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NATO Commander Breedlove: Russia Cast Itself as West's Adversary

By The Moscow Times

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NATO top military commander General Philip Breedlove

NATO Supreme Allied Commander Philip Breedlove said Thursday that Russia has chosen to become an adversary to the West as Moscow tries to reestablish its global influence, and poses an "existential threat" to the United States and its allies in Europe.

Breedlove's remarks at the House Armed Services Committee drew caustic denials from the Russian Defense Ministry later in the day.

"Such tide rises every year at the same time," the ministry said in an English-language post on its Facebook page. "The reason is simple – discussion of the military budget for the next year. It is not the thing to be impressed by."

Top Moscow officials have cast their country as an increasingly powerful global player, while accusing the United States of seeking to destroy Russia.

Breedlove, one of the most vocal critics of Moscow policies, said a "resurgent, aggressive" Russia poses a security challenge to Europe, according to remarks published on the U.S. Department of Defense website.

Russia has "chosen to be an adversary and poses a long-term existential threat" to the United States and its European allies, he said, adding: "Russia is extending its course of influence yet further afield to try to reestablish a leading role on the world stage."

Since Russia annexed the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine in 2014 and extended its support to separatist insurgents in Ukraine's east, other former Soviet republics and former Moscow allies in Eastern Europe have expressed concerns over Russia's "aggression" and appealed for increased NATO presence in their countries.

The U.S. European Command, or EUCOM, which Breedlove heads, intends to "counter Russia" and is "working with allies and partners ... deterring Russia now and preparing to fight and win if necessary," the general told the congressional hearing.

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