

Press Releases: Russia's Violation of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty

Fact Sheet
Office of the Spokesperson

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Since 2013, the United States has raised its concerns with Russia regarding Russian development of a ground-launched cruise missile (NATO designator: SSC-8, Russian designator: 9M729) with a range capability between 500 and 5,500 kilometers on repeated occasions. These include more than 30 engagements at all levels of the Russian government.

Russia has repeatedly changed its cover story regarding its violating missile. For more than four years, Russia denied the existence of the missile and provided no information about it, despite the U.S. provision to Russia of the location of the tests and the names of the companies involved in the development and production of the missile. Russia only admitted that the missile existed after we publicly announced the missile system's Russian designator but claimed that the missile was incapable of ranges beyond 500 kilometers and, therefore, INF Treaty-compliant. Russia refuses to provide the United States any more information about the missile, its capability, or its testing history to support Russia's contention that the missile is Treaty-compliant. Despite such obfuscation, Russia claims that it wants to preserve the Treaty.

The United States has convened five meetings of the parties' technical experts to discuss Russia's INF Treaty violation since 2014. These meetings included two sessions of the Special Verification Commission, the Treaty body responsible for addressing compliance concerns, in November 2016 and December 2017, and three bilateral U.S.-Russia meetings of technical experts in September 2014, April 2015, and June 2018. At each of these meetings, the United States pressed Russia on its violating missile, urged it to come back into compliance, and highlighted the critical nature of our concerns. These actions were met with denials, obfuscation, and falsehoods. In contrast, Russia has initiated zero expert meetings with the United States on this topic during this time period and has not engaged in a substantive manner.

The United States has provided detailed information to Russia regarding its

violation over the course of these bilateral and multilateral engagements, giving more than enough information for Russia to engage substantively on the issue. This includes the following:

- Information pertaining to the missile and the launcher, including Russia's internal designator for the mobile launcher chassis and the names of the companies involved in developing and producing the missile and launcher;
- Information on the violating ground launched cruise missile's (GLCM's) test history, including coordinates of the tests and Russia's attempts to conceal the nature of the program;
- Information showing that the violating GLCM has a range capability between 500 and 5,500 kilometers;
- Information showing that the violating GLCM is distinct from the R-500/SSC-7 GLCM or the RS-26 ICBM; and
- The U.S. assessment that the Russian designator for the system in question is 9M729.

If Russia had decided it wanted to return to compliance, it had a clear path forward. There are measures in the Treaty that were used for eliminating systems, which Russia could have adopted to verifiably destroy the SSC-8 and its associated equipment. Russia decided not to do so.

It is important to note that, in addition to violating the INF Treaty, Russia is also not complying with its obligations under several other arms control treaties, including the Open Skies Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention, and the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty.

U.S. Compliance with the INF Treaty

The United States is in compliance with its obligations under the INF Treaty, and Allies affirmed this most recently in the NATO Summit declaration in July 2018. In contrast to Russia's refusal to answer substantively key U.S. questions about the SSC-8/9M729, the United States has provided Russia with detailed information explaining why the United States is in compliance with the INF Treaty. The United States has even presented some of this information publicly, including in a separate factsheet on the State Department webpage.

U.S. Response to Russia's Violation

The United States is declaring that Russia's ongoing violation of the INF Treaty constitutes a material breach of the Treaty. As a consequence of Russia's material breach, the United States will suspend its obligations under the Treaty effective in 60 days from December 4 unless Russia returns to full and verifiable compliance.

Russia must return to full and verifiable compliance; Russia's failure to do so will result in the demise of the INF Treaty. We should be clear that Russia has not shown any indications that it seeks to return to compliance.

As described in the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review, the United States is committed to arms control efforts that advance U.S., allied, and partner

security; are verifiable and enforceable; and include partners that comply in a verifiable manner with their obligations. An arms control treaty that restrains only one side, while the other side violates it, is not effective in making us safer. Rather, it undermines the very idea of arms control as a tool to enhance our collective security.

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