

# *Mikhail Gorbachev Says U.S.- Russia Tensions Reach Dangerous Threshold*

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Moscow, October 12 (RHC)-- Former Soviet Union President Mikhail Gorbachev has warned that the world has reached a “dangerous threshold” as tensions between Russia and the United States rise over the Syria crisis. The 85-year-old Gorbachev told Russia's news agency RIA Novosti: “I think the world has approached a dangerous threshold. I would prefer not to suggest any particular schemes, but I want to say: we need to stop.”

The former Russian leader said that “dialogue [between Russia and the U.S.] should be resumed. Stopping the dialogue has been the biggest mistake.” He noted that relations between Washington and Moscow were already at their lowest point since the end of the Cold War in 1991. Last week, the U.S. announced it would suspend participation in bilateral channels with Russia that were established to maintain the cessation of hostilities in Syria, where Washington has been supporting anti-government militants while Moscow backs the elected government of President Bashar al-Assad.

Russia has accused Washington of taking hostile actions against Moscow, and deployed nuclear-capable Iskander-M missiles to its Baltic enclave of Kaliningrad bordering Poland and Lithuania. The Russian military also warned the Pentagon against conducting airstrikes on Syrian military positions, noting that its

S-300 and S-400 air defense systems in Syria are active.

Meanwhile, Moscow also pulled out of an arms-control agreement aimed at reprocessing weapons-grade plutonium and demanded the Pentagon scale down its military buildup in eastern Europe.

Gorbachev said: "It is necessary to return to the main priorities. These are nuclear disarmament, the fight against terrorism, the prevention of an environmental disaster." And the former Russian leader, who was president from 1985 until the Soviet Union was dissolved in 1991, said: "Compared to these challenges, all the rest slips into the background."

"Of course, at this moment it is difficult to talk about moving towards a nuclear-free world, we must honestly admit it. But we should not forget: as long as there are nuclear weapons there is the threat of their use. It could be an accident, a technical malfunction of someone's evil will – a madman or a terrorist," the former Soviet leader said.

"The nuclear-free world is not a utopia, but rather an imperative necessity. But we can achieve it only through demilitarization of politics and international relations."

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