

ISKANDERS STATIONED CLOSE TO THE NATO FLANK – PRE-EMPTIVE STRIKE EXERCISE AGAINST A ‘SIMULATED ENEMY’

The missile brigade of the Russian land forces, stationed in the Leningrad Oblast and armed with the Iskander-M missiles, has been brought to the highest level of combat readiness. The unit is involved in a training exercise concerning the on-alert deployments and pre-emptive strike, against the ballistic systems and other critical targets, within the territory of the “simulated adversary”. The whole initiative is a part of the test which summarizes the 2016 year in training for the Western Military District.

The Russian Ministry of Defence announced, on 4th September, in the morning, that the 26th Missile Brigade, stationed in the town of Luga in the Leningrad Oblast, would be involved in a test of readiness. The unit has been put on alert and was tasked with deployment to a firing range, where dislocation, securing, loading and launching the Iskander-M missiles would take place.

The simulated missile strike is to destroy, within a pre-emptive strike procedure, the ballistic missile launchers, air defence systems and command chain used by the theoretical adversary. The exercise involves around 500 soldiers and 50 units of equipment, mainly including the elements of the Iskander system which includes, besides the launcher, technical, transport and loading and command vehicles.

In case of the Iskander-M missiles stationed in the Leningrad Oblast, the range of which is defined as 500 kilometres, the Baltic States, Finland or Belarus may play a role of the hypothetical enemy. However, one should take into account the fact that Iskander-M is a system which is highly mobile and which may be deployed, in a very short period of time, to any region of Russia.

Iskander-M is a short range ballistic missile system capable of striking targets at distances of up to 500 kilometres. The same launcher may also be used to launch the Iskander-K cruise missiles, the range of which exceeds 500 kilometres. The latest information suggests that the launchers of that system may also make use of the R-500S cruise missiles, with a range of even 2 thousand kilometres.