

5 February 2011 Last updated at 14:34 GMT

US-Russia New Start nuclear treaty comes into effect



The exchange of documents took place at the Munich Conference on Security Policy

The New Start nuclear arms treaty limiting the number of atomic warheads the US and Russia are allowed to possess, has come into effect.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton exchanged ratification documents at a conference in Munich.

The treaty replaces the 1991 Start treaty which expired in December 2009.

It was approved by the US Senate in December and by the Russian parliament last month.

The papers exchanged in Munich had been signed by US President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev following an agreement made last April.

Before the ceremony at the [Munich Conference on Security Policy](#), Mrs Clinton said the treaty was "another example of the kind of clear-eyed co-operation that is in everyone's interests".

She said that Washington was also was in talks with Russia about how the two countries can work together on other issues affecting their common security.

Mr Lavrov called New Start "a product of the understanding that unilateral approaches to security are counterproductive".

"The treaty that enters into force today will enhance international stability," he said.

The [New Start treaty](#) limits each side to no more than 800 deployed nuclear warhead delivery systems including bombers, missile launchers and nuclear submarines - a cut of about 50%.

It limits each side to 1,550 deployed warheads.

It will also allow each side to visually inspect the other's nuclear capability, with the aim of verifying how many warheads each missile carries.

26 January 2011 Last updated at 08:32 GMT

Russian parliament approves Start nuclear arms treaty



The new treaty will govern land and sea-based missiles as well as nuclear weapons

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Russia's parliament has given its backing to the Start nuclear arms disarmament treaty.

The Federation Council (upper house) unanimously approved the deal signed by US President Barack Obama and Russia's Dmitry Medvedev in April 2010.

Under the agreement, the number of nuclear warheads deployed by each country will be cut to 1,550.

The US Senate approved the treaty by 71 votes to 26 last year, after months of wrangling.

Wednesday's vote by the Federation Council comes a day after the treaty was ratified by the Duma, or lower house, and represents the final step in its passage through parliament.

The [New Start \(Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty\)](#), will replace its predecessor, signed in 1991, which lapsed at the end of 2009.

The treaty will bring about a cut in warheads of about 30% from the previous limit and will also allow each side visually to inspect the other's nuclear capability, with the aim of verifying how many warheads each missile carries.

In addition, there will be legally binding limits on the number of warheads and missiles that can be deployed on land, on submarines, and on bombers, at any one time.

24 December 2010 Last updated at 15:04 GMT

Russian MPs back Start US arms treaty on first reading



The new treaty will govern land- and sea-based missiles as well as nuclear weapons

The lower house of the Russian parliament, the Duma, has voted to give initial approval to the Start nuclear arms pact with the US.

The treaty, aimed at reducing both countries' nuclear arsenals and allowing their inspection, was ratified by the US Senate on Wednesday.

There were hopes the Duma would give its full approval but officials decided that two more readings were necessary.

The pact must also be ratified by the upper house, the Federation Council.

Before MPs voted to back the treaty by 350 votes to 58, concerns were expressed in the Duma about two non-binding amendments that had been made by the Senate before ratification.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said the amendments - committing the US to a missile defence system and modernising its nuclear arsenal - did not change the treaty as a whole.

He said US efforts to remove "future strategic-range non-nuclear systems" from the scope of the pact were "unacceptable".

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Analysis

Jonathan Marcus BBC Diplomatic Correspondent

While both the Russian Parliament and the US Senate have to ratify this treaty, the Russian leadership has not had to face the political struggle that confronted President Barack Obama in winning support in the Senate.

Government policy in Moscow is to back the treaty and it would be extraordinary if it were not

to gain parliamentary support.

Nonetheless what is interesting is the way in which the treaty is seen even by some of its leading Russian backers, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov noting what he called "an unequivocal" link between strategic offensive arms and missile defence. This is not the way it is seen in Washington.

While there is a good measure of politics in all of this it does suggest that the path to future disarmament agreements is going to be much more difficult.

Arsenals trimmed

The treaty will have to pass two more readings in the Duma in January after the winter break, before going to the Federation Council.

But Defence Committee chairman Viktor Zavarzin said the measure should not be rushed.

"We cannot be criticised for dragging out the ratification process of the treaty. In this process we do not have the right to make a mistake, we must weigh up everything," he said, quoted by Itar-Tass news agency.

Earlier, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev praised President Barack Obama for pushing the pact through the Senate.

