

Trump Nominee to Russia: Abandon ‘Flying Chernobyl’ Nuclear Missile

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U.S. President Donald Trump’s nominee for a top arms control post in the State Department has criticized Russia’s nuclear missiles program. **Mikhail Tereshchenko / TASS**

U.S. President Donald Trump’s nominee for a top arms control post in the State Department has [said](#) Russia should stop developing what he believes is a dangerous nuclear-powered cruise missile.

The Burevestnik, which NATO designates as SSC-X-9 Skyfall, is believed to have exploded during secret rocket engine tests at sea in northern Russia last August, killing five scientists. Russian media have [described](#) the Burevestnik, which President Vladimir Putin has hailed as being unlimited in range and able to evade U.S. missile shields, as a “small flying Chernobyl.”

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Marshall Billingslea, Trump’s nominee for the arms control post, said he’s been “very clear with my Russian counterpart that these are enormous wastes of funds” and that Moscow

should “cease and desist and abandon these kinds of destabilizing ideas.”

“We frankly don’t think these weapons should exist at all,” Billingslea told U.S. senators during nomination hearings Tuesday.

He said Russian–U.S. arms control negotiations would cover some of the nuclear and hypersonic weapons that Putin unveiled ahead of his re-election in 2018, but stressed that they should include the Burevestnik.

“Why on earth would you have a nuclear-powered, nuclear-tipped cruise missile? That is nothing more than a flying Chernobyl,” Billingslea told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

“Just think about the radioactive plume that it would generate as it circles. There’s no good argument [and] logic for having these kinds of doomsday systems.”

Billingslea tweeted earlier in July that the U.S. views the Burevestnik and the Poseidon “doomsday drone” as “terrible concepts” that Russia should shelve.

Embed:

Hope it’s not the case. We repeatedly warned Skyfall & Poseidon are terrible concepts. Whether or not responsible for latest incident, highlights why Russia should shelve these projects. Big waste of money. Not covered by [#NewSTART](#). Next agreement must. <https://t.co/3DmxvMdd5Q>

— Ambassador Marshall S. Billingslea (@USArmsControl) [July 3, 2020](#)

Shortly after the deadly August 2019 accident, Trump said that the U.S. had “similar, though more advanced” missiles than the Burevestnik.

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