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Assessing the Implications of Changes in Russias Strategic Posture

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Russian Means of Defeating or Evading Missile Defenses

Russian President Vladimir Putin announced on 1 March 2018 that Russia is developing several types of “super weapons,” including heavy ICBMs, hypersonic missiles, and nuclear-armed and nuclear-propelled undersea drones designed to evade or defeat missile defenses and cause great damage.



Putin speech on 1 March 2018



Russian Zircon missile

Russian Threat to Continental U.S. Via Hypersonic Missiles on Ships Off Coast

On 20 February 2019 Putin threatened to hold the United States at risk by developing and deploying Zircon hypersonic missiles on submarines or surface ships within range of CONUS and capable of delivering a decapitating strike against the US National Command Authorities.

Consequences of Russia's New Weapons

Russia's new weapons may be designed to intimidate Western publics, weaken the credibility of U.S. security commitments, and provide Moscow with status and influence. Skeptics question the feasibility and affordability of certain weapons, however, and note that the Russians may intensify a competition with China and the United States that they cannot afford to sustain.



USAF X-51A Waverider Hypersonic Demonstrator

Recommendations for Further Research

- Future researchers should examine the full range of implications arising from changes in Russia's strategic posture, notably the “super-weapons” plans announced in March 2018 and February 2019.
- It remains essential for the United States and its NATO Allies to develop a more discerning and comprehensive understanding of how the Russians view their nuclear weapons and other instruments of influence, intimidation, coercion, and combat.



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