The Senate approved the treaty by 71 votes to 26, after months of wrangling and over the objections of some top Republicans.

The [New Start treaty](#), which will replace its lapsed predecessor, Start (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty), was signed by the two presidents in April 2010.

It trims US and Russian nuclear arsenals to 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads - a cut of about 30% from a limit set eight years ago.

The treaty would also allow each side visually to inspect the other's nuclear capability, with the aim of verifying how many warheads each missile carries.

A previous inspection regime - part of the old Start treaty - expired a year ago.

In addition, there will be legally binding limits on the number of warheads and missiles that can be deployed on land, on submarines, and on bombers, at any one time.

23 December 2010 Last updated at 22:18 GMT

Medvedev and Obama hail 'historic' nuclear arms treaty



Mr Obama and Mr Medvedev inked the pact in April in Prague

US President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev have hailed the New Start nuclear arms treat as a "historic event", the White House says.

In a telephone call on Thursday, Mr Medvedev congratulated Mr Obama on achieving Senate approval of the pact.

Mr Obama in turn said that the two had a "very productive year".

The US Senate approved the pact, which would reduce nuclear arsenals and allow their inspection, on Wednesday after some Republicans agreed to back it.

'Extra Russian checks'

In Russia, meanwhile, the Speaker of the State Duma (lower house), Boris Gryzlov, said MPs might approve the pact on Friday, with the upper house, the Federation Council, approving it in next year.

Mr Gryzlov said the Russian parliament would first check that the US Senate's ratification motion had not changed the text of the agreement.



Mr Obama: "The most significant arms-control agreement in nearly two decades"

The US Senate on Wednesday approved the treaty by 71 votes to 26, after months of wrangling and over the objections of some of the top Republicans in the chamber. Thirteen Republican Senators broke with party leadership and voted with the Democrats.

Russian 're-set'

Correspondents say the ratification will be seen as a foreign policy success for Mr Obama.

"Mr Obama wants the American people to learn to feel nostalgia for the past two years. Of course, Republicans regarded it as a period of unmitigated disaster"



Mark Mardell BBC North America editor

He has argued that ratification of New Start is vital to US national security and made the agreement a key plank of the president's much-heralded "re-set" of relations with Russia.

After the vote, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said in a statement: "A responsible partnership between the world's two largest nuclear powers that limits our nuclear arsenals while maintaining strategic stability is imperative to promoting global security."

The [New Start treaty](#), which will replace its lapsed predecessor, Start (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty), was signed by the two presidents in April 2010.

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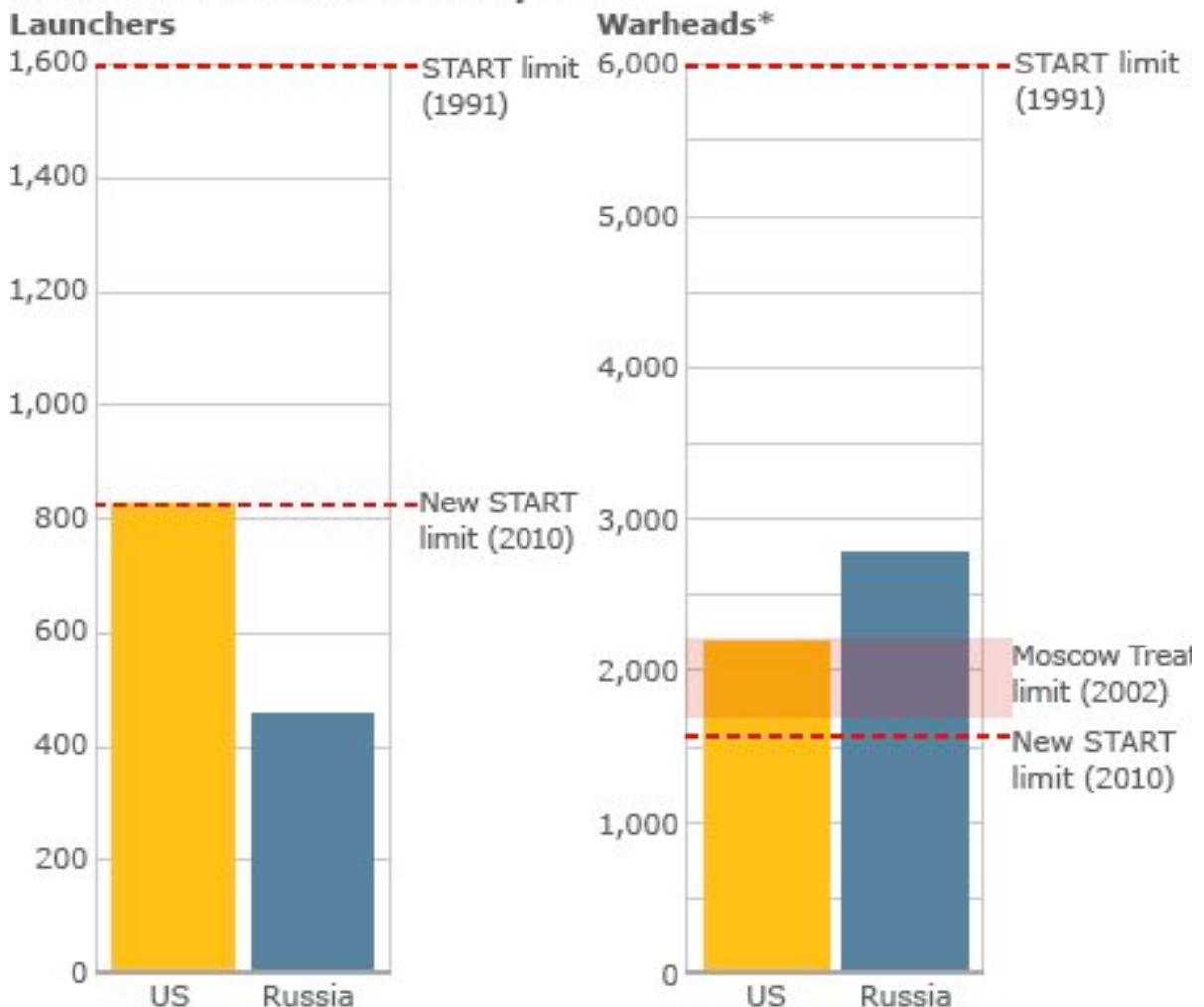
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US AND RUSSIA NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Nuclear arsenals and treaty limits



