

INF nuclear treaty: Russia plans new missile systems after pullout

4 hours ago



Media caption

Are we on the cusp of a new nuclear arms race?

Russia says it is planning to develop new missile systems after both Russia and the US suspended their involvement in an arms control pact.

The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty banned both countries from using short- and medium-range missiles.

Last week, US President Donald Trump announced the US would leave the pact, which it has long accused the Russians of violating. Russia then did the same.

The moves have raised concerns about a new arms race.

The INF was signed in 1987, during the Cold War, to ease a crisis in which US and Soviet missiles were placed within range of European capitals.

What is Russia planning?

On Tuesday, Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said the aim was to create new land-based missiles within the next two years.

Ground-launched missiles were banned under the INF, but not sea- or air-launched ones, which Russia already possesses. These can then be used to create the new systems.

Tensions rise as US threatens to 'take out' Russian missiles

Is nuclear control set to self-destruct?

Mr Shoigu said the US was already violating the accord: "[The US] are actively working on creating ground-based missiles with the range capability of over 500km, which is outside the treaty-stipulated limitations.

"In this situation, the Russian president has set the task for the defence ministry to take tit-for-tat mirrored measures," he said.

The US is yet to respond to Russia's announcement but **AP news agency last week cited Trump officials as saying there were no immediate plans to test or deploy missiles banned under the INF.**

Why did the US pull out of the pact?

The Trump administration has expressed concern at the threat posed by Russia as well as countries outside the INF, in particular China.

Announcing that the US was suspending its involvement in the INF and would leave it completely in six months, President Trump said: "We cannot be the only country in the world unilaterally bound by this treaty, or any other."

The US accuses Russia of several violations, including claims that a new Russian missile falls within the 500-5,500km (310-3,400 miles) range banned by the treaty.

But Russia says it is the US that has broken the pact, and says Washington is using false allegations as a pretext to withdraw from an agreement it never wanted to be part of.

Russia has a head start - but is it the main threat?

By Jonathan Marcus, BBC defence and diplomatic correspondent

Given Russia is seen by the US as having already breached the INF treaty by its deployment of a ground-launched cruise missile, designated the 9M729 or SSC-8, Moscow is clearly ahead in the race to field this previously banned category of weapons.

Reports suggest Russia could already have deployed up to about 100 of these missiles.

President Putin is now talking about developing a ground-launched version of the successful Kalibr naval missile. He has also pointed to a potential hypersonic weapon on which the US believes Russia has been working for some time.

So perhaps there is not much that is new here.

The US itself is already allocating funds for new missile research and development.

But the real arms race here could be in the Asia-Pacific rather than Europe, where both Russia and the US are wary of China's growing intermediate-range arsenal, which has never been restricted by any arms control agreement.

What is the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty?



Image copyright

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Image caption

Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and US President Ronald Reagan signed the INF Treaty in 1987

Signed by the US and the USSR in 1987, **the arms control deal banned all nuclear and non-nuclear missiles with short and medium ranges**, except sea-launched weapons

The US had been concerned by the Soviet deployment of the SS-20 missile system and responded by placing Pershing and cruise missiles in Europe - sparking widespread protests

By 1991, nearly 2,700 missiles had been destroyed

Both countries were allowed to inspect the other's installations

In 2007, Russian President Vladimir Putin declared the treaty no longer served Russia's interests

The move came after the US withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2002

Pompeo announces suspension of nuclear arms treaty with Russia

By [Nicole Gaouette](#) and [Jennifer Hansler](#), CNN

Updated 2224 GMT (0624 HKT) February 1, 2019

Washington (CNN) Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced Friday that the US is suspending the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, a key pact with Russia that has been a centerpiece of European security since the Cold War.

"For years, Russia has violated the terms of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty without remorse," Pompeo said, speaking from the State Department. "Russia's violations put millions of Europeans and Americans at greater risk."

"It is our duty to respond appropriately," Pompeo said, adding that the US had provided "ample time" for Russia to return to compliance.

The long-expected suspension, which has raised concerns about a renewed arms race with Moscow and put European allies on edge, goes into effect on Saturday. Pompeo's announcement starts a 180-day clock to complete withdrawal unless Russia returns to compliance with the 1987 agreement.

President Donald Trump and his senior officials had been signaling for months that they were ready to pull out of the INF treaty, which the US accuses Moscow of violating since 2014.

