

Press Conference on Missile Defense

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MR. KRUZICH: Thank you all for joining today. We have with us Ellen Tauscher, Special Envoy for Strategic Stability and Missile Defense, and Madelyn Creedon, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Global Strategic Affairs. As a reminder, this is on-the-record, and before we go to your questions, we're going to allow each of our speakers to make some brief opening remarks. So without further ado, Ellen, over to you.

SPECIAL ENVOY TAUSCHER: Good evening, everyone. I think we have just come out of a very historic and important meeting. This is the first time we have had a chance to, except with our NATO allies, and the Russians, be in a very big group. I heard a report that there were 50 countries represented at the conference today. So I think what was important is that we came together and made our case. The case we have been making since September 2009. President Obama has said on many occasions that the United States is committed to finding a mutually acceptable approach to cooperation on Missile Defense with Russia. Such cooperation can enhance the security of the United States, our allies in Europe and Russia. We have consulted frequently on Missile Defense with Russia on diplomatic and military to military channels. It shows a serious commitment on both sides to find common ground and resolve differences. We discussed how the European Missile Defense System is designed and configured to counter threats from the Middle and have made clear that we have no intent or desire to undermine Russia's strategic deterrent. The best assurances for Russia are that United States and NATO missile defenses in Europe do not undermine their strategic deterrent would be for them to work in cooperation with the United States and NATO. And why don't I stop there and turn it over to Madelyn and she can make some remarks and then we will be happy to take some of your questions.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY CREEDON: I want to join Ellen Tauscher's comments. It really was a very good conference and as we went through the conference once again we explored the fact that the United States and NATO have been very open and transparent with Russia about our plans and programs and we have provided numerous technical briefings and senior level consultations both today and in the past that show that the NATO missile defenses can not negate Russia's strategic deterrent. The conference today continued that dialogue. We had many good discussions on both sides about the various claims and counter-claims back and forth, and I think

at the end of the day we also demonstrated that missile defense cooperation with Russia is a key U.S. and NATO goal and it is also clear from the conference today that it remains a Russian goal as well. So I believe that missile defense cooperation is in the national security interest of all of our nations in the Euro-Atlantic region because it will enable more effective and more efficient missile defenses. And with that I look forward to your questions.

Question 1: Jim Heinz, Associated Press Moscow. This is a question for either of the envoys who care to answer. I would appreciate your characterization of some of the Russian comments at the conference today, particularly General Makarov's statement about the possibility about preemptive strikes and also the Russian assessment that the discussion appears to be coming quite close to a stalemate.

SPECIAL ENVOY TAUSCHER: We just got a translation of General Makarov's comments and I think it is safe to say that we see no reason for Russia to take military measures to counter missile defenses that will not threaten the U.S.-Russia strategic balance. I am part of the talks. We are hardly at a stalemate. I think what is important to understand is that after many, many decades of a relationship characterized by arms races we are trying to move away from mutually assured destruction to mutually assured stability. And missile defense is a key component, but not the only component of that. We have a very broad relationship with the Russians. It is a very active relationship. It is worked everyday both here in Moscow and back home in Washington and throughout the country. It is a very big interagency issue to work positively with the Russians on things. I think it is safe to say that the Reset has not only worked, but it has held. So we have heard of many of the things that were said today in other fora and by other people. Nothing we heard today was a surprise. But we do believe it is important for us to continue to state our position that the European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA) does not in any way undermine Russia's strategic deterrent and that it is something we welcome cooperation on from the Russian Federation.

Question 2: Elena Chernenko, Kommersant daily newspaper. I have a question to Ellen Tauscher. Yesterday during a conference call you said that while it would not be possible for Russia to get legally binding guarantees, you might agree to a political statement. Is it possible to say when such a statement could be made? Would it be only the U.S. or other NATO countries and in what format could such a statement be made?

