

Putin Calls Obama's Bluff, Says 'Nyet' to NATO Threat

by Jeffrey Steinberg and Nancy Spannaus

May 14—With President Vladimir Putin's surprise phone call to Barack Obama on May 9, in which he announced that he would not be attending the May 18 G-8 Summit at Camp David, the global strategic situation has shifted in a fundamental way. The newly inaugurated Putin, now beginning his third term as President, has delivered an unequivocal rebuff to British and Obama threats, and thus created a crucial opening for sane forces to bring the world back from the brink of thermo-nuclear confrontation.

Contrary to the White House line, and most press coverage, Putin's polite, but pointed announcement that he is too busy to attend, and is sending Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev in his stead, stems specifically from Russia's strong objection to NATO's intention to announce the "interim operational capability" of its European-based Ballistic Missile Defense System (BMDS) during the NATO Conference in Chicago on May 20-21. The meeting of the Russia-NATO Council, traditionally held on the sidelines of NATO heads of state conferences, had already been cancelled by the Russian government, in light of that impasse.

At the beginning of May, the Russian government



Presidential Press & Information Office

President Putin has delivered a clear rebuke to Obama's threats to deploy an BMD system on Russia's borders. He is shown here speaking at the May 9 military parade on Red Square, celebrating the 67th anniversary of Russia's victory in the Great Patriotic War (World War II).

hosted a Moscow conference on ballistic missile defense, attended by representatives of 50 nations, including all 28 NATO member countries, at which top Russian defense officials publicly explained the dangerous consequences of deployment of a European ballistic missile defense shield without Russian full participa-

tion, and threatened to take preventive military action (see *EIR*, May 11).

Those credible Russian threats have blown a hole in the British efforts to intimidate Russia into capitulating to its agenda to save the current system through eliminating national sovereignty and imposing killer austerity and hyperinflation. Yet, at the same time, the Russians continue to express hope that NATO, and particularly the United States, will negotiate a workable arrangement with Russia on missile defense, including *written*, legally binding guarantees that the BMD system is not aimed against Russia, and agreement on a verifiable set of parameters to ensure that that was the case.

Putin's cancellation has definitely delivered a shock to the NATO governments; and some high-level sources in Washington indicate that, contrary to previous statements that NATO will go ahead with building the BMDS, no matter what, the governments will seriously seek to find a way to accommodate Russian concerns, during the NATO summit discussions. But May 20-21 remains a crucial point of decision, as to whether the British Empire succeeds in pushing forward its confrontation policy toward World War III, or whether saner heads prevail.

Another Warning of a Preemptive Strike

Gen. Nikolai Makarov, Chief of Russia's General Staff, was unequivocal in his warning during the May 3-4 BMD conference. Given the threat to Russia's ability to retaliate against a U.S./NATO first strike attack, a threat represented by the planned BMD installations in Poland and Romania, "the placement of new strike weapons in the south and northwest of Russia against [NATO] missile defense components, including the deployment of Iskander missile systems in Kaliningrad region, is one possible way of incapacitating the European missile defense infrastructure," Makarov said. Taking into account the "destabilizing nature of the missile defense system . . . the decision on the preemptive use of available weapons will be made during the period of an escalating situation."

Deputy Chief of the General Staff Gen. Col. Valeri Gerasimov later in the conference, provided extensive documentation, with video animations, of the fact that the planned system is not aimed at Iran, but does, in its intended later phases, represent a threat to Russia's strategic deterrent.

On May 11, Russian Minister of Defense Anatoli Serdyukov reiterated Makarov's warning, according to

a report in the official Russian news agency Itar-Tass, but in even blunter terms:

"At the conference on ballistic missile defense (BMD), we once again drew attention to the fact that the EuroBMD deployment causes us certain concerns; we shall destroy the anti-missile defenses accordingly," Itar-Tass quoted Serdyukov. He named Russia's Iskander missile as capable of doing this: "The Iskander can handle neutralization of systems that could hinder our missiles," he said, referring to the BMD threat to Russian intercontinental ballistic missiles, fired in a retaliatory "second strike" under a scenario of a U.S. nuclear missile first strike against Russia.

The Iskander is a truck-mobile, nuclear-capable tactical missile with a range of up to 400 kilometers. NATO calls it the SS-26. It is a successor to the Oka missile (SS-23), which was taken out of service and destroyed under the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force treaty of 1987; the Iskander also succeeded the famous Soviet Scud-B missile. In his televised national address of Nov. 23, 2011, then-President Dmitri Medvedev warned that Russia would station Iskander missiles in Kaliningrad, if the U.S.A. and NATO proceeded with the BMD program in Poland.

Asked his view of the May 3-4 Moscow conference on BMD, and of some remarks by State Department spokesman Philip Gordon on seeking a compromise with Russia on BMD issues, Serdyukov said that the Russian side awaits specific proposals from the Americans. "We shall wait for what they offer. If they offer legally binding guarantees, we are prepared to look at the matter differently. Hitherto we have received only verbal promises. So far, at the conference it was said that they were prepared to work on some kind of proposals."

