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## **RUSSIA DEMANDS U.S. DESTROY MISSILE-DEFENSE SYSTEM IN ROMANIA, MILITARY DRONES**

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Russia says the United States should destroy its MK-41 missile-defense launch system deployed in NATO-member Romania in order to return to compliance with a landmark Cold War-era nuclear treaty.

The Russian Defense Ministry also said on February 7 that Washington should destroy its unmanned aerial vehicles for the same reason.

The U.S. Embassy's military attache was handed a note containing Moscow's demand after being summoned to the ministry.

Russia suspended the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty on February 3, a day after the United States announced it would withdraw in six months unless Moscow ended what it says were violations of the pact. Moscow denies violating the treaty.

The missile-defense system located in Deveselu, in southern Romania, is technically known as Aegis Ashore. It was inaugurated in May 2016 and is tasked with shooting down rockets as part of a larger defense shield.

In response, Romanian Defense Minister Teodor Melescanu said on February 7 that Aegis Ashore is a strictly defensive system.

Russia's demand "is purely an excuse for its own military programs that directly violate the INF Treaty," Melescanu said, adding that Romania will hold consultations with its allies and will come up with a common position on the issue.

<https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-demands-u-s-destroy-missile-defense-system-in-romania-military-drones/29758623.html>

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