

The INF Treaty – NATO’s position



Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and United States President Ronald Reagan sign the INF Treaty at the White House, Washington, DC, in 1987. A historic moment for Alliance security.

The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, or INF Treaty, is crucial to Euro-Atlantic security. It eliminated a whole category of nuclear weapons that threatened Europe in the 1980s. But the 9M729 or SSC-8 missile system developed and deployed by Russia in recent years violates the INF Treaty, and poses a significant risk to Alliance security. The United States has raised its concerns more than 30 times with Russia, starting under the Obama administration. NATO Allies agree with the United States’ assessment that Russia is in material breach of its obligations under the INF Treaty, and have called upon Russia to return to full and verifiable compliance.

Key events

The INF Treaty was signed on **8 December 1987** by the United States and the Soviet Union, and entered into force on 1 June 1988. It required both countries to eliminate their ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles that could travel between 500 and 5,500 kilometres (between 300 and 3,400 miles) by an implementation deadline of 1 June 1991.

By the deadline, the two countries had together destroyed a total of 2,692 short- and intermediate-range missiles: 1,846 Soviet missiles and 846 American missiles. It marked the first elimination of an entire category of weapons capable of carrying nuclear warheads.

But in recent years, Russia has developed, produced, tested and deployed a new intermediate-range missile known as the 9M729, or SSC-8. The 9M729 is mobile and easy to hide. It is capable of carrying nuclear warheads. It reduces warning times to minutes, lowering the threshold for nuclear conflict, and it can reach European capitals.

In December 2018, NATO Foreign Ministers supported the finding of the United States that Russia is in material breach of its obligations under the INF Treaty and called on Russia to urgently return to full and verifiable compliance with the Treaty.

Allies have remained open to dialogue and have engaged Russia on its violation, including at a NATO-Russia Council meeting on **25 January 2019**. Russia has continued to deny its INF Treaty violation, has refused to provide any credible response, and has taken no demonstrable steps toward returning to full and verifiable compliance.

As a result of Russia’s continued non-compliance, on **1 February 2019**, the United States announced its decision to suspend its obligations under Article XV of the INF Treaty. This means that the United States could terminate the Treaty within six months of this date if Russia has not come back into compliance.

NATO’s focus is to preserve the INF Treaty. The Alliance is doing everything that is in its remit to encourage Russia to return to compliance before 2 August 2019. At the same time, NATO has to prepare for a world without the INF Treaty and with more Russian missiles.

Allies are firmly committed to the preservation of effective international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. Therefore, the Alliance will continue to uphold, support and further strengthen arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation as a key element of Euro-Atlantic security.



Ambassador Eileen Malloy, chief of the arms control unit at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow at the destruction site in Saryozek in early 1990.

Timeline

- **8 December 1987:** Signing of the INF Treaty.
- **11 May 1991:** Destruction of the last missiles covered under the Treaty.
- **July 2014:** The United States first raises its concerns with Russia about the missile system.
- **11 July 2018:** NATO Allies declare that Russia appears to be violating the INF Treaty.
- **20 October 2018:** The United States announces its intention to terminate the Treaty.
- **4 December 2018:** The United States declares Russia in material breach of the Treaty.
- **4 December 2018:** NATO Foreign Ministers support the US finding on Russia's violation.
- **25 January 2019:** NATO Allies urge Russia to return to compliance at a NATO-Russia Council meeting.
- **1 February 2019:** The United States announces its decision to suspend compliance with the INF Treaty.
- **1 February 2019:** NATO Allies issue a statement on Russia's failure to comply with the INF Treaty.
- **14 February 2019:** NATO Defence Ministers call again on Russia to come back into compliance.

Find out more: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_166100.htm?selectedLocale=en

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