SPECIAL ENVOY TAUSCHER: That is a very good question. We have made many statements about the characterization of the missile defense system that is coming into Europe. We have said very clearly that it does not nor is it intended to undermine Russia's strategic deterrent. We have said that we want there to be cooperation. We have said the system is not targeted against the Russian Federation. So I think we have said many different things. There are many different ways to say things and many different ways to characterize it, including political statements. And we have been ready to say those things and have said them for well over two years. So the Russian Federation has said consistently that they want something that is legally binding. That is often in the horizon. We have to come to agreement first that we are going to have cooperation and we are actually going to do that cooperation. So we will see in the future how we actually bind ourselves together. But the kind of political statement we have been talking about, we have been talking about from the very beginning.

Question 3: Steve Gutterman, Reuters. A follow-up on your comment. So are you saying that the U.S. and NATO could agree to a legally binding treaty or statement of some kind once there is agreement on cooperation?

SPECIAL ENVOY TAUSCHER: Let me just say Steve, that what we have been saying consistently is that what we can't do is anything that limits the system. And for a very long time much of the conversation that we have had with different members of the Russian interagency is about a characterization of limiting the system. And we cannot agree to that. We can't agree to that for the obvious reasons. We are never going to limit the ability to protect ourselves, our allies, our forward deployed troops and assets no matter where they are deployed. So we have made that very, very clear. We need to continue to work on the confidence building measures and the trust issue that was well identified this afternoon as being a key hurdle, but one which we think we can bridge to get ourselves to a place where all sides NATO, the United States and Russia believe that we can put together an agreement. I can't tell you what type of agreement that will be. But I will tell it is important for us that we start to move on these various technical issues and other things that President Medvedev and President Obama talked about in Seoul. To continue having technical and expert level talks, because that is how we believe we will get past the physics and the geography that we think are obvious but which we have failed to convince the Russians. To build on the trust that we think is necessary to move forward.

Question 4: Elizabeth Atarova from Red Star, the official daily newspaper of the Ministry of Defense. I have the following question. Say Russia implements a set of measures as outlined by President Medvedev last November and stressed today by General Makarov. Then what political and military reaction from the United States can Russian citizens expect?

SPECIAL ENVOY TAUSCHER: I would say we are very far from that. I think what we saw today and what I believe President Medvedev said back in November and what General Makarov said today is a view of Christmas future. What will happen if we don't have cooperation? What will happen if we don't find accommodation? What will happen if we don't agree to agree? None of that is a surprise to us. We have heard it before. We don't believe that a system we are deploying in Europe to protect American and Europe NATO allies that we want to have Russia cooperate on against real and credible threats that exist now. We don't believe that that doesn't undermine the strategic deterrent. We don't believe that that rises to a counter-threat of deploying missiles someplace else. So we think that that is off on the horizon. We think that they were showing us what could happen. We think that we are far from there but were aware of what they are saying and we understand their concerns.

Question 5: Elizabeth Atarovo from Red Star: A second question about the Asian missile shield. So Russia and China are important actors in this region and is there some kind of long-term vision in the administration, in the current administration as for how our cooperation could evolve in the region?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY CREEDON: The Department of Defense has been working on Phased Adaptive Approaches in many regions. The whole concept was outlined in the Ballistic Defense Review Report that was published in 2010 and in that report the United States said that

we are going to look very closely at the regional threats in these regions of importance to us and that we will work cooperatively with our allies and partners in each of these regions to develop an appropriate defense. In other words, a defense that is appropriate for that region based on the geography and the threat at the time. And so we are obviously further along with the European one but as many of you were there today, as one of the speakers was from Japan and discussed at length some of the work we are doing with the Japanese with respect to the co-development of one of the SM3 variants. So that each of these will be developed on its own scope, pace and schedule but we are in fact, looking at each region.

Question 6: Elena Chernenko, Kommersant. If I may just ask one additional question? How did it make both of you feel when you saw today the presentation of the Ministry of Defense of Russia how the Russian ballistic missiles were flying over to major U.S. cities? Thank you.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY CREEDON: Well I might add that I also showed a chart that depicted Russian ICBMs flying over to major U.S. cities so I mean I think all of us were using these charts for illustrative purposes. Obviously this not something we believe is a threat. The United States does not believe that Russia is a threat. We very much support the notion of strategic balance and strategic deterrence. These charts were all shown, the presentations were all shown to graphically depict some of our views with respect to the capabilities of the um EPAA and also some of the U.S. in the case of the Russians' presentations some of the U.S. homeland missile defense protections. I think that it was good that we all put these up there. Part of the conference goals' were achieve because it brought everybody together. It laid out a range of discussions, a range of views. And so I think in that case it actually was a good success.

