

Russia will build missiles if US leaves treaty, Putin warns

5 December 2018



Russian President Vladimir Putin said Nato's accusation was a pretext for the US to leave the treaty

Russia will develop missiles banned under a Cold War agreement if the US exits the pact, President Vladimir Putin has warned. His comments follow Nato's accusation on Tuesday that Russia has already broken the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty.

Signed in 1987 by the US and USSR, it banned both countries' use of all short and medium-range missiles.

But Mr Putin says the accusation is a pretext for the US to leave the pact.

In televised comments, the Russian leader said many other countries had developed weapons banned under the INF treaty.

"Now it seems our American partners believe that the situation has changed so much that [they] must also have such a weapon," he said.

"What's our response? It's simple - in that case we will also do this."

Nato 'not planning more missiles in Europe'

Russia denies breaking missile treaty

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

US President Donald Trump has previously said the country would leave the treaty because of Russian actions.

Analysts say Russia sees the weapons as a cheaper alternative to conventional forces.

Arriving for talks with Nato foreign ministers, EU foreign affairs chief Federica Mogherini urged the two countries to save the treaty, saying it had "guaranteed peace and security in European territory for 30 years now".

What has Nato said?

On Tuesday, the Western military alliance formally accused Russia of breaking the treaty.

"Allies have concluded that Russia has developed and fielded a missile system, the 9M729, which violates the INF Treaty and poses significant risks to Euro-Atlantic security," the Nato foreign ministers' statement read.

The statement said the member nations "strongly support" the US claim that Russia is in breach of the pact, and called on Moscow to "return urgently to full and verifiable compliance".



Russia denies building missiles that violate the accord

Speaking after the release of Nato's statement, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Russia had 60 days to return to compliance with the treaty, after which time the US would suspend its own compliance.

"During this 60 days we will still not test or produce or deploy any systems, and we'll see what happens during this 60-day period," he said.

Russia has repeatedly denied breaking the Cold War treaty.

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



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

In 2014, **then US President Barack Obama accused Russia of breaching the INF Treaty** after it allegedly tested a ground-launched cruise missile.

He reportedly chose not to withdraw from the treaty under pressure from European leaders, who said such a move could restart an arms race.

The last time the US withdrew from a major arms treaty was in 2002, when President George W Bush pulled the US out of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, which banned weapons designed to counter ballistic nuclear missiles.

His administration's move to set up a missile shield in Europe alarmed the Kremlin, and was scrapped by the Obama administration in 2009. It was replaced by a modified defence system in 2016.

Russia must scrap or alter missiles U.S. says violate arms treaty

Jonathan Landay, Arshad Mohammed

4 MIN READ

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Russia must scrap its 9M729 nuclear-capable cruise missiles and launchers or modify the weapons' range to return to compliance with a key Cold War-era arms control treaty and avert a U.S. pullout from the pact, a senior U.S. official said Thursday.

"Either you rid the system, rid the launcher or change the system where it doesn't exceed the range" in a verifiable manner, said U.S. Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Andrea Thompson.

On Tuesday, the United States announced it was giving Russia 60 days to end what Washington charges is the missiles' violation of the 1987

Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty, or it would begin to withdraw from the pact.

The possibility that the treaty might unravel alarms Washington's European allies, who fear its collapse would trigger a new U.S.-Russian nuclear weapons race with the danger that Europe itself could become a nuclear battleground.

U.S. Ambassador to Russia Jon Huntsman, who briefed reporters with Thompson, said that a U.S. withdrawal from the treaty "does not mean we are walking away from arms control."

"We remain committed to arms control, but we need a reliable partner and do not have one in Russia on INF or for that matter on other treaties that it's violating," Huntsman said.

Sounding a similar theme on Thursday at a Washington Post event, the top U.S. military commander warned that Russia's continued breach of the INF pact could hamper extending the New START treaty, which limits U.S. and Russian offensive nuclear weapons deployments, beyond its Feb. 5, 2021, expiration.

"I will not obviously not make this decision. I'll make recommendations," said Marine General Joseph Dunford, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. "But it's very difficult for me to envision progress in extending (New START) . . . if the foundation of that is non-compliance with the INF Treaty."

Unless the sides agree on a five-year extension provided by the pact, New START's expiration will end all restrictions on their deployments of offensive nuclear weapons.

Moscow denies the missile, which U.S. officials say can hit European targets with nuclear or conventional warheads, violates the INF Treaty. Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday warned that Russia would

develop missiles banned by the accord if the United States exits the pact.

The United States and its European allies charge that what Moscow calls the 9M729 Novator cruise missile - designated the SSC-8 by the NATO Western security alliance - breaches the treaty's range limit of 500 to 5,000 km (310 to 3,420 miles).

The treaty also bans the production and testing of missiles with such ranges and their launchers.

President Donald Trump on Oct. 20 said the United States would withdraw from the treaty after what U.S. officials said were dozens of meetings since 2013 in which their Russian counterparts first denied the 9M729's existence and then said it complied with the pact.

NATO leaders on Tuesday unanimously supported the U.S. charge that Russia has been violating the treaty. But they prevailed on Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to give diplomacy another chance and allow Russia 60 days to return to compliance.

The treaty, negotiated by then-President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and ratified by the U.S. Senate, eliminated the medium-range missile arsenals of the world's two biggest nuclear powers and reduced their ability to launch a nuclear strike at short notice.