*Additional warheads in reserve / awaiting dismantlement: US 6,700, Russia 8,111

Source: Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists

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1 of 2

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Are you in the US or Russia? What is your reaction to the passing of this treaty? You can send us your views using the form below.

Dmitry Medvedev welcomes US nuclear

arms treaty

Russian president says country is ready to ratify the arms reduction pact with the US

- [Tom Parfitt](#) in Moscow
- guardian.co.uk, Thursday 23 December 2010 18.53 GMT



Dmitry Medvedev, the Russian president, has welcomed New Start, the nuclear arms reduction treaty with the US. Photograph: Konstantin Zavrazhin/Getty Images

MPs in [Russia](#) could approve a new strategic [arms reduction treaty with the US](#) as early as tomorrow after President [Dmitry Medvedev](#) welcomed the pact.

The country's overwhelmingly pro-Kremlin parliament is likely to push the agreement through swiftly, despite doubts over Washington's desire to station a missile defence shield in Europe.

Medvedev's office said today he was "pleased to learn that the [United States](#) Senate has ratified the Start Treaty and expressed hope that the State Duma and the Federation Council [lower and upper houses of parliament] will be ready to consider this issue shortly and to ratify the document".

The US Senate voted 71 to 26 in favour of the treaty yesterday, despite expectations that Republican members might try to block its passage.

The speaker of the State Duma, Boris Gryzlov, said the Kremlin-controlled United Russia party, which dominates the chamber, was ready to approve the treaty at a parliamentary session scheduled tomorrow.

The speaker of the Federation Council, Sergei Mironov, said he could push it through the same day.

Under New Start, as the agreement is called, strategic nuclear warheads deployed by each country will be reduced to 1,550 within seven years. Deployed missile launchers would be cut to 700.

Mikhail Margelov, head of the Federation Council's foreign relations committee, said the treaty "represents a shift away from cold war mentality and demonstrates that Russia and the US are focused on achieving 21st-century global security".

Its ratification in both countries will be seen as step forward after a difficult period in bilateral relations since Medvedev and Barack Obama signed the treaty in Prague in April.

Two months after that meeting, the US exposed 10 Russian sleeper agents living in New York and Washington, although the fallout was partly defused when they were exchanged for four men jailed in Russia who had allegedly worked for western intelligence agencies.

Relations appeared to be warming last month when the Nato military alliance invited Russia to participate in a US-led missile defence system about which Moscow is deeply suspicious. But the thaw came under threat when WikiLeaks revealed US diplomatic cables suggesting Russia is a "mafia state".

