
Russia wants answers on expansion of US missile shield.

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MOSCOW, March 6 (RIA Novosti) - Russia's foreign minister said Tuesday that Moscow intends to press for answers to questions it has regarding the expansion of the United States' missile shield.

Russia, which has long been anxious about the opening of NATO bases in former Communist-bloc countries and ex-Soviet republics, has strongly criticized recently announced U.S. plans to deploy an anti-ballistic missile system in Central Europe as a national security threat and a destabilizing factor for Europe.

"We are discussing the issue with our American colleagues and are asking them for answers to our questions and concerns, which are completely justified.

Although meetings and briefings are being held on the issue, most of our questions have not received any clear answers," Sergei Lavrov said following his talks with Song Min-soon, the South Korean Minister of foreign affairs and trade.

In response to Moscow's concerns about a threat to its security, Washington continues to insist that the proposed deployment of missile defense elements in Poland and the Czech Republic are intended to counter possible strikes from North Korea and Iran, which are involved in long-running disputes with the international community over their nuclear programs.

Lavrov called for transparency and trust in order to dispel any uncertainty related to strategic stability.

Russia constantly monitors strategic developments and notices when new ideas and proposals appear, which, as it eventually turns out, have not been discussed with the countries where the U.S. plans to deploy its missiles, he said.

The U.S. aroused further security concerns in Russia last Thursday when a senior Pentagon official said Washington "would like to station a radar base in the Caucasus." The announcement evoked suspicions in Moscow that Georgia could be a possible site. Georgian officials have denied the possibility.

"Along with the Caucasus, Ukraine was also mentioned, which later provoked questions with Ukrainian politicians," Lavrov said.

Moscow strongly opposes the drive by Georgia and Ukraine to join the Western military alliance and the establishment of NATO bases on the territory of Russia's former Soviet allies in the Baltic Region and Central Asia.

"The problem of strategic stability concerns everyone, and it is not mere coincidence that calls are made in Europe, including by Germany, to discuss issues such as the deployment of the American missile shield in Poland and the Czech Republic in the organizations to which Poland and the Czech Republic belong, namely in NATO and the European Union," the foreign minister said.

He emphasized the importance of Russia's involvement in such discussions. "The question concerns the future architecture of European and global security," the minister added.
