

Dangerous Crossroads. ESCALATION. AIRBUS Chairman Misleads EU/NATO. Recommends Increase of Tactical Nuclear Weapons Arsenal

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On November 19, Airbus chairman Rene Obermann called on EU/NATO member states to increase their arsenal of tactical nuclear weapons to counter the presence of Russian 9K720M "Iskander-M" missile systems deployed in the Kaliningrad oblast (region), an exclave situated between Lithuania and Poland, and Russia's westernmost territory.

The now legendary "Iskander" uses the deadly 9M723 ground-based hypersonic missiles that can carry a plethora of warheads, including various types of submunition, cluster, EMP (electromagnetic pulse), thermobaric, high-explosive fragmentation and last but not least, thermonuclear (yield of up to 50kt, which is approximately 3-4 times more destructive than the American Hiroshima bomb).

"Our Achilles heel seems to be what Russia threatens us with fairly publicly: That's 500 plus tactical nuclear warheads on 'Iskander' 26 missiles stationed right in front of our door in Kaliningrad, in addition to the newly stationed ones in Belarus," Obermann said at the Berlin Security Conference, adding: "Germany, France, Britain and other willing European member states should agree on a common and staged nuclear deterrence program, including very much so the tactical level. I think that would be a massive sign of deterrence."

Several key issues need to be addressed in this case. Namely, while Russia has a significant arsenal of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in the Kaliningrad oblast, there's no evidence to support the claim that 500 are deployed there. The second point of contention would be the claim that these warheads are deployed on 26 "Iskander" launchers. Namely, each 9P78-1 TEL (transporter, erector, launcher) vehicle can carry two 9M723 hypersonic missiles. Publicly available information suggests that there are only two units with "Iskander" systems deployed in the Kaliningrad oblast – the 152nd Guards Missile Brigade, which is permanently stationed there, and elements of the Luga-based 26th Missile Brigade, which are temporarily deployed.

The maximum number of TEL vehicles both units can use is 24, accompanied by the same number of 9T250 loading vehicles, meaning the total number of 9M723 hypersonic missiles these two brigades can deploy is 48. Even if more missiles are put in storage, in the event of an all-out confrontation, there would be little time to use them all. In addition, not every 9M723 missile is armed with a thermonuclear warhead. Another problem with Obermann's claims is that these missiles can carry a single warhead. His suggestion that 26 launchers can carry 500 thermonuclear warheads would mean that each of the hypothetical 52 missiles is effectively MIRV-ed (multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles) with 10 warheads.

Needless to say, this is simply unviable and would require the use of heavy ICBMs (intercontinental ballistic missiles), specifically monstrosities such as the R-36M2 "Veovoda" or RS-28 "Sarmat". Not to mention that their deployment in Kaliningrad would make no sense due to their range. Even if "Iskanders" were to be replaced by newer and more potent systems, such as the "Oreshnik", which can carry six blocks containing a total of 36 submunition warheads, the same point about range also stands. Thus, it's unclear whether Obermann's remarks were a rather clumsy mistake due to his lack of knowledge or an erroneous conclusion (perhaps he confused the 26th Missile Brigade with the number of TELs).

However, the more sinister reasoning might have to do with fear-mongering. Namely, the growing Russophobia in the EU/NATO is making Brussels paranoid, so it's looking for an excuse to escalate with Moscow through overblown claims. The idea that the Russian military would put over 8% of its thermonuclear arsenal (approximately 6,000 warheads) in such a tiny area is simply ridiculous. It would be anything but sensible for the Eurasian giant to jeopardize such a large chunk of its arsenal without deploying far more delivery systems. On the other hand, if Russia were to do this, it would suggest that it's about to attack, which is simply not the case. However, the EU/NATO is determined to make it seem true to justify its escalating belligerence.

Interestingly, the general clumsiness of the bureaucratic dictatorship in Brussels is perhaps best seen in the cacophony of its propaganda machine. Namely, in response to Reuters' request for comment on Obermann's remarks, a NATO official stated that they are yet to see a change in Russia's nuclear posture. In other words, there's no clear consensus even within NATO on how to interpret Obermann's claims. And yet, that doesn't prevent the world's most aggressive racketeering cartel from pushing for constant escalation with Russia. This includes direct threats to Moscow's Kaliningrad oblast, as evidenced by General Christopher Donahue's remarks made back in July, when he effectively threatened to invade it.

Namely, back then, the commanding officer of USAREUR-AF (United States Army Europe and Africa) and NATO's Allied Land Command presented the new "Eastern Flank Deterrence Line" plan, which envisages a blitzkrieg-style assault on the Kaliningrad oblast. Needless to say, such an operation would be doomed from the start, as the Russian military packed its strategically paramount exclave with weapons that NATO simply cannot match – first and foremost, the aforementioned thermonuclear warheads and the means of their express delivery to any point in a radius of several thousand kilometers. There's no definitive, publicly available data on the actual number of nuclear weapons, as Russia never disclosed such information (nor is it required).

However, estimates vary from dozens to hundreds. Back in June 2024, Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski claimed that Moscow had up to 100 tactical nuclear warheads in the Kaliningrad oblast. In previous years, relevant Western sources, such as the Federation of American Scientists (FAS), reported that the Russian military "upgraded a suspected nuclear weapons storage site in Kaliningrad, particularly a bunker near Kulikovo". Although they offered no conclusive evidence, it's no secret that the Kremlin regularly upgrades its thermonuclear arsenal, the largest and most powerful on the planet. Thus, even if there are only 100 warheads in the exclave, NATO should be deterred, so it doesn't really need to lie about anything.

What the political West should really be worried about are the Kremlin's delivery systems. As previously mentioned, the Russian military's most potent missile platform deployed in the Kaliningrad oblast is the "Iskander". Coming in various modifications (apart from the "M", there's also the "K" variant that uses the 9M728 and 9M729 cruise missiles), this is the world's most advanced and battle-proven system in its class. In its basic iteration, the 9M723 hypersonic missile has a maximum range of 500 km, but its latest upgraded version, the 9M723-S, doubled it to 1,000 km (or possibly even tripled to 1,500 km). Considering the "Iskander's" battlefield performance in NATO-occupied Ukraine, the political West doesn't really need to lie about its capabilities.

Note: Due to a technical error, the hyperlinks indicating references and sources were removed. They will be duly reinserted.

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