U.S. Withdraws from INF Treaty; Missile Tests to Begin This Month

On Aug. 2, 2019, the United States formally withdrew from the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, prompting harsh reactions from Russia and China and concerns about the beginning of a new, more dangerous phase of global military competition.

This treaty, signed in 1987, led to the elimination of 2,692 U.S. and Soviet Union nuclear and conventional ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges between 500 and 5,500 kilometers. The United States accused Russia of violating the treaty by testing, possessing, and fielding an illegal ground-launched cruise missile, known as the 9M729.

Following President Donald Trump’s announcement in October 2018 on the sidelines of a campaign rally that he planned to “terminate” the INF Treaty, neither Washington nor Moscow made a serious effort to try to save the treaty. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced Feb. 2, 2019, that the Trump administration would suspend its obligations under the treaty and withdraw from the agreement in six months if Russia did not return to full compliance.

In an Aug. 2 statement formally announcing the withdrawal, Secretary Pompeo said, “The United States will not remain party to a treaty that is deliberately violated by Russia. Russia’s noncompliance under the treaty jeopardizes U.S. supreme interests as Russia’s development and fielding of a treaty-violating missile system represents a direct threat to the United States and our allies and partners.”

Trump told reporters at the White House that, “If they're [Russia] not going to live up to their commitment [under the INF Treaty], then we have to—we always have to be in the lead.”

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) expressed support for the U.S. withdrawal decision,
noting: “A situation whereby the United States fully abides by the Treaty, and Russia does not, is not sustainable.”

But Russia and China strongly criticized the Trump administration’s action and sought to blame the United States for the demise of the treaty. “Instead of engaging in a meaningful discussion on international security matters, the United States opted for simply undercutting many years of efforts to reduce the probability of a large-scale armed conflict, including the use of nuclear weapons,” Russian President Vladimir Putin said in an Aug. 5 statement.

Similarly, Hua Chunying, the Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson said Aug. 2 that, “Withdrawing from the INF Treaty is another negative move of the U.S. that ignores its international commitment and pursues unilateralism. Its real intention is to make the treaty no longer binding on itself so that it can unilaterally seek military and strategic edge.”

With the treaty gone, attention has turned to how the United States and NATO should approach a world without the agreement. The Department of Defense requested nearly $100 million in fiscal year 2020 to develop three new missile systems that would violate the range limits of the treaty. The department is preparing to test a conventional ground-launched cruise missile in August and an intermediate-range ballistic missile in November.

Following the collapse of the INF Treaty, the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), which is slated to expire Feb. 5, 2021, is the only remaining nuclear arms control agreement between the United States and Russia. If New START expires with nothing to replace it, there will be no legally binding limits on the world’s two largest nuclear arsenals for the first time in nearly half a century.—KINGSTON REIF, director for disarmament and threat reduction policy, and SHANNON BUGOS, research assistant

INF TREATY

New Defense Secretary Urges Missile Deployments

Following the U.S. withdrawal from the INF Treaty, new Defense Secretary Mark Esper told reporters en route to Asia Aug. 2 that he would like to see the deployment of U.S. conventional, ground-launched, intermediate-range missiles in Europe and Asia, ideally as soon as possible.
Esper noted, however, that a decision to deploy such missiles would likely be years away, given that it will take time to develop new missiles and a plan for their use, as well as consult with allies in Europe about potentially basing them on their territory.

Supporters of pursuing the missiles argue that the weapons would provide the United States with additional military options against Russia and especially China, which is not a party to the treaty and has deployed large numbers of missiles with ranges that Washington and Moscow were long prohibited from deploying.

Critics argue that the U.S. military can counter Russia and China by continuing to field air- and sea-launched cruise missiles that do not violate the accord. They also note that such intermediate-range weapons would need to be deployed on the territory of allies neighboring Russia or China to be of meaningful military value. So far, no country has said that it would be willing to host such missiles.

In Europe, several countries, including Poland, have made it clear that any deployment of new INF Treaty-range missiles would have to be approved by all NATO members.

At the June meeting of NATO Defense Ministers in Brussels, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg commented that the alliance is considering several potential NATO responses in a world without the INF Treaty, including additional military exercise programs; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities; air and missile defenses; and conventional capabilities. According to some press reports, the potential additional conventional capabilities could involve more flights over Europe by U.S. nuclear-capable bombers, more military training, and the repositioning U.S. sea-based missiles.

Stoltenberg has repeatedly stated that NATO does not intend to deploy new nuclear missiles in Europe, but he has been silent on whether the alliance is considering the deployment of conventional variants.

