

Beijing vows to respond if Washington deploys missiles in Asia



Beijing, August 6 (RHC)-- China has vowed to take countermeasures if Washington deploys intermediate-range missiles in Asia, a plan that U.S. officials have announced. Fu Cong, the Chinese Foreign Ministry's director general for arms control department, said in a press briefing on Tuesday that China "will not stand idly by" if the U.S. deployed missiles in Asia.

"If the U.S. deploys missiles in this part of the world, at the doorstep of China, China will be forced to take countermeasures," Fu said. "I urge our neighbors to exercise prudence and not to allow the US deployment of intermediate-range missiles on their territory," he added, mentioning Japan, South Korea, and Australia by name.

U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper said in Australia over the weekend that he favored the deployment of ground-to-ground missiles in Asia possibly within months. Washington says it plans to deploy new missiles in Asia a day after withdrawing from an arms control treaty.

Fu, the Chinese Foreign Ministry official, said "everything will be on the table" in terms of how China would respond if that happened. Beijing's reaction came a day after Russia announced that it would

adopt its own countermeasures if Washington stationed land-based missiles in Asia.

Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said on Monday that Moscow did not intend to get sucked into an arms race with Washington but would respond defensively to such threats. "If the deployment of new US systems begins specifically in Asia, then the corresponding steps to balance these actions will be taken by us in the direction of parrying these threats," Ryabkov said.

On Friday last week, the U.S. formally terminated a Cold War-era treaty with Russia that had banned missiles with ranges of 500-5,500 kilometers, accusing Moscow of having violated the accord by developing a certain type of missile.

Russia denied the accusation and publicized the specifications of the missile to show that it was not banned under the INF. Shortly after the termination of the treaty, Esper, the U.S. defense secretary, said that the Pentagon had already started work to develop "mobile, conventional, ground-launched cruise and ballistic missile systems."

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