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## Moscow says it will retaliate if Ukraine hosts US anti-missile defenses

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Russia will take retaliatory measures to protect itself if Ukraine decides to station US anti-missile defense systems in its territory, Kremlin spokesman told the media.

"Concerning Ukraine's plan to house anti-missile systems in its territory, we can only perceive it negatively," Dmitry Peskov said Wednesday. "Because it will be a threat to the Russian Federation. In case there are missile defense systems stationed in Ukraine, Russia will have to take retaliatory measures to ensure its own safety."

He was commenting on a recent statement by the head of Ukraine's Security Service, the SBU, Aleksandr Turchinov, which claimed that Ukraine faces a "Russian nuclear threat." In an interview-structured statement published by the Ukrainian Security Council's website, Turchinov claims Russia has stationed nuclear missiles on the Crimean peninsula.

"Nuclear weapons in Crimea will be targeted, first and foremost, at European countries. There is also real danger for Turkey, which is, by the way, a NATO member," Turchinov said.

"To protect ourselves from the nuclear threat, we may have to hold consultations about stationing components of an anti-missile defense system in Ukraine," Turchinov said in his statement.

The statement also calls for additional international sanctions against Russia, including blocking the Bosphorus strait from Russian navy vessels and shutting Russia off from the international

SWIFT financial transfer system.

When asked about Turchinov's statements on hosting anti-missile defense, a NATO representative told the RIA Novosti news agency he could not comment, saying only that the alliance was "responsible for protecting its member states from missile threats." Although NATO leaders have expressed support for Ukraine, it is not a member of the alliance.

Russia has already rebuffed the idea, with Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov saying at a Federation Council meeting that Turchinov's statements are "hot air" and "have no prospects."

In March, the Director of the Russian Foreign Ministry's department of non-proliferation and arms control said Moscow had the right to station nuclear weapons in Crimea, since the peninsula is Russian territory since the 2014 referendum and its reunification with Russia. He said, however, that there are no plans to put any nukes there.

Despite that, last week at a NATO gathering in Turkey the alliance's secretary-general said he was "concerned" by Moscow's statements about the possibility of nuclear deployment in Crimea and warned Russia against it.