

Russia Completes CFE Treaty Suspension

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Russia is suspending its participation in meetings of the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty Joint Consultative Group (JCG), according to a Russian Foreign Ministry statement on March 10.

The announcement marks a further pullback from the treaty that Moscow had largely abandoned in 2007. ([See ACT, January/February 2008.](#))

In a March 11 interview with Interfax, Mikhail Ulyanov, the head of the Russian Foreign Ministry's Department for Non-Proliferation and Arms Control, said Moscow's suspension was not due to the deterioration in U.S.-Russian relations resulting from Russia's actions in Ukraine.

"The issue was long overdue, long before the Ukraine crisis, before the current state of affairs in our relations with the West," Ulyanov said.

According to Ulyanov, the United States "had forbidden its allies to discuss any substantive issues at the JCG. In those conditions there was not much sense in continuing our participation in the JCG."

The CFE Treaty, signed at the end of the Cold War on Nov. 19, 1990, eliminated the Soviet Union's overwhelming quantitative advantage in conventional weapons in Europe by setting equal limits on the number of tanks, armored combat vehicles, heavy artillery, combat aircraft, and attack helicopters that NATO and the Warsaw Pact could deploy between the Atlantic Ocean and the Ural Mountains.

The treaty was designed to prevent either alliance from amassing forces for a blitzkrieg-type offensive, which could have triggered the use of nuclear weapons in response.

Russia suspended implementation of the CFE Treaty in 2007, claiming it was responding to NATO member states' decision to condition their ratification of the 1999 Adapted CFE Treaty on the resolution of a dispute over Russian military deployments in parts of Moldova and Georgia. But Moscow continued to participate in the consultative group, saying that it hoped that dialogue could lead to the creation of an effective, new conventional arms control regime in Europe.

Beginning in 2010, the Obama administration sought to resolve the CFE Treaty dispute through the development of a draft "framework" for new negotiations to strengthen the treaty regime. But the talks stalled, and in November 2011, the United States announced that it "would cease carrying out certain obligations" under the CFE Treaty with regard to Russia.

Ulyanov told Interfax that Russia would be unlikely to return to compliance with the CFE Treaty. The accord, created when the Warsaw Pact was still in existence, is "anachronistic" and "absolutely out of sync with the present realities," he said.

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