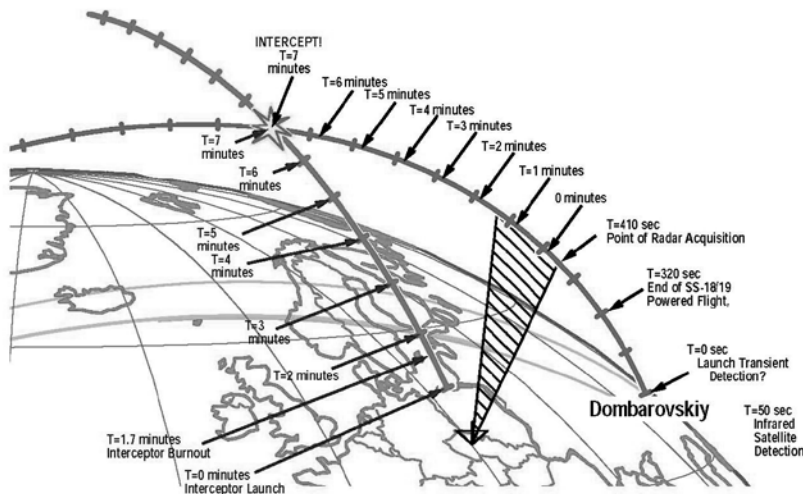
The Putin Message

Putin's call to Obama, declaring his intention to skip the Camp David summit, was placed on May 9, the day of national celebration of the Allied victory in World War II, and one of Russia's most patriotic commemorations (see accompanying article).

Putin told his American counterpart that he would not be coming to Camp David for the May 18 G-8 heads of state summit, claiming that he was "too busy" putting the new government together to travel to the U.S. He told Obama that the newly appointed Prime Minister and ex-President, Dmitri Medvedev, would be attending instead.

FIGURE 1

Engagement Event Timeline for Engagement of SS-18/19 from Dombarovskiy with 2-Stage Missile Defense Interceptor



Courtesy of Dr. Theodore Postol

Using the correct data for the speed of the ICBM and interceptor, and the distances to be covered by both, at seven minutes after the ICBM is launched from western Russia, Dr. Ted Postol demonstrated that it can be intercepted by the Poland-based missile, with help from the U.S. radar proposed to be based in the Czech Republic.

The message was clear: Putin will wait to see what happens at the NATO meeting in Chicago, and will act accordingly. The danger of thermonuclear war, while not a certainty, is definitely real and immediate.

What the Russian leadership is looking for was outlined in Makarov's May 3 speech. He listed various criteria that would indicate that the European BMDS was not directed at Russia, including data on missile velocities, basing locations, radar ranges, and interception capabilities at different phases of flight. He also laid out procedures for joint development of confidence and monitoring measures to guarantee security of strategic capabilities of both sides, preparatory to a legally binding agreement, and identified a number of other crucial topics of discussion geared toward restoring trust.

Will the U.S. Respond?

In the immediate wake of the Moscow conference, NATO and U.S. officials made repeated public statements indicating that they were not taking the Russian concerns or threats seriously. President Obama himself met with NATO Secretary General Fogh Rasmussen on May 10, but no reports have surfaced from that discussion. Instead, there have been declarations several Ad-

ministration spokesmen—Obama's Special Envoy for Strategic Stability and Missile Defense Ellen Tauscher; Assistant Secretary of Defense for Global Strategic Affairs Madelyn Creedon (both of whom heard the Russian warnings in person at the May 3-4 conference in Moscow); and NATO spokesperson Oana Lungescu—that the BMD system represents no threat to Russia, and that they expect to go ahead.

Yet, there is public dissension in the ranks.

In recent weeks, both the U.S. Defense Science Board and the National Academy of Sciences have urged Obama to cancel the European BMD deployment, because the system is unreliable, and actually heightens the danger of a blunder into thermonuclear confrontation. There was also the detailed analysis given by at an American Association for the Advancement of Sciences briefing on Capitol Hill on Aug. 28, 2007, in which Dr. Ted Postol, professor of Science, Technology, and National Security Policy at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and former scientific advisor to the Chief of Naval Operations, provided an airtight case for why the U.S. system in its later phase represented a strategic threat to the Russian deterrent against nuclear attack (**Figure 1**).

In addition, top American military leaders are fully aware of the Russian position, and of the folly of going forward with the European BMD provocation. At recent hearings of the House Armed Services Committee, Gen. Martin Dempsey, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, emphasized that there are many areas where U.S.-Russian cooperation is vital to global stability—including the U.S./NATO mission in Afghanistan, the global war on terrorism and war on drugs, and ballistic missile defense.

The problem that looms the largest is President Obama himself. As Lyndon LaRouche has been warning since April 2009, the greatest threat to the survival of mankind is the continued presence of British agent and extreme Narcissist Barack Obama in the White House. As long as Obama is allowed to continue as President, the British Crown maintains a finger on the U.S. thermonuclear trigger. Putin and the Russian de-

fense establishment have made clear that they are fully aware of the threats directed against them, and they are not going to capitulate in any way.

Now it's up to the American political leadership to take the same kind of courageous step, and remove Obama from his position of power before it's too late.