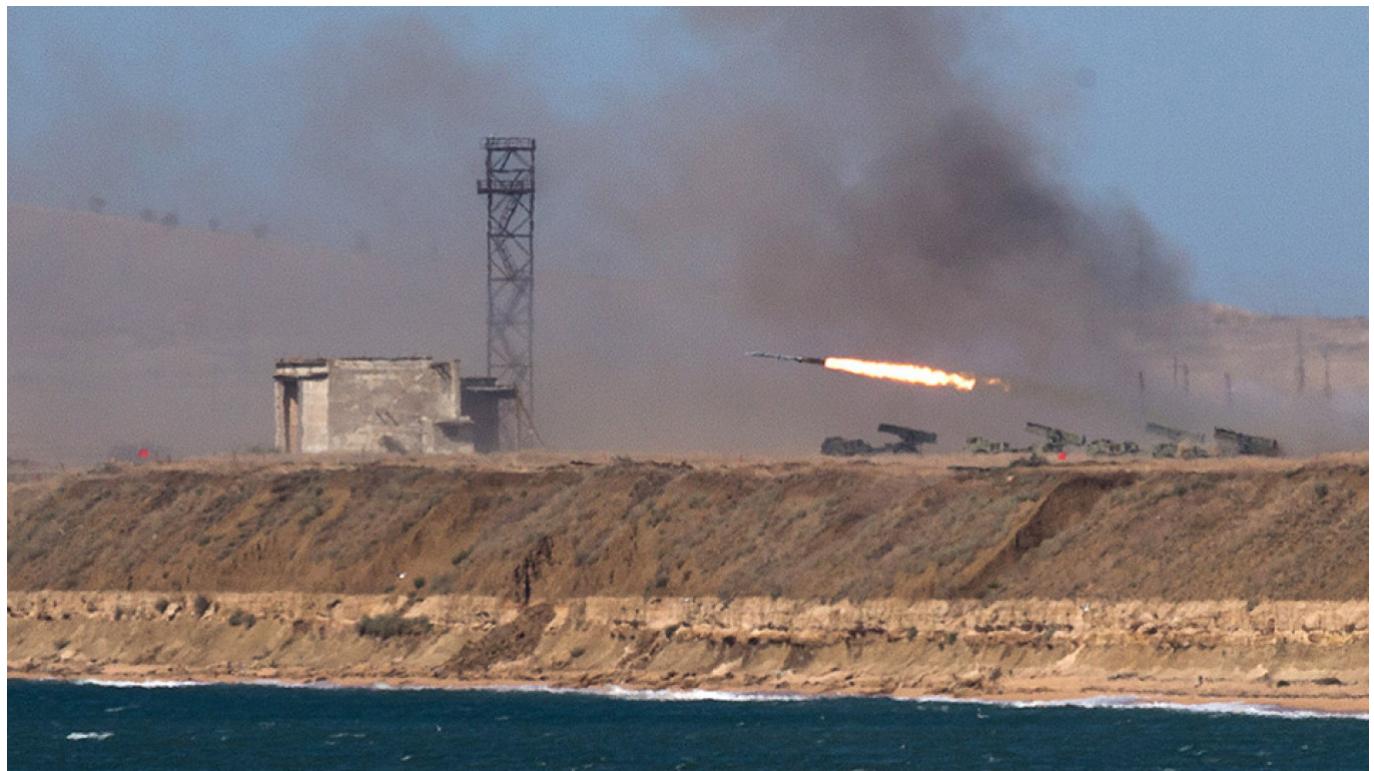




NATO Rejects Putin's Missile Moratorium Offer

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Sergei Malgavko / TASS

NATO has rejected Russian President Vladimir Putin's calls to suspend deployment of missiles in Europe that were banned under a recently abandoned U.S.-Russian nuclear pact.

The *Kommersant* business daily [reported](#) and the Kremlin confirmed Putin's offer, which came amid concerns that Russia and the U.S. are headed toward an arms race after Washington exited the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) pact last month. The INF pact's demise means both Washington and Moscow are legally free to develop and deploy ground-launched nuclear and conventional ballistic and cruise missiles.

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“Unless and until Russia verifiably destroys the SSC-8 system, this moratorium on deployments is not a real offer,” NATO spokeswoman Oana Lungesu was [quoted](#) as saying by the *Financial Times* newspaper.

SSC-8 is NATO's name for the Novator 9M729, which the Western alliance says violates the INF Treaty's range limits. Russia has [said](#) the Novator 9M729's range puts it outside the treaty and rejected a U.S. demand to destroy the new missile.

NATO has "heard this proposal before" and saw it as "not a credible offer," FT quoted Lungescu as saying of Putin's letter.

France's foreign ministry spokesperson, meanwhile, has [said](#) it is "studying" Putin's proposal.

Russia has previously [announced](#) its decision not to deploy medium- and short-range missiles in Europe or other regions on the condition that the U.S. does the same.

The Pentagon said last month it had tested a conventionally configured cruise missile that hit its target after more than 500 kilometers of flight, its first such test since the Soviet-era treaty's demise. Russia is close to completing preparations for a like-for-like response to the U.S. test, Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko [said](#) this month.

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