Analysts say the treaty overrides such irritants, showing progress in the attempts to improve ties with Russia, which began after Obama came to power.

Sergei Rogov, head of the influential US and Canada Institute in Moscow, told the RIA Novosti news agency: "It is, of course, a positive step and it shows that the 're-set' in Russian-American relations is bringing real results, but the question now is, what next?"

Top of the agenda for the Kremlin will be hammering out details of its role in the missile defence project. Vladimir Putin, the prime minister, warned this month that Russia would be obliged to deploy "new strike forces" on its borders if talks with Nato over the system failed to show progress.

22 December 2010 Last updated at 21:02 GMT

New Start: US Senate approves Russia nuclear treaty



The new treaty will govern missiles based on land and at sea, as well as nuclear bombs

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US senators have voted to ratify a much-delayed nuclear arms treaty that will pave the way for new cuts in American and Russian nuclear arsenals.

After months of wrangling in the Senate, where it needed a two-thirds majority, the New Start treaty was passed by a vote of 71 to 26.

The treaty requires the US and Russia to cut their deployed nuclear warheads by some 30%.

It must still pass Russia's parliament, a move expected next spring.

Despite lengthy protests from a number of congressional Republicans, 13 Republican Senators voted with the Democrats during Wednesday's vote.

Top Republicans, including Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, John McCain and Jon Kyl, had opposed ratification of the treaty.

But correspondents say the ratification will be seen as a foreign policy success for US President Barack Obama.

After the vote, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman John Kerry said: "This historic Senate vote makes our country safer and moves the world further away from the danger of nuclear disaster.

"The winners are not defined by party or ideology. The winners are the American people, who are safer with fewer Russian missiles aimed at them, and who benefit knowing that our co-operation with Russia in curbing Iran's nuclear ambitions and supplying our troops in Afghanistan can be strengthened."

Russian 're-set'

The [New Start treaty](#), which will replace its lapsed predecessor, Start (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty), was signed by Barack Obama and his Russian counterpart, President

Dmitry Medvedev, in April 2010.

Analysis



Iain Mackenzie BBC News, Washington

In the past, the Senate has rubber-stamped similar arms reduction treaties without much fuss. However, New Start had proved a major headache for President Obama - with many Republican senators refusing to support ratification.

Several of them eventually switched sides following a major political charm offensive which included endorsements of the treaty by senior military figures, as well as every living former secretary of state - Republican and Democrat.

Opponents wanted to hold off voting until next year - claiming the deal would limit the United States' ability to develop a missile defence system in future. They had also, successfully, argued for more money to update remaining nuclear weapons.

It trims US and Russian nuclear arsenals to 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads - a cut of about 30% from a limit set eight years ago.

The treaty would also allow each side visually to inspect the other's nuclear capability, with the aim of verifying how many warheads each missile carries.

A previous inspection regime - part of the old Start treaty - expired a year ago.

In addition, there will be legally binding limits on the number of warheads and missiles that can be deployed on land, on submarines, and on bombers, at any one time.

Although the treaty won wide support from former government figures - including a string of former presidents and secretaries of state, senior Republicans were opposed to allowing the outgoing Senate to vote on the treaty.

They argued that the treaty could compromise US national security, handing Russia influence over American missile defence strategy.

In contrast, President Obama has argued that ratification of New Start was vital to US national security.

The treaty forms a key plank of the president's much-heralded "re-set" of relations with Russia.

Speaking in Mumbai before the vote took place, Russian President Medvedev said he was "optimistic" that the US Senate would pass the treaty.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov had previously warned that the treaty would be scrapped if Republicans succeeded in altering its form from the document signed in April.

On Monday, Adm Mike Mullen, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, sent a letter to congressional leaders urging them to quickly ratify the agreement, becoming the latest in a

series of senior military and civilian national security officials to back it.

22 December 2010 Last updated at 23:11 GMT

Obama hails Senate vote to back Russia nuclear treaty



Mr Obama called the treaty "the most significant arms-control agreement in nearly two decades"

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The US president has welcomed the US Senate's ratification of a much-delayed nuclear arms treaty with Russia.

Barack Obama said the agreement, which will pave the way for new cuts in American and Russian nuclear arsenals, was the most important such deal in almost 20 years.

After months of wrangling in the Senate, the New Start treaty was passed by a vote of 71 to 26.

Under the deal, Russia and the US will cut deployed nuclear warheads by 30%.

