

BACKGROUND

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Russian Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces: What They Mean for the United States

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Abstract

The 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty between the U.S. and the Soviet Union was one of the most significant arms-reduction accomplishments of the Cold War. The INF Treaty led to the elimination of ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges from 300 miles to 3,400 miles, their launchers, and associated support structures and support equipment. In 2014, the U.S. State Department officially accused Russia of violating the treaty. The allegation sparked renewed interest in the utility of the agreement for the United States, and in the implications of Russia's violations for U.S. allies in Europe. Russia's aggressive and illegal behavior and the inability of the United States to bring Russia back into compliance with the INF Treaty indicate that the treaty has outlived its utility and is no longer in the U.S. interest.

The 1987 Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles—known as the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty—was one of the most significant arms-reduction accomplishments of the Cold War era. The INF Treaty led to the elimination of ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges from 500 kilometers to 5,500 kilometers (about 300 miles to 3,400 miles), their launchers, and associated support structures and support equipment.¹ In July 2014, the U.S. State Department officially accused Russia of violating the treaty.² The allegation sparked renewed interest in the utility of the agreement for the United States, and in the implications of Russia's violations for U.S. allies in Europe. Russia's aggressive and

KEY POINTS

- The 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty between the U.S. and the Soviet Union was one of the most significant arms-reduction accomplishments of the Cold War; it led to the elimination of intermediate-range ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles, their launchers, support structures, and equipment.
- Russia has been threatening NATO with nuclear attacks, thus severely undermining the post-Cold War security order in Europe. Russia confirmed its aggressive intentions by annexing Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014.
- In 2014, the U.S. State Department accused Russia of violating the treaty, sparking renewed interest in the utility of the agreement for the United States, and in the implications of Russia's violations for U.S. allies in Europe.
- Russia's disregard for international agreements, its development of intermediate-range capabilities, and the inability of the United States to bring Russia into compliance indicate that the treaty is no longer in the U.S. interest.

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illegal behavior and the inability of the United States to bring Russia back into compliance with the INF Treaty indicate that the treaty has outlived its utility and is no longer in the U.S. interest.

Russia's INF Treaty Violations

The State Department's 2014 Annual Compliance Report found that the Russian Federation "is in violation of its obligations under the INF Treaty not to possess, produce, or flight-test a ground-launched cruise missile (GLCM) with a range capability of 500 km to 5,500 km, or to possess or produce launchers of such missiles."³ The State Department affirmed the continuation of the Russian INF Treaty violations in its most recent report, published in May 2015.⁴ The State Department allegedly did not provide a more detailed explanation to its Russian counterpart about the violation in order to protect U.S. intelligence sources and methods.⁵ Russian officials have used this lack of specificity to deny U.S. accusations on the grounds that they need more information before responding to U.S. allegations.⁶ They have also put forth their own accusations against the United States, accusing the U.S. of violating the INF Treaty by pursuing certain elements of the U.S. missile defense system.⁷

Russian accusations are baseless, as the INF Treaty contains an exemption for U.S. missile defense systems when those systems are used solely for missile defense purposes. At the time the INF Treaty was signed, both the Soviet Union and the United States recognized missile defense as an important part of dealing with proliferating ballistic missile threats. The rationale has not changed and actually became more compelling after the end of the Cold War, as ballistic missile technology became cheaper and more accessible. In contrast to Russia's strong objections to the U.S. missile defense system today, when the U.S. withdrew from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM Treaty) in 2002, Russian President Vladimir Putin said the decision was "not a threat to the security of the Russian Federation."⁸

The Russian charge that U.S. armed drones constitute a violation of the INF Treaty is equally fallacious. Armed drones are not subject to the INF Treaty at all. Moreover, the first post-INF Treaty armed drone was Russian.

