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Russia Warns U.S. is Preparing to Use Nuclear Weapons in Europe

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Markus Rauchenberger / U.S. Army photo

The United States is laying the groundwork to use nuclear weapons in Europe, the Russian Foreign Ministry's arms control and nonproliferation chief has warned.

The U.S. and Russia are suspending the 1987 Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, which bans either side from stationing short- and intermediate-range, land-based missiles in Europe. Russia has said it was planning for a U.S. deployment of new nuclear missiles in Europe following Washington's planned withdrawal.

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"[The U.S. is] preparing to use nuclear weapons in Europe with the involvement of non-nuclear states," Vladimir Yermakov, the head of the Foreign Ministry's department of arms control and nonproliferation, was quoted as saying on Tuesday.

“Sadly, some countries dependent on Washington pretend that nothing is happening or are simply afraid to think about how provocative this act is,” he told the state-run RIA Novosti news agency.

Germany’s foreign minister had said in December that Berlin would staunchly oppose any efforts to station new medium-range nuclear missiles in Europe after the INF Treaty is scrapped.

Yemarkov, in the RIA interview quoted by the RBC news website, warned that European states place themselves “on the brink of nuclear catastrophe and complete self-destruction” by supporting any U.S. nuclear efforts.

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Russia calls the U.S. deployment of nuclear weapons in Europe a “flagrant violation” of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which calls on nuclear states such as the United States and Russia to work toward nuclear disarmament.

Washington accuses Moscow of violating the INF Treaty with a new cruise missile, which Russia says is not covered by the pact.

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