"This is the most significant arms control agreement in nearly two decades and it will make us safer and reduce our nuclear arsenals along with Russia," Mr Obama said.

Despite lengthy protests from a number of congressional Republicans, 13 Republican Senators voted with the Democrats during Wednesday's vote.

Top Republicans, including Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, John McCain and Jon Kyl, had opposed ratification of the treaty.

"Mr Obama wants the American people to learn to feel nostalgia for the past two years. Of course, Republicans regarded it as a period of unmitigated disaster"

"Mr Obama said the vote also showed that the US political process was not doomed to what he called "endless gridlock".

"The strong bi-partisan vote in the Senate sends a powerful signal to the world that Republicans and Democrats stand together on behalf of our security," he said from the White House.

The treaty must still pass Russia's parliament, a move expected next spring.

But correspondents say the ratification will be seen as a foreign policy success for Mr Obama.

After the vote, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said in a statement: "A responsible partnership between the world's two largest nuclear powers that limits our nuclear arsenals while maintaining strategic stability is imperative to promoting global security."

Russian 're-set'

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Opponents wanted to hold off voting until next year - claiming the deal would limit the United States' ability to develop a missile defence system in future. They had also, successfully, argued for more money to update remaining nuclear weapons.

- [Your views: How important is New Start treaty?](#)

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In addition, there will be legally binding limits on the number of warheads and missiles that can be deployed on land, on submarines, and on bombers, at any one time.

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They argued that the treaty could compromise US national security, handing Russia influence over American missile defence strategy.

In contrast, President Obama has argued that ratification of New Start was vital to US national security and made the agreement a key plank of the president's much-heralded "re-set" of relations with Russia.

Speaking in Mumbai before the vote took place, Mr Medvedev said he was "optimistic" that the US Senate would pass the treaty.

21 December 2010 Last updated at 21:02 GMT

New Start nuclear arms treaty 'headed for ratification'



The treaty would substantially reduce deployed nuclear weapons on both sides

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The New Start nuclear treaty between the US and Russia has cleared a key procedural hurdle in

the US Senate and now looks set to be ratified.

Senators voted to end debate on the issue, clearing the way for a final vote on the treaty, set for Wednesday.

Ratification would be a victory for President Barack Obama and the Democrats, who have pushed hard for it.

Some Republican senators oppose the treaty on a variety of grounds, though Mr Obama has called it crucial.

Treaty 'needed now'

"We are on the brink of writing the next chapter in the 40-year history of wrestling with the threat of nuclear weapons," Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman John Kerry, a Democrat, said after the vote.

The 67 votes in favour of the parliamentary motion to end debate puts the treaty above the threshold needed for ratification at the final ballot, and Mr Kerry said he expected as many as 70 votes.

"In our nation's security interest we need a New Start treaty now," Republican Richard Lugar told reporters, dismissing the calls from others in his party to hold more hearings next year.

The [New Start treaty](#) would trim US and Russian arsenals to 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads - a cut of about 30% from a limit set eight years ago. It would also allow each side visually to inspect the other's nuclear arsenal to verify how many warheads a missile carries.

The previous missile treaty expired more than a year ago, and Mr Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev signed the New Start pact in April.

For the treaty to take effect, it needs the votes of two-thirds of the US Senate, or 67 if all 100 senators are present.

Top Republicans, including Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, John McCain and Jon Kyl, have said they oppose the treaty.

Russian warning

They and other Republicans have lodged several procedural complaints, including an objection to Democratic efforts to hold a vote before the end of the year, and say they oppose non-binding provisions they say would hinder US development of missile defence technology.

Meanwhile, some analysts have suggested Republicans oppose the treaty for political ends, seeking to deny Mr Obama a crucial foreign policy accomplishment.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has warned the treaty would be scrapped if Republicans succeeded in altering its form from the document signed in April.

On Monday, Adm Mike Mullen, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, sent a letter to congressional leaders on Monday urging them quickly to ratify the agreement, becoming the latest in a series of senior military and civilian national security officials to back it.

20 December 2010 Last updated at 22:14 GMT

New Start: Russia warns US Senate over nuclear treaty



Mr Lavrov said the treaty could not be renegotiated

Russia has warned US lawmakers that any change to the new nuclear arms disarmament treaty between the two countries could destroy the pact.

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said the New Start treaty "cannot be reopened, becoming the subject of new negotiations" according to remarks reported by Interfax news agency.

Republicans in the US Senate have recently pushed to change its wording.

