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World

Rice expresses concern over Russia's military build-up

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WASHINGTON, October 15 (RIA Novosti) - The U.S. administration is concerned about Russia's rapid increase in military spending and recently resumed patrol flights by Russian strategic bombers, the U.S. Secretary of State said.

Russia's military spending has increased dramatically under President Putin. According to Russia's three-year federal budget, defense spending in 2008 will grow another 16.3% from 2007 to 956 billion rubles (\$36.8 billion), and is set to total 1.184 trillion rubles (\$45.5 billion) by 2010.

"I think the rapid growth in Russian military spending definitely bears watching," Condoleezza Rice said in an interview with ABC News Sunday. "And frankly, some of the efforts - for instance, Bear flights in areas that we haven't seen for a while - are really not helpful to security."

Moscow announced in mid-August that patrol flights of Tu-95 Bear strategic bombers had been resumed and would continue on a permanent basis, with patrol areas including the edge of the U.S. and NATO airspace off the coasts of Alaska, Britain and Guam.

"We don't have an adversarial relationship with Russia any longer, and I would sincerely hope that Russian military activities, as well as Russian military expenditures, would reflect that," Rice said.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Senate approved the 2008 defense bill of \$648.8 billion in October, which completely dwarfs Russia's annual military budget.

Rice also said that despite an apparent improvement in the transparency of the Russian political system the Kremlin's internal politics remained a mystery and puzzle to a certain degree for the Americans.

The U.S. top diplomat reiterated that Washington is seriously concerned about the continuing consolidation of power by the state and backsliding on democracy in Russia on the eve of parliamentary and presidential elections in the country.

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Russian Air Force marks its 95th Anniversary
More than 30,000 spectators have turned up for an air show at Monino airfield, near Moscow, to commemorate the 95th anniversary of the Russian Air Force, an Air Force spokesman said Saturday.



Navy Day in Russia
Russian Navy Day celebrations; by tradition the day is marked on the last Sunday of July.



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President Vladimir Putin said Thursday the deployment of mobile Topol-M intercontinental ballistic missile systems contributes a great deal to Russia's national security.

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