Question 7: Andrei Beramka, Komsomolskaya Pravda. I will ask my question in Russian. It is said that the European Missile Defense is aimed at threats from the Middle East, mainly from Iran. But if you look at the map, some of this covers part of Russia and the Ukraine. So there is concern that this American system is aimed at Russia. And this could threaten the security of Russia.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY CREEDON: The way that the EPAA is designed is focused on the threat coming out of the Middle East and given where the two interceptor sites will be in Poland and Romania. These intercepts will occur only when we know that these hypothetical missiles are coming into one of the NATO defended areas. And with respect to the radars, the radars are focused again, on the location from the threat, they are focused on Iran. So neither the interceptors nor the radar present any sort of a threat to Russia. Russia has sophisticated systems and Iran at the moment has short- and medium-range missiles. We worry about the development of a longer range missile. But the system is designed to go after the Iranian missiles not the sophisticated Russian ICBMs that have lots of capabilities frankly to evade any sort of missile defense system.

Question 8: Andrew Kramer with the New York Times. Just to follow up on my colleague's question. Would the intercepts occur in Russian territory?

ADMIRAL HENDRICKSON: The intercepts occur in a common area of space. The SM-3 only works in space and it is the hit to kill weapon. And it is such that the system can be set up to have the intercept occur where we would like it to occur in space. I would add two other things to that. The first thing is that when the intercept does occur in space, the RV is essentially small and the KW is essentially small and their impact, the sheer force of that makes thousands of pieces which do not survive re-entry. So there is little to no debris that is caused by an intercept in space when the two things actually meet with the force that they meet. The system is set up that we can control where that intercept occurs.

Question 9: Phil Black from CNN. One of the Russian speakers today claimed that the United States, if the United States, the United States acknowledges that at Phase III, the U.S. will be able to shoot down or intercept Russian ICBMs. Is that true, and if so, how would that not undermine Russia's strategic deterrent?

SPECIAL ENVOY TAUSCHER: No, it's not true. Randy, why don't you go through the physics of that.

ADMIRAL HENDRICKSON: We showed again today that it's both a geography and a science problem as Ambassador Vershbow said and I think, very clearly, Secretary Creedon showed the geography of the way the systems align now to look towards the Middle East. And I think I laid out in a very comprehensive timeline that even with a variant anticipated in 2018 that the trajectories that come towards the U.S. that are Russian ICBMs in nature – and I hope it never comes to that – are polar for the most part, or a majority of them, and the ones that are not do not pass within where the EPAA assets are and by the time we were to develop a fire control solution on them the SM-3 doesn't have enough gas, if you will, to catch up to it and it's in a perpetual tail chase so there's no reason to even shoot.

MR. KRUZICH: More questions?... Just one more.

Question 10: Andrew Cramer with the New York Times. Just once again to follow up on that. What about a Russian ICBM strike on Western Europe? Would your missiles have capability to intercept that type of attack?

ADMIRAL HENDRICKSON: That's a hypothetical question and I wouldn't even want to venture a guess. I would have to do analysis but an ICBM by its very nature is longer than 10,000 kilometers and so I'm having a hard time even envisioning a scenario.

Question 11: [inaudible]. I need to ask another uncomfortable question in Russian. Are you ready to guarantee that if the political situation changes in Iran one or two years down the road you'll stop your work on the Third phase?

SPECIAL ENVOY TAUSCHER: No. We're committed to deploying all four phases. It's called phased... European Phased Adaptive Approach. European. That's where it is. Phased, because it's meant to be able to manage and leverage new technologies. And adaptive, is about the threat. And having said that there could be some timing modifications but basically we are

committed to deploying all four phases of the European Phased Adaptive Approach in the places we've set.

MR. KRUZICH: OK. If that's all the questions then we'll close the press conference. You want to know one thing that the presentations uh that were made today will be, are available right on the website – the U.S. Embassy website, which is moscow.usembassy.gov). And also the transcript from the call they did last night with press both in Washington and here is also up on the website. OK. So thank you for coming.