'Full support'

"The United States has fully adhered to the INF Treaty for more than 30 years, but we will not remain constrained by its terms while Russia misrepresents its actions," Trump said in a statement Friday. "We cannot be the only country in the world unilaterally bound by this treaty, or any other."

Later, at the White House, the President hinted to reporters that he'd be open to negotiations on a new treaty but did not mention Russia by name -- the only other signatory to the pact.

"I hope that you're able to get everybody in a big and beautiful room and do a new treaty that would be much better, but certainly I would like to see that," Trump said, according to pool reports. "But you have to have everybody adhere to it and you have a certain side that almost pretends it doesn't exist."

"So unless we're going to have something we all agree to we can't be put at the disadvantage of going by a treaty, limiting what we do, when somebody else doesn't go by that treaty," Trump said.

While Russia and the US are the only two parties to the treaty, but it significantly affects European security.

The ground-based nuclear tipped cruise missiles covered by the bilateral agreement can fly between 310 to 3,100 miles, making them a threat to Europe, where officials have unanimously backed the US decision, even as they consider their next steps and admit having little to no optimism that the treaty can be saved.

In a statement, NATO said America's allies "fully support" the US decision because of Russia's threat to Euro-Atlantic security and its refusal to provide any credible response or take any steps towards full and verifiable compliance.

NATO urged Russia to use the next six months to "return to full and verifiable compliance to preserve the INF Treaty."

Arms control experts sound the alarm

Top Kremlin official: We are not that threatening 02:21

"We are heading into a direction we have not been in in 40 years: no arms control limits or rules that we are both following, and that is very dangerous," said Lynn Rusten, a senior director for arms control and nonproliferation at the National Security Council during the Obama administration who is now a vice president at the Nuclear Threat Initiative.

US officials and lawmakers have expressed concern that the treaty is allowing China to gain a military advantage, as Beijing is not bound by the INF treaty's limits on intermediate range missiles that currently constrain the US.

Trump appeared to confirm this in his Friday remarks to reporters, saying, "first of all you have to add countries" to the treaty.

But a senior US administration official denied Beijing is a factor.

"There's a lot of discussion about China," this official said, briefing reporters on the suspension. "It is a reality that China is unconstrained, it is a reality they have more than 1,000 of these weapons, but for the United States this has nothing to do with China. This is solely about Russia's violation of this treaty."

"We simply cannot tolerate this kind of abuse of arms control," the official said.

Russian denials

Russia has consistently denied being in violation of the treaty, and on Thursday, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov said talks with the US hadn't yielded progress.

"Unfortunately, there is no progress. The US position remains rather tough and ultimatum-like," Ryabkov said, according to Russian state media outlet TASS.

"We told the US side that it is impossible to hold dialogue in the conditions of attempted blackmailing of Russia," he added.

Senior US administration officials countered Thursday by laying out Russia's repeated efforts to get the US to agree to dissolve the treaty and years of American effort to get Russia to comply, including 35 diplomatic engagements ranging from the highest political levels to technical talks.

"We have, unfortunately, very little to show for it," said a US official who briefed reporters on condition of anonymity, stressing that "the onus is on Russia."

The Doomsday Clock says it's almost the end of the world as we know it. (And that's not fine.)

"Russia continues to deny its violations ... Russia will have this chance. If they are truly interested in preserving this treaty, this is their final chance," the official continued. "It would be in Russia's best interests to return to full and verifiable compliance."

This official noted the "remarkable unity" among the US and its European allies, but European officials say they're concerned about the treaty dissolving and say they will use the six-month window to urge Russia to comply.

"It is clear to us that Russia has violated this treaty and that's why we need to speak to Russia," German Chancellor Angela Merkel said at a press conference in Berlin on Friday, shortly before the US announced its intention to suspend the treaty.

Germany will "do everything we can" to use the six-month deadline after the termination to hold further talks with Russia, Merkel

said.

'What are we looking at instead?'

European officials discussing the fallout in the coming months point to a possible increase in Russian cyber activities, including its influence campaigns, Russia is likely to use the US withdrawal as an excuse to deploy systems elsewhere and the certainty of finger-pointing, as Moscow works to assign blame.

"Russia will feel more legitimized to continue what it's doing now, but also increasing some of its efforts on missile technology and deploying them," said a European official.

