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THE MILITARY SIGNIFICANCE OF KALININGRAD

Kaliningrad, the Russian Federation's exclave in Europe has a strategic significance from both, geopolitical and military aspects. The Russian Federation perceives the deployment by the United States of the components of its anti-missile defence system in Europe as a threat to the Russian national security. As an adequate answer and a possible countermeasure Russia plans to deploy SS–26 Stone / Iskander Missile Systems on the territory of the Kaliningrad exclave. The territory of the Kaliningrad exclave, Russia's westernmost area hosts the Kaliningrad Special Military District. The presence of the Russian military build-up on the territory of the exclave reinforced with the installation of the Iskander Missile System could be crucial in a critical situation. Further armament of the Kaliningrad exclave might pose a real threat to the European security, but Russia plans to deploy the Iskander Missile System only in case of necessity, i.e. to protect its national interests in case Washington decides to install the elements of anti-missile defence system in Europe.

The Russian Federation perceives the deployment of the components of the anti-missile defence system of the United States in Europe as a threat to its national security. Therefore, as an adequate answer, the Kremlin intends to position its short-range SS-26 Stone (Iskander) missiles in Kaliningrad Special Military District, on the territory of the Russian exclave in Europe.

Hereby we would like to introduce the related information published in different open sources.

The latest feature of the problematic relationship of the United States and the Russian Federation is the Kremlin's announcement about deciding to deploy SS–26 Stone (Iskander) missile systems in the Kaliningrad region in response to the deployment of US ballistic missile defence system (BMDS) elements in Eastern Europe – and the related reaction of the United States and NATO member states concerned.

The Kremlin's latest move to deploy missiles in Kaliningrad is the first time since the Cold War that Russia declared its intention to create a military threat to the West. Yet the nature of the threat does not represent a fundamental challenge to US or European security.

In his first state-of-the-nation message to the Federal Assembly on November 5, President Dmitry Medvedev said that Russia would deploy, if necessary (e.g. if the US goes on with its European Ballistic Missile Plan), short-range SS-26 Stone (Iskander) missile systems in its Kaliningrad exclave near Poland to neutralize the United States anti-ballistic missile system in Europe. President Medvedev: "I would add something about what we have had to face in recent years: what is it? It is the construction of a global missile defence system, the installation of military bases around Russia, the unbridled expansion of NATO and other similar 'presents' for Russia – we therefore have every reason to believe that they are simply testing our strength. Of course we will not let ourselves be dragged into an arms race. But we must take this into account in defence expenditures. And we will continue to reliably protect the safety of the citizens of Russia. Therefore I will now announce some of the measures that will be taken. In particular measures to effectively counter the persistent and consistent attempts of the current American administration to install new elements of a global missile defence system in Europe. For example, we had planned to decommission three missile regiments of a missile division deployed in Kozelsk from combat readiness and to disband the division by 2010. I have decided to abstain from these plans. Nothing will disband. Moreover, we will deploy the Iskander missile system in the Kaliningrad Region to be able, if necessary, to neutralise the missile defence system. Naturally, we envisage using the resources of the Russian Navy for

these purposes as well. And finally, electronic jamming of the new installations of the US missile defence system will be carried out from the territory of the same westernmost region, i.e. is from Kaliningrad. I want to emphasise that we have been forced to take these measures. We have repeatedly told our partners that we want to engage in positive cooperation. We want to act against common threats and to work together. But unfortunately, very unfortunately, they did not want to listen to us."

Medvedev told the Russian parliament that deployment of Iskanders will neutralize US plans for installation of components of its missile defence system in Poland and in Czech Republic, which the United States claims as vital in defending against missile attacks from „rouge states” such as Iran.

The Russian Federation’s NATO envoy Dmitry Rogozin claimed that the planned US system was aimed at Russia, and not at future rogue threats from Middle East as Washington claims. Russia is anxious not because of the ten missile-defence units to be installed in Poland, but due to the fact that the planned facility could serve as a precedent for greater military build-up of US (e.g. further components of US anti-missile system) in Eastern Europe. The Russian leadership is concerned over US plans as far as its anti-missile defence system would encroach on Russia’s military doctrine containing the first strike capability to compensate for the inferiority of their conventional forces vis-à-vis NATO.

Although Russia's representatives continue to stress that the Iskanders will not be deployed until the US bases are installed in Poland and the Czech Republic, and that Russia will not go ahead with its plans if the Americans reconsider their decision, NATO is still expressing serious concern. NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer stated recently that NATO will make every effort to prevent missiles from being installed in Russia's westernmost region. All the key Western nations have criticized Russia's decision. For example, the US Defense Secretary Robert Gates called the Russian move "provocative," and NATO spokesman Robert Pszczel said the "placing of these Iskander missiles in the Kaliningrad region would not help NATO and Russia to improve their relationship." Even the German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier broke with his typically pro-Moscow stance, stating that the Russian threat was "a wrong signal at the wrong time.



In reality, however, the Russian counter-threat to station Iskander missiles and radio yammers in Kaliningrad will not substantially change the current strategic balance, nor significantly threaten European security as Western politicians predict.

The deployment of Iskander systems with a range of 500 km (310 miles) would allow Russia to target the entire territory of Poland and also parts of Germany and the Czech Republic. The Russian threat is more overblown rhetoric than meaningful strategy. The new generation of Iskanders could deliver warheads to targets up to 300–500 kilometers away, putting them within range of the BMDs units in northern Poland. The Iskanders, launched from mobile trucks, follow a flat trajectory and are capable of violent evasive manoeuvres, including the deployment of decoys that allow the missiles to bypass hostile countermeasures. This gives them a high probability of successfully evading BMDs units in Poland that are designed to take down ICBMs coasting above the atmosphere, rather than Iskander missiles which do not follow a traditional ballistic trajectory. In order to protect DoD assets from Iskander strikes, the US would have to rely on short- to medium-range interceptors such as the Patriot (PAC-3) and Aegis systems, capable only of limited area defense. True, the Iskander is an offensive weapon capable of targeting missile defense sites in Poland and the Czech Republic, but this does not mean the US BMDs will be “neutralized” as Medvedev claims. Nor does it increase the likelihood that Russia will seek to use these missiles in a pre-emptive strike. Such an attack would result in immediate and overwhelming retaliation by NATO, which the Kremlin will continue to avoid. Military strategy, therefore, will not fundamentally change if the construction of BMDs or the stationing of missiles in Kaliningrad goes ahead.

In November, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev threatened to deploy Iskander-M short-range missiles in the Kaliningrad exclave, if the US missile shield was deployed in Central Europe. However, Medvedev subsequently

said in an interview that Russia could "reconsider this response if the new US administration is ready to once again review and analyse all the consequences of its decisions to deploy the missiles and radar facilities."

On December 10, Army General Nikolai Makarov declared, that with a unilateral move to withdraw almost all of its tanks from Kaliningrad exclave, Russia clearly demonstrates that it has no plans to attack other countries and is not pursuing an expansionist policy. Makarov said: "However, we have always opposed NATO's eastward expansion because it poses serious threats to Russia". In case of necessity, i.e. if Washington does not abandon its controversial plans to place elements of the US global missile shield in Europe, Russia would take adequate measures to protect its national interests.

Key words, expressions: Russian exclave, Kaliningrad, SS–26 Stone / Iskander, Military District, missile defence system, security, national interest.

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