Esper’s comments prompted some U.S. allies in Asia to say that they have not been asked to consider and are not considering basing ground-launched missiles on their territory. Australian Prime
Minister Scott Morrison recently stated that basing intermediate-range missiles has “not been asked of us,” is “not being considered,” and has “not been put to us.” “I think I can rule a line under that,” he added. And a South Korean defense ministry spokesperson said, “We have not internally reviewed the issue [of basing U.S. intermediate-range missiles] and have no plan to do so.”

Both Russia and China threatened to respond to any U.S. INF Treaty-range missile deployments.

“If Russia obtains reliable information whereby the United States completes the development of these systems and starts to produce them, Russia will have no option other than to engage in a full-scale effort to develop similar missiles,” Putin said Aug. 5.

Fu Cong, director-general of the arms control department at China’s foreign ministry, warned China’s “neighbors to exercise prudence and not to allow the U.S. deployment of intermediate-range missiles on their territory.”

“If the U.S. deploys [intermediate-range] missiles in this part of the world, at the doorstep of China, China will be forced to take countermeasures,” he added.

Meanwhile, the administration’s push for new INF Treaty-range missiles has been controversial in Congress. The Democratic-led House version of the fiscal year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) and defense appropriations bill eliminated the Pentagon’s funding request for the missiles. Given the Republican-led Senate’s support for developing the weapons, the issue is likely to be a contentious one when the two chambers try to reconcile their versions of the defense authorization and appropriations bill in the coming weeks.

NEW START

Bolton Says Extension of New START is “Unlikely”

According to National Security Advisor John Bolton, the Trump administration is unlikely to support an extension of the 2010 New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START).

In an interview with The Washington Free Beacon published June 18, Bolton commented, “There’s no decision, but I think it’s unlikely” that the administration will move to extend the treaty.

Bolton criticized the treaty for neither establishing limitations on Russian tactical or nonstrategic nuclear weapons nor including China, thereby letting Beijing “build up to an unlimited level.” This “flaw,” Bolton said, “remains today. So simply extending it, extends the basic flaw.”

New START caps the deployed U.S. and Russian strategic nuclear arsenals at 1,550 warheads, 700 missiles and heavy bombers, and 800 missile launchers and bombers. Though set to expire Feb. 5, 2021, the treaty can be extended for up to five years by agreement of the U.S. and Russian presidents.

Previously, Putin has expressed interest in an extension, though Russia has raised concerns about the U.S. implementation of the treaty that it says must be resolved. Following his summit meeting with Trump in Helsinki last summer, Putin said, “Russia stands ready to extend this treaty, to prolong it, but we have to agree on the specifics at first.”

New Report on U.S. Nuclear Excess
The United States plans to spend nearly $500 billion to maintain and replace its nuclear arsenal over the next decade—a level of spending that is unnecessary, unsustainable, and unsafe. Learn more.
On July 30, Bolton commented again on New START, saying that the treaty “was flawed from the beginning.” He went on to say that, “while no decision has been made,” the administration needs “to focus on something better.” Bolton reiterated that the administration is seeking a more comprehensive arms control deal that includes Russia and China and limits nuclear weapons not covered by New START, such as Russia’s large arsenal of shorter-range tactical nuclear weapons.

While Bolton continues to criticize New START, U.S. military leaders continue to tout the benefits of the treaty.

“When it comes to the New START treaty, from a STRATCOM perspective, we like the idea of arms control agreements, particularly with Russia, that provide us with some level of assurance that at least a portion of their nuclear forces are capped,” Vice Adm. David Kriete, deputy commander of STRATCOM, told reporters July 31.

He added that New START “has a very, very robust verification regime.... We want that information flowing. If we were to lose that for any reason in the future we would have to go look for other ways to fill in the gaps for the things we get from those verifications.”

**House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee Holds Hearing on New START**


This hearing—titled, “Russia and Arms Control: Extending New START or Starting Over?”—featured Thomas Countryman, board chairman of the Arms Control Association and former acting undersecretary of state for arms control and international security; Brian McKeon, former acting undersecretary and principal deputy undersecretary for policy at the Department of Defense; Madelyn Creedon, former principal deputy administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration; and Thomas Karako, director of the Missile Defense Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

In his opening remarks, subcommittee Chairman William Keating (D-Mass.) said, “The United States and Russia are in compliance with New START, as multiple administration officials have stated and testified previously. And the agreement has effectively reduced nuclear arsenals in both countries.” The hearing, he said, aimed to answer the question of “why would we ever let this agreement lapse?”

