

Russia and Iran Join CWC; Membership Total Reaches 104

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IN EARLY NOVEMBER, the reach of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) extended considerably when Russia, possessor of the world's largest stockpile of chemical weapons, and Iran, suspected by the United States of pursuing offensive weapons programs, deposited their instruments of ratification with the UN secretary general.

President Boris Yeltsin deposited Russia's instrument November 5 after nearly eight months of parliamentary deliberations. On October 31, the Duma (lower house of Parliament), had approved the treaty by a vote of 288 75, with two abstentions. The upper chamber, the Federation Council, unanimously approved the accord five days later.

Iran's November 3 ratification, which surprised some observers, leaves several Middle Eastern countries, including Egypt, Iraq, Israel and Syria, still outside of the regime.

Under the terms of the treaty, Russia and Iran are required to submit data declarations on their chemical weapon stockpiles and relevant facilities within 60 days from their dates of ratification. They must also be prepared to accept intrusive inspections by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)—the treaty's implementing body—at any site which a state party suspects of housing chemical weapon activities.

The CWC, which bans the production, stockpiling, transfer and use of chemical weapons and mandates their destruction, will enter into force for Russia on December 5. Thus, instead of being a full voting member for the entire second Conference of States Parties (CSP) from December 1 to 5, Russia will only be able to vote on the last day of the meeting. The CSP reviews compliance with the treaty and is expected to take up several substantive matters, including how much financial responsibility a state will bear for inspections on its territory, a primary concern for Russia.

Because Russia was not among the 87 "original states parties" (those ratifying before the treaty's April 29 entry into force), Russian participation in the OPCW will, initially at least, be limited. Moscow will not immediately gain a position on the Executive Council—the governing body of the OPCW. Unless one of the five council member states from Russia's region (Eastern Europe) relinquishes its seat, Moscow will have to wait until the next election cycle in May 1998 to gain representation on the council.

During the six months of treaty operation prior to Russian ratification, Russian inspectors and staff were absent from the ranks of the OPCW. In November, processing for employment of Russians will be initiated by the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW, which is responsible for the treaty's inspection regime.

Russia's membership adds a degree of legitimacy to the OPCW and substantially advances the universality of the treaty. President Bill Clinton, in a November 5 statement released by the White House, called the completion of Russian ratification, "an important step forward in achieving our mutual arms control objectives." By joining the CWC, Russia brings the total number of states parties to 104 (64 signatories have yet to ratify), and commits itself to destroying its 40,000 ton stockpile of blister and nerve agents within 10 years—with an option for a five year extension—at an estimated cost of \$5 billion to \$6 billion, according to Russian officials.

The Duma's ratification contained language reflecting a Yeltsin administration pledge that roughly 20 percent of destruction costs would be offset by international assistance. According to Russian officials, The Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, Italy and the European Union have indicated a

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willingness to assist with the destruction program.

The United States has allocated \$171.9 million through fiscal year 1998 for chemical weapons destruction projects and an additional \$22.2 million through fiscal year 1998 for demilitarization of chemical weapons production facilities in Russia. Germany has also assisted with Russian chemical weapons destruction, contributing an estimated \$20 million by the end of 1997.

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