The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia’s Nuclear Strike Threshold Lower Than Publicly Stated – FT

February 28, 2024



A Russian Yars thermonuclear armed intercontinental ballistic missile system. **Russian Defense Ministry / TASS**

Russia's threshold for using tactical nuclear weapons in an armed conflict is lower than previously made public, the Financial Times reported Wednesday, citing leaked military documents.

In 2020, President Vladimir Putin approved a new nuclear deterrence policy that permits the use of nuclear first strikes in several scenarios, such as those where Russia's existence as a state is threatened, but also in cases of defense against attacks using conventional weapons.

According to classified documents seen by FT, Russia’s threshold for nuclear weapons use also includes an enemy landing on Russian territory and the defeat of units responsible for defending border areas.

Other criteria for Russia's use of nuclear weapons include the destruction of three airfields, three or more cruisers, two coastal command centers, 20% of Russia’s strategic ballistic

missile submarines or 30% of nuclear-powered attack submarines.

Related article: Russia Dismisses 'Malicious' Space Nuclear Weapon Reports

The 29 military documents seen by FT are described as presentations for naval officers that discuss nuclear weapons operating principles and warm game scenarios.

One of the war games outlines a hypothetical attack by China and Russia's use of nuclear weapons to stop it from advancing with a second wave of invading forces.

When contacted by FT for comment, China's Foreign Ministry denied there were grounds to suspect Russia, claiming the "threat theory has no market in China and Russia."

Putin has repeatedly invoked Russia's nuclear doctrine since ordering the invasion of Ukraine over two years ago.

Both Putin and other Russian officials have given mixed signals about Moscow's potential use of nuclear weapons amid the war in Ukraine, which has raised concerns in the West.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2024/02/28/russias-nuclear-strike-threshold-lower-than-publicly-stated-ft-a84274