Ranking Member Rep. Adam Kinzinger (R-Ill.) said, “With the end of the INF Treaty, the New START treaty is the only game in town. And while it appears Russia is complying with the New START agreement, it still has flaws.”

In his testimony, Countryman answered that it “would be national security malpractice to discard New START in the hopes of negotiating a more comprehensive, ambitious nuclear arms control agreement with Russia and China to say nothing about getting it ratified and into force.”

**Senators Express Support for New START Extension**

On Aug. 1, Senators Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) and Todd Young (R-Ind.) introduced legislation that calls for an extension of New START until 2026 unless Russia violates the treaty or another sufficient agreement is put in place.

Abandoning the treaty “would undercut national security and the security of our allies,” said Senator Van Hollen. Senator Young urged “our intelligence community to conduct thorough assessments to ensure arms control efforts are effective” so that the United States can work to “curb the threat of nuclear weapons from countries like Russia for years to come.”

Similar legislation was first introduced in the House in May by Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.) and the committee’s ranking member, Rep. Michael McCaul (R-

**STRATEGIC STABILITY**

**U.S.-Russia Talks in Geneva End Early**

The United States and Russia held a dialogue July 17 on strategic security in Geneva, though the talks ended a day earlier than expected.

Deputy U.S. Secretary of State John Sullivan and Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security Andrea Thompson led the U.S. delegation while Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov led the Russian side. According to a State Department readout of the meeting, the two sides discussed “their respective national strategic policies as a means to reduce misunderstandings and misperceptions on a range of key security issues.” The U.S. delegation explained the U.S. National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy, Nuclear Posture Review, Missile Defense Review, as well as “the President’s vision for a new direction in nuclear arms control with Russia and China.”

Both New START and the INF Treaty were reportedly discussed. Regarding the former, Ryabkov after the meeting commented that “the well-known, very large and serious problem concerning the artificial exclusion by the Americans of a large number of their strategic carriers which have been declared re-equipped” needed to be resolved before the extension of the treaty.

Regarding the INF Treaty, Ryabkov said there was “no rapprochement.” For its part, the United States emphasized Russian violations and called for complete, verifiable compliance with the treaty. The State Department also said the United States “underscored concerns about Russia’s development and deployment of non-strategic nuclear weapons and lack of transparency with regard to existing obligations.”

After Geneva, Sullivan, Thompson, as well as National Security Council Senior Director Tim Morrison traveled to NATO headquarters in Brussels to brief the North Atlantic Council on the talks. According to the readout provided by the State Department, the U.S. delegation “underscored the importance of modernizing nuclear arms control in line with the President’s vision for a new direction” and “affirmed its intent to continue engagement with Russia, as appropriate, on security and arms-control issues and to keep Allies informed of these discussions.”

When and if the United States and Russia will meet again to resume the dialogue in the coming months remains unclear.

**Trump and Putin Meet at the G-20 Summit**

On the sidelines of the G-20 Summit June 28 in Osaka, Japan, President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin met for about an hour.
Also in the room were Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, National Security Advisor John Bolton, acting White House Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney, Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin, Ivanka Trump, and Jared Kushner.

Following the meeting, Trump told reporters that he and Putin “had a great discussion, President Putin and myself.” He further said that they discussed “putting a cap on what [Russia is] buying, and we’re buying, from a nuclear standpoint—and other—arms control. We talked a lot about arms control. And I think he’d like to see arms control and so would we. I think it makes a lot of sense.” A readout of the meeting from the White House stated, “The Presidents agreed the two countries will continue discussion on a 21st century model of arms control, which President Trump stated as needing to include China.”

In a news conference after the meeting, Putin said that he and Trump “instructed our foreign affairs departments (Mr. Lavrov on our side and Mr. Pompeo on the U.S. side) to launch consultations on” issues pertaining to strategic stability. “I do not know yet if those consultations will lead to the extension of the New START treaty, it is too early to speak about it, but we talked about this issue,” he added.

Before the summit, Putin told The Financial Times in an interview “that we are ready to hold talks and to extend this treaty [New START] between the U.S. and Russia, but we have not seen any relevant initiative from our American partners...If we do not begin talks now, it would be over because there would be no time even for formalities.”

