

New START Verification: Fitting the Means to the Ends

- [Policy White Papers](#)

February 22, 2010

By [Greg Thielmann](#)

ACA
THE ARMS CONTROL
ASSOCIATION

Threat Assessment Brief
*Analysis on Effective Policy Responses to Weapons-Related
Security Threats*

BY GREG THIELMANN,
SENIOR FELLOW
FEBRUARY 22, 2010

New START Verification: Fitting the Means to the Ends

The New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) promises to lock in significant reductions in U.S. and Russian strategic arsenals by establishing lower ceilings on deployed weapons. The treaty's verification provisions are means to that end--providing confidence that the sides are complying with those lower limits. Although the goal is to establish the high confidence levels maintained during the 15 years of the original START (1994-2009), the successor agreement will achieve that goal with more focused and up-to-date methods, including innovative verification provisions for deployed warhead ceilings. START's multilayered limits and the elaborate verification measures flowing out of them were born of the Cold War. New START verification can be streamlined in accordance with the new, simplified limits and in response to post-Cold War realities. In assessing the new treaty, it is critical that verification provisions be judged by how well they fulfill their core function.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The purpose of including verification provisions in an arms control agreement is to provide mechanisms for increasing confidence that the sides are complying with the limits of the treaty and to provide sufficient time for a response if they are not.
- Historically, the absence of effective verification provisions in arms control agreements has not only reduced confidence in compliance, but also encouraged treaty violations and inhibited appropriate responses.
- Effective verification provisions often enhance the collection of security information, but enhancing collection *per se* is not a legitimate rationale for including them in a treaty. Verification provisions can be justified only by their relationship to the limits agreed on and their utility in monitoring, assessing, and encouraging treaty compliance.
- Although New START verification must be based on reciprocal obligations, Moscow will not perceive the burden as equal because Russia is traditionally more wary of intrusive verification measures than the United States.
- The elaborate verification provisions of START were designed in response to Cold War circumstances more dire than those we confront today. They were also intended to guard against cheating scenarios even less plausible today than they were then.
- Two decades later, national technical means of verification are more sophisticated; familiarity with Russian force structures and operations is much greater; Russia's relative military capability is much diminished; and bilateral relations are much improved. These changes permit a less elaborate verification package.
- If, as reported, the remaining issues for New START have now been resolved in principle, this means Russia is permitting measures that enable the United States to monitor mobile ICBM numbers and the United States is permitting measures that enable the Russians to count SLBM warheads.

Realize Threat Assessment Project, Greg Thielmann, Director
Arms Control Association, 1515 K Street, NW, Ste. 130, Washington, DC 20005-2001 202-638-2722

[Download PDF](#)

The New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) promises to lock in significant reductions in U.S. and Russian strategic arsenals by establishing lower ceilings on deployed weapons. The treaty's verification provisions are means to that end--providing confidence that the sides are complying with those lower limits. Although the goal is to establish the high confidence levels maintained during the 15 years of the original START (1994-2009), the successor agreement will achieve that goal with more focused and up-to-date methods, including innovative verification provisions for deployed warhead ceilings. START's multilayered limits and the elaborate verification measures flowing out of them were born of the Cold War. New START verification can be streamlined in accordance with the new, simplified limits and in response to post-Cold War realities. In assessing the new treaty, it is critical that verification provisions be judged by how well they fulfill their core function.

New START Verification: Fitting the Means to the Ends

Published on Arms Control Association (<https://www.armscontrol.org>)

- [Greg Thielmann](#)
- [Russia](#)
- [New START](#)

Source URL: <https://www.armscontrol.org/policy-white-papers/2010-02/new-start-verification-fitting-means-ends>