Russia's most serious violation of the INF Treaty seems to be a ground-launched cruise missile test.⁹ Russia allegedly started conducting flight tests of a missile with a prohibited range as early as 2008.¹⁰

1. Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles (INF Treaty), December 8, 1987, <http://www.state.gov/t/avc/trty/102360.htm> (accessed June 3, 2015). Russia exercises the rights and performs the obligations of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics with respect to treaties to which that Union was a party. See U.S. Department of State, *Treaties in Force: 2013*, p. 266, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/218912.pdf> (accessed July 24, 2015), which states: "The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics dissolved December 25, 1991. As stated in the Alma-Ata Declaration of December 21, 1991, '... The States participating in the Commonwealth guarantee in accordance with their constitutional procedures the discharge of the international obligations deriving from treaties and agreements concluded by the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics...' In addition, the Russian Federation has informed the United States Government by a note dated January 13, 1992, that it '... continues to perform the rights and fulfil the obligations following from the international agreements signed by the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics...'"
2. U.S. Department of State, "Adherence to and Compliance with Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament Agreements and Commitments," July 2014, p. 8, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/230108.pdf> (accessed June 3, 2015).
3. *Ibid.*
4. U.S. Department of State, "Report on Adherence to and Compliance With Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament Agreements and Commitments," June 5, 2015, <http://www.state.gov/t/avc/rls/rpt/2015/243224.htm> (accessed June 3, 2015).
5. Josh Rogin, "U.S. Weighing Punishments for Russia's Nuclear Violations," *Bloomberg View*, May 20, 2015, <http://www.bloombergvew.com/articles/2015-05-20/u-s-weighing-punishments-for-russia-s-nuclear-violations> (accessed June 3, 2015).
6. Sergey Lavrov, speech delivered at 51st Munich Security Conference, Munich, Germany, February 7, 2015, http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/4E7CDDD252FDEF1F43257DE60031E493 (accessed June 3, 2015).
7. Fred Dews, "Rose Gottemoeller: U.S. Commitment to Peace and Security of a World without Nuclear Weapons Is Unassailable," *The Brookings Institution*, December 17, 2014, <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/brookings-now/posts/2014/12/gottemoeller-peace-security-world-without-nuclear-weapons> (accessed June 3, 2015).
8. Olivier Knox, "Bush Announces US Withdrawal from ABM Treaty," *Space Daily*, December 13, 2001, <http://www.spacedaily.com/news/bmdo-01zzo.html> (accessed June 3, 2015).
9. Michael R. Gordon, "U.S. Says Russia Tested Cruise Missile, Violating Treaty," *The New York Times*, July 28, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/29/world/europe/us-says-russia-tested-cruise-missile-in-violation-of-treaty.html> (accessed June 3, 2015).
10. *Ibid.*

The missile most likely is the R-500, which the Russian press reported to have been tested at a range prohibited by the INF Treaty even in its first tests.¹¹ U.S. officials have described the range of the prohibited cruise missile as “intermediate,” which means a range of over 3,000 km.¹² Russian sources have put the range of the missile at between 2,000 km and 3,000 km.¹³ To violate the terms of the INF Treaty, a missile does not have to actually fly at a range prohibited by the treaty; it is enough for a missile to have the *potential* of flying at a range prohibited under the INF Treaty.¹⁴ The U.S. government took four years and numerous consultations with Russian officials to determine that Russia is, in fact, in violation of the INF Treaty. Even worse, despite these serious compliance concerns, the Administration kept the Senate blind about its concerns regarding Russia’s violations during the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) ratification debate. Due to its numerous flaws and disadvantages for the United States, New START had the lowest Senate approval of any arms control agreement since the end of the Cold War. New START would have faced an even more challenging ratification process had the Senators known about the extent of the Administration’s compliance concerns.¹⁵

Mark Schneider, Russia expert at the National Institute of Public Policy, analyzes four additional issues involving Russian violation or circumvention

of the INF Treaty. The first issue is the Iskander M ballistic missile system, currently deployed by Moscow, which reportedly has a range prohibited by the INF Treaty. The second is the new RS-26 Rubezh intercontinental-range ballistic missile, which the Russians have said was tested at a range of up to 2,000 km on three of its four successful tests.¹⁶ RS-26 is either a violation or a circumvention, as opposed to a violation, depending on one’s interpretation of the INF Treaty “type rule.” The issue is whether the missile that the Russians say was tested at a range of up to 5,600 km is the same “type” under the INF Treaty as the missile that was tested three times up to 2,000 km. An intercontinental-range ballistic missile (ICBM) could be given a prohibited intermediate range, for example, by making its payload heavier than it was during the initial intercontinental-range test (thus making the trajectory shorter).¹⁷ Russia could also fly an ICBM with two stages instead of three, thus achieving the prohibited range. In the past, Russia has converted some of its intermediate-range nuclear missiles to short-range missiles not prohibited by the INF Treaty by removing one of the stages. The RS-26 clearly does not have the range to function as a true ICBM.

