route over the North Pole.

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