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Russia Threatens Preemptive Strike if NATO Builds Missile Defense Shield

By John Glaser

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Russia's top military officer has threatened to carry out a pre-emptive strike if Washington goes ahead with its plan to build a missile defense shield in Eastern Europe.



The Obama administration has been pushing for a deal to build missile defense facilities in Eastern Europe through the NATO alliance, over the strong objections of the Russians. Washington claims its purpose would be to protect from any Iranian missile threat. But Moscow believes it would undermine their nuclear deterrent.

Chief of General Staff Nikolai Makarov on Thursday at a international conference attended by U.S. and NATO officials [said](#), “A decision to use destructive force pre-emptively will be taken if the situation worsens.”

As a compromise, Moscow has proposed running the missile shield jointly with NATO, but the alliance has rejected that proposal. Russian officials have described the diplomatic negotiations with the U.S.-led effort a “dead end.”

U.S. Senator John McCain complained that Russia is using this issue as an “excuse to have a military buildup in this part of the world, which is at peace, is really an egregious example of what might be even viewed as paranoia on the part of Vladimir Putin.”

Maybe, but paranoia also describes Washington’s supposed purpose behind the missile defense shield. Iran’s military capacity is minimal compared to America’s and most of Europe’s and the notion that a threat from the weak, isolated Iran calls for such a build-up in Eastern Europe is not rational ([unless he’s doing it for purely political reasons](#)).

More likely, Putin is justified in his paranoia, and the real reason for Washington’s plan is to weaken Russia’s defenses and maintain military hegemony over the region. That the Obama administration would risk potential war for the scheme is reckless indeed.