

Russia suspends INF Treaty with US - Kremlin

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President Vladimir Putin has signed a decree enacting Russia's suspension of the INF Treaty, a move that was announced after a similar decision by the US. The weapons control agreement was set to expire in less than six months.

Russia is putting on ice the Cold War-era agreement, which resulted in significant demilitarization of the European continent. The US will be formally notified about the decision.

The INF Treaty may be revived if the US *"eliminates its earlier violations of its obligations"* under the deal, according to the decree [published](#) by the Kremlin on Monday. Otherwise it will simply expire and cease to exist.

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The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty came into force in 1988 and banned both the Soviet Union and the US from developing and deploying land-based cruise and ballistic missiles with ranges between 500 and 5,500 km. The agreement was signed to de-escalate tensions in Europe, where both countries had dozens of such missiles deployed, posing a risk of an accidental nuclear exchange. The missiles only needed minutes to reach their targets, leaving a very small window for the other side to decide whether a detected attack was a real one, requiring immediate retaliation, or a false positive.

The preservation of the agreement had been under threat for over a decade, with both sides

complaining about the other not fully complying with its terms. The US claimed that Russia had secretly developed a missile that violated the INF – an accusation that Moscow denies.

Russia had two major complaints. One is that the US' use of intermediate-range missiles in the development of anti-missile technology still meant that it was deploying and testing banned missiles.

The other was that the creation of AEGIS Ashore, a ground-based version of the naval system, which can fire Tomahawk cruise missiles in addition to missile interceptors. The US insists that AEGIS Ashore launchers in Romania and Poland are purely defensive, but Moscow sees them as potential launching pads for an attack on Russian territory.

Last year, the Trump administration announced that unless Russia destroys its stockpiles of the missile that the US claims to be in violation of the treaty, Washington would withdraw from the INF. With negotiations failing to resolve the situation, the US announced its formal suspension of the treaty in early February.

Russia said it would do the same and accused the US of duplicity, saying Washington was using its claim about the Russian missile as a pretext to abandon the deal, which it no longer finds convenient.

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Moscow says it has no intention of building and deploying intermediate-range, nuclear-capable missiles on its land, unless the US does so first. But if it does, Russia has both the technology and the production capacity to respond swiftly and restore parity in nuclear forces, President Putin warned in his latest State of the Nation address. He warned that Russian missiles would target not only American missiles in Europe, but also “centers of decision” from which an order to deliver a strike against Russia may be issued.