Two-thirds of the 100 US senators must back the treaty for it to be ratified.

"The Start agreement, which was drafted on the basis of strict parity, completely meets the national interests of both Russia and the United States," Mr Lavrov told Interfax.

"It cannot be reopened, becoming the subject of new negotiations," he added.

Adm Mike Mullen, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, sent a letter to congressional leaders on Monday urging them quickly to ratify the agreement.

"This treaty enhances our ability to do that which we in the military have been charged to do: Protect and defend the citizens of the United States," he wrote.

"I am confident in its success as I am in its safeguards. The sooner it is ratified, the better."

Security imperative

Republican Senator Jon Kyl from Arizona argued on Sunday that the "treaty needs to be fixed", and that not enough time had been allowed for senators to consider it.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell from Kentucky said he would oppose the accord in a vote expected on Tuesday, further complicating the prospects for President Barack Obama in resolving one of the largest issues on his foreign policy agenda.

But Senate Democrats said on Sunday they expected ultimately to have enough votes to ratify the treaty - which would trim US and Russian arsenals to 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads - a

cut of about 30% from a limit set eight years ago.

Mr Obama wants the Senate to vote on the issue before January when Republicans will increase their numbers in the Senate by five, dimming the prospects for the accord.

The president, who has said the pact would make the world safer, lobbied senators by telephone on Monday to pass the accord, calling the treaty a national security imperative, said deputy press secretary Bill Burton.

In his weekly address to the nation on Saturday, Mr Obama said the "safety and security of America" was at stake.

The treaty would limit the number of deployed ballistic missiles or nuclear bombers to 700 as well as establish a new mechanism for sending inspectors to the other country's nuclear sites.

Since the previous Start treaty expired in December 2009, Russia and the US have not been able to conduct inspections of each other's nuclear stockpiles - leading to uncertainty about what the other side is doing.

18 December 2010 Last updated at 13:26 GMT

Barack Obama urges US Senate to pass new Start treaty



The US and Russia began building nuclear arsenals as the Cold War intensified

President Barack Obama has renewed his call for US senators to ratify an arms control treaty with Russia before the Democratic-led Congress breaks up.

In his weekly address, Mr Obama said the "safety and security of America" was at stake.

The US and Russian presidents signed the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (Start) in April, but ratification has been delayed by disagreements.

The treaty requires a two-thirds majority in the Senate to become law.

That means that the Democrats need two independents and a number of Republicans to vote in favour of ratification.

Some Republicans had tried to delay the debate on ratification until January, when a new-look

Congress will include more Republican senators.

The treaty is a key part of Mr Obama's efforts to "reset" relations with Russia.

But Republicans have raised a number of concerns, including whether the treaty would allow the modernisation of America's nuclear arsenal.

One senior Republican, Senator Kit Bond, said the treaty would give "essentially a vote on our missile defence decisions".

Warhead reduction

Speaking the day after he signed into law an extension to wide-ranging tax cuts passed by his predecessor, President George W Bush, Mr Obama appealed to the Senate to put aside partisan differences and ratify the treaty.



"Every minute we drag our feet is a minute that we have no inspectors on the ground at those Russian nuclear sites"

Barack Obama US President

Noting that arms control treaties with Russia had been supported by every US president from Ronald Reagan onwards, Mr Obama said the new treaty had backing from the military, from former presidents, and had been scrutinised by 18 Senate hearings over seven months.

Failing to pass the treaty would hit US credibility in the eyes of other nations, he added.

"We'll risk undermining American leadership not only on nuclear proliferation, but a host of other challenges around the world.

"Ratifying a treaty like Start isn't about winning a victory for an administration or a political party. It's about the safety and security of the United States of America."

The terms of the new treaty would restrict each nation to a maximum of 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads - a cut of about 30% from a limit set eight years ago.

The treaty would limit to 700 the number of deployed ballistic missiles or nuclear bombers.

It would also establish a new mechanism for sending inspectors to the other country's nuclear sites.

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Republicans have said the treaty will compromise US missile defence plans

"Every minute we drag our feet is a minute that we have no inspectors on the ground at those Russian nuclear sites," Mr Obama said in his address, adding: "It's time to get this done."

Republicans have raised a number of concerns, including whether the treaty would allow the modernisation of America's nuclear arsenal.

Senator Kit Bond, the most senior Republican on the Senate Intelligence Committee, condemned the treaty as "giving Russia essentially a vote on our missile defence decisions".

A vote is expected early next week.