U.S. Hosts Disarmament Working Group

The U.S. Department of Stated hosted the Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament Working Group (CEWG) for a kick-off plenary meeting from July 2-3. First proposed by the United States at the 2018 NPT Preparatory Committee meeting, the initiative was described as an effort to hold a dialogue on the “discrete tasks” necessary “to create the conditions conducive to further nuclear disarmament.”
Participants included those from both nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states, as well as those not party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Overall, more than 40 countries were represented in this meeting aimed at identifying “ways to improve the international security environment in order to overcome obstacles to further progress on nuclear disarmament.”

In his opening remarks, Christopher Ford, U.S. assistant secretary of state for international security and nonproliferation, described three subgroups of discussion: reducing perceived nuclear weapons initiatives, multilateral disarmament efforts, and interim measures to reduce nuclear risks. Over the course of the two-day meeting, the approximately 100 representatives weighed in on each of the three topic areas.

Russia’s delegation to the plenary meeting was led by Vladimir Yermakov, director-general of the department for non-proliferation and arms control. Afterward, Yermakov commented that “Washington has not offered any breakthrough ideas. As we understand it, Washington still needs additional time to work out its approach.”

The next meeting of the Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament (CEND) group has not yet been announced, though some reports indicate it will take place later this year in Europe.

FACT FILE: Comparisons Between the House and Senate National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2020 on U.S.-Russian Nuclear Arms Control

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<th>House NDAA</th>
<th>Senate NDAA</th>
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<td>Supports extending the New START Treaty and prohibits the use of funds to withdraw from New START unless Russia is in material breach of the treaty and requires presidential certification regarding the future of the treaty before its potential expiration</td>
<td>No similar provision regarding the study of nonstrategic nuclear weapons</td>
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<td>Prohibits funding for missiles noncompliant with the INF Treaty until the secretary of defense meets certain conditions, and cuts entire $96 million Pentagon request for research and development on three INF-range missiles</td>
<td>No similar provision regarding the study of nonstrategic nuclear weapons</td>
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<td>Reaffirms Congress’s commitment to the Open Skies Treaty; prohibits the use of DoD funds to suspend, terminate, or withdraw from Open Skies unless “certain certification requirements are made”; and updates reporting requirements on flights conducted under Open Skies</td>
<td>Requires a report describing Russia’s nuclear weapons in New START if deployed, Russian nuclear modernization programs, and the implications thereof on the New START central limits</td>
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For a full listing of the differences between the House and Senate NDAA, visit the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation’s site.

On Our Calendar

Key 2019 dates and events relevant to U.S.-Russian arms control and disarmament:

Aug. 29 — International Day Against Nuclear Tests (70th anniversary of the first nuclear test by the USSR)

Sept. 17 — 74th Session of the UN General Assembly, New York

Oct. 3-Nov. 8 — 74th Session of the UN First Committee

Oct. 24-30 — UN Disarmament Week

Dec. 3-4 — NATO Heads of State and Government Meeting, London
New Resources and Analyses

- “Rising from the Ashes: Securing and Expanding Past Achievements in INF Arms Control,” by Greg Thielmann, Oliver Meier, and Andrei Zagorski, Deep Cuts, July 2019
- “Bolton's Attempt to Sabotage New START,” by Daryl Kimball, Arms Control Today, July/August 2019
- “U.S. Questions Russian CTBT Compliance,” by Daryl Kimball, Arms Control Today, July/August 2019
- “NATO Secretary-General Stoltenberg's INF Response Is Inadequate,” by Daryl Kimball, Arms Control Now, July 15, 2019
- “Europe Has No Attractive Options in the Post-INF World,” by Bruno Lete, Defense One, July 16, 2019
- “Abandoning our nuclear arms treaties with Russia is a bad idea,” by Ivo Daalder, Chicago Tribune, July 18, 2019
- “Clock’s ticking on one of world’s most important nuclear treaties. A dangerous arms race may be next,” by Eliza Mackintosh, CNN, July 20, 2019
- “Are Russia and America Headed Toward Nuclear War?” by Dimitri Alexander Simes, The National Interest, July 23, 2019
- “What the INF Treaty’s Collapse Means for Nuclear Proliferation,” by Lori Esposito Murray, Council on Foreign Relations, Aug. 1, 2019
- “The INF Treaty is done, but lessons for policy remain,” by John Woodworth, Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, Aug. 2, 2019
- “What Does the Demise of the INF Treaty Mean for Nuclear Arms Control?” by Lara Seligman and Robbie Gramer, Foreign Policy, Aug. 2, 2019
- “China Warns U.S. Against Sending Missiles to Asia Amid Fears of an Arms Race,” by Alan Yuhas, The New York Times, Aug. 6, 2019

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