

MTCR Closes Some Loopholes

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Members of the [Missile Technology Control Regime \(MTCR\)](#) took a step to strengthen their ability to curb cruise missile proliferation during a September 24-27 plenary meeting in Warsaw.

The MTCR is an informal export control arrangement among 33 countries that is designed to stem the spread of ballistic and cruise missiles capable of delivering a 500-kilogram payload to a range of 300 kilometers or more. The MTCR, however, did not previously define the terms “range” and “payload” or specify methods for calculating them. This omission has made it unclear whether certain missile systems are covered by the regime.

At the plenary meeting, the member states agreed to add definitions of “range” and “payload,” as well as methods for their calculation, to the MTCR’s Annex, according to a State Department official interviewed October 22. Consisting of two parts, the MTCR includes “Guidelines,” which establish a common export control policy, and an “Annex,” which lists missile-related items that each country is expected to control through its own national legislation.

Cruise missiles have been a particularly complicated issue because of the relative ease with which their range and payload can be modified—a characteristic that makes it difficult to determine the missiles’ maximum capabilities. By calculating ranges at suboptimal altitudes, some members have argued that certain cruise missiles meet the MTCR’s guidelines for export, although if flown at optimal altitudes the missiles would not meet these guidelines, Richard Speier, a former Department of Defense official, said in an October 24 interview.

The new method for calculating the range for cruise missiles reads: “for Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) systems [a category that includes cruise missiles], the range will be determined...using the most fuel-efficient flight profile (e.g. cruise speed and altitude).” According to Speier, the decision to include this language “closed some very important loopholes.”

Cruise missiles have increasingly become a proliferation concern for the United States. A July 3 Congressional Research Service report says that “U.S. and allied forces currently face a threat from short-range, conventionally armed, anti-ship cruise missiles in the hands of a few nations” and warns that efforts to control both the vertical and horizontal proliferation of these missiles might become more difficult as the technology matures.

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