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CENTRE FOR EASTERN STUDIES 18.05.2011 www.osw.waw.pl

Russia hardens its position on plans to build anti-missile shield

On 14 May, President Dmitri Medvedev sent an identical message to the heads of the NATO member states, in which he reminded them of the Russian positio towards plans to develop an anti-missile defence system for the alliance. Russia has made its participation in this initiative dependent on the West's agreement to transfer to Russia some of the responsibility for anti-missile defence of not only the area of the CIS, but also of those NATO countries which border the Russian Federation. Russia is also seeking to obtain guarantees from the Alliance that this system will not be directed against Russia itself. Medvedev's appeal should be seen as confirmation that Russia is unwilling to continue discussions on constructing the anti-missile shield.

Since NATO's November summit in Lisbon, Moscow has advocated the adoption of the so-called sectoral missile defense that would involve the extension of the the Russian missile defence system umbrella over certain NATO states. It also rejects the Alliance's position, which provides for an interaction between two separate systems, which would not interfere with the military security system of either party. On 18 May, during a press conference in Skolkovo, the Russian president stated that Western failure to take into account Russian demands could force Moscow to take steps to restore the disturbed balance of power. He did not rule out the possibility of Russia withdrawing from the recently signed Russian-American START treaty. In this context, President Medvedev's appeal may be seen as an element of a political strategy the aim of which is to deepen concern among Western countries that Russia might return to anti-Western rhetoric, and to stimulate criticism of US policy in Europe. <peż>