

Putin eyes missile treaty withdrawal

by UPI

MOSCOW -- Russia is indicating an intermediate-range missiles treaty is so flawed that Moscow could back out altogether. The Itar-Tass news agency said Friday that President Vladimir Putin that the INF -- Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces -- pact should cover missiles worldwide rather than just Russia and the United States. Putin said that if the 20-year-old INF is not extended to other countries, Russia and the United States should have the option of pulling out of the agreement. The INF was drafted at the end of the Cold War; however intermediate-range missiles capable of carrying nukes have since proliferated to other parts of the world. "Other countries, unlike us, have the right to develop these weapons systems, and they are successfully developing them," Putin said. The Times of London Friday described Putin's statements as a bargaining chip in the ongoing disagreement over a planned U.S. missile-defense system in Europe. Using the poker analogy, The Times said Putin was upping the ante in his game with his lame-duck U.S. counterpart.

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