



Permanent Iskanders in Kaliningrad

OE Watch Commentary: There are doubts that Russia and the US will commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, in June 2018. The sense of mutual trust which undergirded the original agreement has deteriorated over the past several years, and both sides have accused the other of not only violating the treaty, but of exacerbating mutual tensions. A symptom of this growing distrust is reflected in the Kremlin's decision to permanently deploy the Iskander-M missile complex to Kaliningrad. The accompanying excerpt from the moderate Russian source, *Kommersant* discusses this decision, which some have claimed could violate the INF Treaty.

The article points out that “the Russian authorities have been promising to do this since 2007, but to date, have deployed the system “to this region only on an interim basis.” Quoting a Russian military source, the *Kommersant* article claims that the decision to permanently deploy this system to Kaliningrad was regarded by “the military-political leadership ... as an ace up its sleeve in the event of a dramatic deterioration of relations.” This “occurred after the events of 2014,” when Russia employed armed force against Ukraine and “the US and its allies” levied sanctions and began to reinforce their “military infrastructure on the border with the Russian Federation.” Prior to this, the Kremlin had threatened to move missiles into Kaliningrad “as a counterweight to the deployment of elements of the American Missile Defense System in Europe.” According to the article, Moscow was “outraged” after the US deployed “to Poland and the Baltic Region... additional contingents and weapons.”

The article describes how the infrastructure where the unit is deployed (Chernyakhovsk, Kaliningrad Oblast) has been developed over the past two years to accommodate “the acceptance of a brigade set of the Iskander complex.” It also provides specific reference about the unit designation and major equipment: “152nd Guards Missile Brigade... 12 launchers, 12-transporter-loader vehicles, 11 command staff vehicles, 14 life support vehicles, one information compilation facility...” Unit crews will first complete training “at the 60th Missile Troops Combat Employment Training Center (Znamensk, Astrakhan Oblast)” and once their proficiency is tested, “will be sent via rail to the permanent deployment location.”

Regardless of whether the Iskander missile system violates the INF Treaty, Russia's permanent deployment of this weapon system into the Kaliningrad enclave alters the balance of power in this region. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“Iskander-M operational-tactical missile complexes (OTRK) will be deployed in Kaliningrad Oblast on a permanent basis in the very near future.”

Source: Ivan Safronov, Yelena Chernenko, and Galina Dudina, “Искандеры тихо едут, но быстро заряжают: Под Калининградом развернут ракетные комплексы земля-земля (The Iskanders Quietly Move, But Rapidly Load: Surface-to-Surface Missile Complexes Have Been Deployed Near Kaliningrad),” *Kommersant Online*, 2 December 2017. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3486110>

Iskander-M operational-tactical missile complexes (OTRK) will be deployed in Kaliningrad Oblast on a permanent basis in the very near future. The Russian authorities have been promising to do this since 2007, however, the latest operational-tactical missile complexes have been deployed to this region only on an interim basis until now....

...A Kommersant source, who is close to the RF Armed Forces General Staff, confirmed the fact of the brigade's rearming from old Tochka-U tactical missile complexes to the new Iskander OTRK, having clarified that they will be placed on alert at the beginning of 2018. Prior to this, the 152nd Missile Brigade's crews will train to drive the OTRK at 60th Missile Troops Combat Employment Training Center (Znamensk, Astrakhan Oblast) and then will conduct a tactical exercise with actual missile launches, and already after that the formation's personnel will be sent via rail to the permanent deployment location.

Conversations about the permanent deployment of the Iskanders in Kaliningrad Oblast have been conducted since July 2007: Having assumed the post of First Deputy Prime Minister at that time, Sergey Ivanov stated that this step is necessary as a counterweight to the deployment of elements of the American Missile Defense System in Europe.

In November 2008, then RF President Dmitriy Medvedev also repeated this thesis, having explained the step by the deployment of the US Missile Defense System in Poland. However, the promised deployment didn't occur for nearly 10 years, although the American intelligence services repeatedly announced the deployment of precisely the Iskanders to Chernyakhovsk....

...In the words of a Kommersant military source, the temporary deployment of the latest OTRKs to Chernyakhovsk was previously employed as a “demonstrative response to the US's unfriendly steps, in particular, and of NATO as a whole.” The permanent deployment of the Iskanders was delayed for political reasons, Kommersant's interlocutor says: the military-political leadership kept this step “as an ace up its sleeve in the event of a dramatic deterioration of relations”.

It occurred after the events of 2014: the US and its allies reacted to the inclusion of the Crimea into Russia's composition and Moscow's support of the self-proclaimed republics of the Donbass through the introduction of sanctions and the reinforcement of the military infrastructure on the border with the RF. Last fall, the sides repeatedly pursued claims against each other in the escalation of the situation in the region. NATO saw a threat in the large-scale Russo-Belarusian Zapad-2017 exercises. And the deployment to Poland and the Baltic Region of additional contingents and weapons from the US outraged Moscow.

“As a result of the situation that is being exacerbated in the region, a decision was made in 2016 to begin the erection in Chernyakhovsk of mobile tent shelters for the accommodation of the OTRK on a permanent basis – that storage system will permit the reduction of equipment wear,” Kommersant's interlocutor continues. In his words, right now this work is practically completed and the infrastructure has been prepared for the acceptance of a brigade set of the Iskander complex.

In the words of Design Bureau of Machine building Chief Designer Vasiliy Kashin, one such set consists of 12 launchers, 12-transporter-loader vehicles, 11 command staff vehicles, 14 life support vehicles, one information compilation facility, one routine maintenance vehicle...