A second European official said that "they will threaten, they will try to divide NATO, they'll do anything but stay quiet." The Russians will likely argue that "this is about the US and the US trying to destabilize the international order," this official said, stressing that Europe has been united in its stance, alongside the US, that Russia has been violating the treaty.

"The bigger picture is what kind of sign you're sending out, what message you're sending," said a third European official. "For us, this treaty was extremely important for our security. What are we looking at instead" if it is scrapped, the official asked. *CNN's Kylie Atwood and Veronica Stracqualursi in Washington, and Nadine Schmidt in Berlin contributed to this report.*

Russia follows US in suspending INF nuclear missile treaty

By Mary Ilyushina, Jack Guy and Steven Jiang, CNN

Updated 1456 GMT (2256 HKT) February 2, 2019

Moscow (CNN)Russia has announced it is suspending participation in the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces treaty -- one day after the US declared it would pull out of the agreement unless Moscow complies with its terms within 180 days.

Russian President Vladimir Putin announced the move on Saturday, according to the Kremlin's official website.

Putin held a special meeting with Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu following Friday's decision by the US to suspend compliance with the INF treaty, a key pact with Russia that has been a centerpiece of European security since the Cold War.

"We will proceed as follows. We will have a tit-for-tat response. American partners have announced that they are suspending their participation in the treaty, so we are suspending ours as well," said Putin, according to the website.

"They announced that they are engaged in research & technological development work, and we will do the same."

US President Donald Trump and his senior officials had been signaling for months that they were ready to pull out of the INF treaty, which the US accuses Moscow of violating since 2014. Moscow has consistently rejected those accusations.

And Putin has ordered his ministers not to initiate any negotiations about any possible adjustments to the treaty, stating that from now on Russia refuses to be a broker for salvaging the agreement.

Russia shows off its military might during a Victory Day parade in May 2017.

While Putin emphasized that he did not want to start a new arms race, the Russian President also announced his support for a proposal to start construction of a new medium-range supersonic nuclear missile.

The Kremlin website also said Putin agrees with the proposals of the Ministry of Defense to start "grounding" the "Kalibr" missiles and the opening of a new direction -- the creation of a medium-range hypersonic ground-based rocket."

The INF treaty "bans ground-launched missiles with a range between 500 and 5,500 kilometers."

Russian Kalibr missiles are a type of cruise missile that Russian forces launch from ships and submarines. Now Putin is agreeing to allow the development of a land-launched variant.

This new ground launched design would be a direct violation if the treaty was still being observed, but both Washington and Moscow have now suspended compliance.

US officials claim that Russia has not been obeying the treaty. "For years, Russia has violated the terms of the Intermediate-Range

Nuclear Forces Treaty without remorse," US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said. "Russia's violations put millions of Europeans and Americans at greater risk.

"It is our duty to respond appropriately," Pompeo said, adding that the US had provided "ample time" for Russia to return to compliance.

The long-expected suspension has raised concerns about a renewed arms race with Moscow and put European allies on edge.

Pompeo's announcement starts the 180-day countdown to complete withdrawal unless Russia returns to compliance with the 1987 agreement.

"We are heading into a direction we have not been in in 40 years: no arms control limits or rules that we are both following, and that is very dangerous," said Lynn Rusten, a senior director for arms control and nonproliferation at the National Security Council during the Obama administration and now a vice president at the Washington DC-based Nuclear Threat Initiative.

China opposes US move

In some quarters it is thought that the treaty has allowed China to gain a military advantage, as Beijing is not bound by the INF treaty's limits on intermediate range missiles.

On Saturday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang released a statement outlining its opposition to the US decision to suspend compliance, saying that it "may trigger a series of adverse consequences."

Geng said the treaty "plays a significant role in easing major-country relations, promoting international and regional peace, and safeguarding global strategic balance and stability" and that China urges "US and Russia to properly resolve differences through constructive dialogue."

The statement from Geng was released Saturday before Russia announced it was also suspending its compliance with the treaty.

When asked if China would agree to a new multilateral treaty on arms control to replace the INF, Geng responded: "The multilateralization of the INF Treaty involves a series of complex issues covering political, military and legal fields, which draws concerns from many countries. China opposes the multilateralization of this treaty. What is imperative at the moment is to uphold and implement the existing treaty instead of creating a new one."