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Russia Shows Off Hypersonic Nuclear Missile to U.S. Inspectors

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Defense Ministry

Russia said it has showed its new hypersonic nuclear missile system to U.S. inspectors as part of a bilateral arms control treaty ahead of the missile's deployment, Interfax reported Tuesday.

President Vladimir Putin said late last year that Russia would be ready to deploy the Avangard missile system in one year's time. One of several new weapons announced in 2018, the Avangard was touted as a highly maneuverable weapon able to evade the United States' missile defense systems.

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The Defense Ministry staged a demo of the Avangard system to a U.S. inspection group that visited Russia on Nov. 24-26, Interfax reported.

“The Russian side held a demonstration to help ensure the viability and effectiveness of the [New] START Treaty,” the Russian military was quoted as saying, adding that it plans to put Avangard into combat duty before the end of the year.

The New START, or the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, limits launcher and warhead numbers fielded by Russia and the U.S.

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Moscow has said it wants to extend the New START before it expires in February 2021, while Washington said it will wait until next year to decide.

Researchers believe a mission to salvage one of the Avangard systems may have resulted in an accident that killed five nuclear scientists near the northwestern town of Nyonoksa in August.

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