

US-NATO Sea-based Missile System Threatens Russia

A sophisticated multilayered missile defense architecture is being created in the immediate vicinity of Russia...

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The major specific feature of the EPAA first phase was the achievement of the initial capability to hit short, medium and even “intermediate” (including missiles with a range of 3,000-5,500 km) range ballistic missiles, mainly thanks to moving the global missile defense sea component, that is the Aegis command and control multifunctional integrated system with SM-2 and SM-3 interceptors, to European shores.

[T]he USA is a long-time leader in sea-based missile defense systems. At the beginning of 2012 there were a total of 24 Aegis-equipped ships (5 Ticonderoga class cruisers and 19 Arleigh Burke class destroyers) in the US Navy inventory. According to US long-term, thirty-year (2011-2041), shipbuilding program, 84 ships are to be upgraded to acquire the Aegis capability: 10 out of 22 cruisers and practically all destroyers (74 ships).

An Aegis-equipped Ticonderoga cruiser or an Arleigh Burke destroyer is capable of launching up to 30 SM-2 or SM-3 interceptors of various modifications. So the overall number of such “interceptor ships” may grow up to 84, making the total global sea-based interceptor missiles force exceed 2,500.

A sophisticated multilayered and multi-echelon missile defense architecture is being created in the immediate vicinity of Russia, encompassing Europe and Asia. It’s major specific feature is that in any emergency on the international scene, the architecture is going to interact most closely with US and NATO tactical and strategic nuclear potentials.

Wrapping up the “sidelines” meeting at the Seoul nuclear summit, Dmitry Medvedev and Barack Obama acknowledged by mutual consent they failed to get ahead in finding a common stance on the most acute but still unsolved issue of global dimensions - the creation of some kind of “cooperative” Russia-USA/NATO joint ballistic missile defense (BMD) in Europe.

The US President asked for a “time out” till the US presidential campaign is over. He also dropped a hint he would have “more flexibility” concerning missile defense bilateral cooperation prospects if re-elected in November.

Dmitry Medvedev and Barack Obama confined themselves to an agreement to continue consultations, but not full-scale talks, in the next six-eight months with the participation of technical experts.

Actually the meeting repeated the zero results of the talks in Honolulu in November 2011 followed by the well-known statement by the Russian president listing the military-technical steps to be taken in response to continuation of the US-NATO “missile shield” build-up in Europe while ignoring Russia’s security concerns.

It’s still not known how serious Washington’s intent is to discuss the European missile defense with Russia. The hopes Moscow had to reach a concrete agreement with the USA at the end of last year and before the then-forthcoming event in Seoul the NATO summit in Chicago in May are fading away.

It looks like Washington has the intention of going on deploying missile defense infrastructure on the European continent and around it using the postponement of decision finding deliberations to its advantage: its plan was wrapped up and made final a long time ago.

First, it’s not known if Barack Obama will continue to be the head of state and supreme commander of the armed forces. If he stays, what will his stance on missile defense be like? Will it be like the present one – “foot dragging”?

Secondly, what will a Republican president-elect do in case he manages to win? Actually, nearly all Republican senators have spoken out against changes in the US stance on missile defense or taking Russia’s concerns into account. Just recently 43 out of 47 Republican Senators signed a warning letter to Obama saying they would not support any limitations concerning the European missile defense component being deployed in case the current administration comes up with such plans.

Let’s remember that during the deliberations on the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START-3) ratification Barack Obama assured the senators that under no circumstances would he introduce “qualitative or quantitative” limitations on the BMD infrastructure or sacrifice US national security interests.

The first phase of the European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA) missile defense plan was successfully fulfilled in 2011, the next stage of the program is being implemented.

The major specific feature of the EPAA first phase was the achievement of the initial capability to hit short, medium and even “intermediate” (including missiles with a range of 3,000-5,500 km) range ballistic missiles, mainly thanks to moving the global missile defense sea component, that is the Aegis command and control multifunctional integrated system with SM-2 and SM-3 interceptors, to European shores.

It’s worth emphasizing that the USA is a long-time leader in sea-based missile defense systems. At the beginning of 2012 there were a total of 24 Aegis-equipped ships (5 Ticonderoga class cruisers and 19 Arleigh Burke class destroyers) in the US Navy inventory. According to US long-term, thirty-year (2011-2041), shipbuilding program, 84 ships are to be upgraded to acquire the Aegis capability: 10 out of 22 cruisers and practically all destroyers (74 ships).

The naval missile defense component is constantly gaining more importance in the overall missile defense architecture. The plans in force foresee an increase of the number of SM-3 interceptors from 111 in 2011 up to 436 in 2015 and 515 in 2020 (not 50 as some Russian experts say!). An Aegis-equipped Ticonderoga cruiser or an Arleigh Burke destroyer is

capable of launching up to 30 SM-2 or SM-3 interceptors of various modifications. So the overall number of such “interceptor ships” may grow up to 84, making the total global sea-based interceptor missiles force exceed 2,500.

Further, NATO missile defense command and control facilities were built while implementing the first stage of the European Phased Adaptive Approach plan. Early warning systems are upgraded, new radars are being installed. Unlike other military programs, national missile defense and its overseas (European) component are immune from budget cuts, its expenditure preserves a stable tendency to grow.

Close Washington allies besides NATO members (like the UK, Spain, the Netherlands, Poland and Romania) are actively joining the program. For instance, Japan, a neutral state that in fact has become an alliance member a long time ago, has contributed to a technological breakthrough in enhancing the interceptors’ capabilities. The technology has been successfully used by the USA to its advantage. Australia and South Korea are long-time missile defense development partners.

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Under the circumstances, Russia needs to take a more tough and resolute stance in defending its national security interests. Washington’s attempts to impose discussions on tactical nuclear weapons and make them part of the agenda separately from missile defense plans should be repelled. The deployment of missile defense along with NATO partners and some Asia-Pacific region allies should be taken into account while outlining the pattern of future strategic offensive arms reduction talks.

Finally, Russia should toughen its military-technical and diplomatic-political response to the United States in case it doesn’t realize what kind of adventure it is pushing the world into while vibrantly developing and installing practically everywhere its missile defense components that enhance the US nuclear potential capability. A long-time experience of arms control testifies to the fact that Washington doesn’t understand the language of polite diplomacy, but rather only responds to practical military-technical actions making it also face complex challenges to its own security.

While Russian and US technical experts discuss some missile defense aspects till the end of this year, it’s expedient to come out with a simple but logical step (if such a proposal has not been put forward to the White House as yet): to freeze further deployment of US and NATO missile defense in Europe till the experts’ work is done. It will make their efforts more fruitful.

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