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Russia Says It Plans to Pivot From Nuclear Deterrence, Avoiding Trump's Arms Race

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Kremlin Press Service

When it comes to strategic deterrence, Russia might replace its nuclear weapons with precision bombs, in order to help reduce international tensions and strengthen world peace, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said in a public lecture on Thursday, the news agency RIA Novosti reported.

According to Shoigu, Moscow plans to rely on warships and submarines armed with cruise missiles to carry the bulk of its precision-guided weapons.

"By 2021, we plan to more than quadruple the combat capabilities of our strategic conventional forces, which will fully meet the demands of [Russia's] conventional deterrence," Shoigu said.

Russia's defense minister also reported that Moscow has no intention of being dragged into

an arms race, saying the Kremlin plans to maintain the country's current level of national security, developing its "general-purpose" forces to operate in peacetime and in armed conflicts, including missions against international terrorists.

Shoigu's comments seem to fly in the face of remarks President Vladimir Putin made on Dec. 22 to a meeting of Russia's Defense Ministry Board, when he said, "We need to enhance the combat capability of strategic nuclear forces, primarily by strengthening missile complexes that will be guaranteed to penetrate existing and future missile defense systems."

The same day, U.S. President-elect Donald Trump repeated a common promise from his campaign, calling on America to "strengthen and expand its nuclear capability until such time as the world comes to its senses regarding nukes."

The next day, when fielding a question from The Wall Street Journal about Trump's comment, President Putin showed little concern, brushing it off as "nothing unusual."

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