

Beat: Miscellaneous

Russia test-fires ballistic missile, plans 2 more tests this month

-, 05.03.2014, 17:17 Time

USPA News - Russian military forces carried out a planned test-fire of an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) on late Tuesday evening, despite growing tensions and talk of Russian military intervention in Ukraine, but officials indicated the events were unrelated. The Strategic Rocket Forces said it launched at 10:10 p.m. local time an SS-25 Topol ballistic missile from the Kapustin Yar test site in southern Astrakhan Oblast toward the Sary Shagan testing range in Kazakhstan, where the dummy warhead successfully reached its target.

The test firing was carried out to test a new type of combat payload, the ministry of defense said. Tests of new warheads on Topol missiles from Kapustin Yar have become relatively common, as Tuesday's test-firing follows two similar events that took place in October and December 2013. But the third test came at a sensitive time as Russian forces have taken control of the Ukrainian region of Crimea, with demands from the West to pull back. "Although the test took place at the time of increased tensions caused by Russia's military intervention in Ukraine, the launch was definitely not related to these developments as these tests are normally scheduled some time in advance," said a spokesperson for the military's Rocket Forces. U.S. officials confirmed they had received advance notification for Tuesday's launch prior to the Crimean crisis. "This was a previously notified and routine test launch of an ICBM. As required under the New START Treaty, Russia provided advance notification of this launch to the United States," said U.S. National Security Council spokeswoman Caitlin Hayden. Hayden added: "Such advance notifications are intended to provide transparency, confidence, and predictability and to help both sides avoid misunderstandings. Russia and the United States routinely flight test their ICBMs and SLBMs (submarine-launched ballistic missiles)." Tuesday's test-firing was followed with an announcement from the Kazakhstan Ministry of Defense on early Wednesday that Russia plans to carry out two more tests later this month. It said the plan for the tests was signed in November 2013 although Kazakhstan did not give its final go-ahead until last Friday. "According to the plan, three missile test launches were scheduled for March 2014. The Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Kazakhstan received applications for testing on February 19, 2014, and approved them on February 28 this year," the ministry said. "In accordance with established procedure, the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Kazakhstan notified relevant state and local authorities." Russia and the United States routinely flight test their ICBMs and SLBMs. The New Start Treaty, signed by President Obama in 2011, requires U.S. and Russia to limit the number of strategic arms within seven years from the date the Treaty entered into force. The treaty does not contain any constraints on testing, developing, or deployment of current or planned missile defense programs.

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-1960/russia-test-fires-ballistic-missile-plans-2-more-tests-this-month.html>

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:

United Press Association, Inc.
3651 Lindell Road, Suite D168
Las Vegas, NV 89103, USA

(702) 943.0321 Local
(702) 943.0233 Facsimile
info@unitedpressassociation.org
info@gna24.com
www.gna24.com