

The U.S. Is Developing a Strategic Military Technological Advantage Over Russia

Interview with Leonid Ivashov, President of the Academy on Geopolitical Affairs.

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[The U.S. and the Soviet Union] took on an obligation to support the processes for the reduction of strategic and conventional arms through abandoning their defense; that abstaining from developing anti-ballistic missile defense, pursuant to a 1972 agreement.

But today, the US has withdrawn from this agreement and is developing a multi-tiered global ABM system. There are elements of this system in space, they are working on air defense using laser ABM systems and they are developing the sea-based component. Today we are seeing a growing ABM presence in the proximity of Russia, including with on-the-ground clusters, what is being planned in Romania and in Europe as a whole, etc.

Interview with Leonid Ivashov, President of the Academy on Geopolitical Affairs.

This article, which criticizes the US administration for allegedly preparing the handover of secret sensitive materials to Russia on anti-missile defense isn't really aimed at discussing any issues related to anti-missile defense. Its first task is to provide support for the Obama administration in its avoiding of the discussion of anti-missile defense issues with Russia. On the other hand, it exerts pressure on Russian proposals for a joint ABM system in Europe, so that Russia feels public and journalistic pressure in this respect.

The point is that Russia views US strategic AMD as a threat to its security. Russia considers the signed treaty on the reduction of strategic nuclear weapons, the START 3, damaging for its interest insofar as the American side is attempting to attain a military-technical advantage. This happens because US military strategic facilities and missile carriers will be protected by US ABMs, whereas Russian facilities will essentially be exposed and unprotected. Therefore, if US ABM systems are developed, there can be no parity in nuclear missile armaments, because one party is protected and the other is not. This is why Russia made a unilateral declaration when signing START-3, saying that it may withdraw from the treaty if the US ABM system upsets the balance of power in the nuclear missile sphere.

In order for this not to happen and for Russia to remain a part to START-3, and taking into consideration statements by the US side that the US AMD is not detrimental to Russia's security and is not directed at Russia, Moscow has suggested a joint ABM system in Europe. However, this does not suit the American side, which is why we're seeing this pressure.

I think that this article is precisely aimed at supporting and defending the US position.

Turning to criticisms by the author about the transfer of secret information, I have to say that after the collapse of the USSR, Russia passed a great deal of secret information to the US, including on the state of its missiles, which was stipulated by the previous START agreements. START-3 also presupposes the sides' openness as regards their nuclear potential and so the exchange of information, including telemetric data. This was a major concession by Russia, to agree to exchange telemetric specifications on new missiles undergoing testing. So I don't think there is any sense in talking about us stealthily obtaining secret information from the Americans - we have to exchange information and we do this.

We also have to bear in mind the following argument against framing this issue in terms of the leak of classified information. Russia today has no plans to create and develop a national ABM system. And if it did obtain something in an adjacent technological field, it would not be able to use it, because it is not creating a system that could utilize American know-how. So this article does not have a constructive nature.

Perhaps a question that is slightly tangential to the main topic, but to what extent do today's ABM systems correspond to the level of development of modern-day weapons? Because if I understand it correctly, the US has much more advanced defense projects than the ABM system.

Yes, you have to take an integrated look at the issue. When agreements on the limitation and reduction of strategic armaments by US and Russia were being reached, there were other factors at play, for example, about the parity of conventional weapons. There was a parity of sorts between the USSR and the States - in some fields, the US was in the lead, in other places we were ahead - but all in all, there was parity. And against a background of the launch of the process for the reduction of strategic weapons, there was a parallel process for the restriction of conventional weapons, agreements on the restriction of such equipment in Europe.

There was a third factor: the sides took on an obligation to support the processes for the reduction of strategic and conventional arms through abandoning their defense; that abstaining from developing anti-ballistic missile defense, pursuant to a 1972 agreement. But today, the US has withdrawn from this agreement and is developing a multi-tiered global ABM system. There are elements of this system in space, they are working on air defense using laser ABM systems and they are developing the sea-based component. Today we are seeing a growing ABM presence in the proximity of Russia, including with on-the-ground clusters, what is being planned in Romania and in Europe as a whole, etc. So the balance here has been disturbed.

As regards conventional weapons, Russian specialists have thoroughly considered changes in the US military strategy, when in 2003 the US administration adopted the Prompt Global Strike concept. This concept is today being vigorously implemented. It essentially imparts the substance and significance of strategic weapons onto conventional high-precision weapons, firstly sea and air-based cruise missiles. Notably, this class of weapons, that is cruise missiles, is not restricted by any sort of agreement. These are very dangerous weapons, that have a strategic range and the highest precision, and they can carry conventional and nuclear warheads. And Russia is obviously concerned about this, which is why the Russian military doctrine contains clauses on the possibility of the preventative use of tactical nuclear weapons. So this is a very complex issue. The Americans are not in any way addressing scope for the restriction of weapons, they are not even

discussing possible restrictions of conventional weapons that have a strategic nature.

Russia is behind on this, so even any limitation of strategic offensive weapons, which has been agreed upon, is not in an entirely stable position, given destabilizing factors, first of all ABM systems and high-precision conventional weapons.

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