Either way, the RS-26 ballistic missile is a material sign of Russia’s desire to obtain intermediate-range capabilities currently prohibited by the INF Treaty. In New START, the United States severely

11. Alexander Timoshik, “New Russian Missile R-500 to Destroy Any US Defense System,” *Pravda*, May 30, 2007, http://english.pravda.ru/russia/kremlin/30-05-2007/92443-missile_r_500-0/ (accessed June 4, 2015).
12. James R. Clapper, “Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community,” Office of the Director of National Intelligence, Statement for the Record before the Armed Services Committee, U.S. Senate, February 26, 2015, p. 7, http://www.dni.gov/files/documents/Unclassified_2015_ATA_SFR_-_SASC_FINAL.pdf (accessed June 10, 2015).
13. U.K. House of Commons Defense Committee, “Russia: A New Confrontation?” July 10, 2009, p. 187, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmdfence/276/276.pdf> (accessed June 4, 2015); Ilya Kramnik, “Missile Bargaining: Iskanders for Missile Defense,” *RIA Novosti*, January 29, 2009, <http://sputniknews.com/analysis/20090129/119877816.html> (accessed June 16, 2015); Lauren Goodrich, “INSIGHT-RUSSIA-Iskander Missile,” *Rusrep.ru*, December 13, 2009, <http://www.rusrep.ru/article/2012/02/27/1739377> (accessed June 11, 2015); and Jerome Cartillier and Jo Biddle, “US Calls on Moscow to Get Rid of Banned Arms,” *AFP*, July 29, 2013, http://news.yahoo.com/russia-violated-arms-treaty-testing-cruise-missile-us-002749693.html;_ylt=A0LEVj1Ex3VVO9YAtmwnnllQ;_ylu=X3oDMTEzZWJidTA2BGNvbG8DYmYxBHBvcwMxBHZOaWQDRkZHRTAxXzEEc2VjA3Ny# (accessed June 11, 2015).
14. INF Treaty.
15. Baker Spring, “Twelve Flaws of New START that Will Be Difficult to Fix,” Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 2455, September 16, 2010, <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2010/09/Twelve-Flaws-of-New-START-That-Will-Be-Difficult-to-Fix>.
16. John R. Bolton and Paula A. DeSutter, “Russian Roulette: Obama’s Plan for Nuclear Reductions Is Letting Moscow Get Away With Murder,” *Foreign Policy*, June 21, 2013, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/06/21/russian-roulette/> (accessed June 4, 2015), and Bill Gertz, “Russia Again Flight Tests New ICBM to Treaty-Violating Range,” *The Washington Free Beacon*, March 31, 2015, <http://freebeacon.com/national-security/russia-again-flight-tests-new-icbm-to-treaty-violating-range/> (accessed June 4, 2015).
17. Mark Schneider, “Additional Information on Reports of Russian Violations of the INF Treaty,” National Institute for Public Policy, 2012, <http://www.nipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Info-Series-3501.pdf> (accessed June 4, 2015).

degraded the data exchange regime with respect to Russia's offensive nuclear forces and agreed to not release information from data exchanges to the general public. This precluded a more informed judgment regarding Russia's new long-range and potentially intermediate-range ballistic missiles.¹⁸

Russia has violated almost every arms control agreement it has ever signed with the United States.

The third issue refers to a dangerous precedent: a Soviet/Russian covert retention of the Skorost ballistic missile erroneously described as an intercontinental-range ballistic missile even though some Russian sources allege it was an intermediate-range ballistic missile.¹⁹ The United States did not push Russia on this issue. Lastly, while the INF Treaty contains an exception for ballistic-missile-defense interceptors, the exception is applicable only as long as interceptors are used solely for the missile defense purpose. Russia's missile defense interceptors can likely be used as surface-to-air missiles.²⁰

Back to the Future and Strategic Context

Russian violations are neither new nor surprising given U.S. arms control experience with Moscow. Currently, Russia is in violation of the Helsinki Final Act, the Istanbul Commitments of 1999, the

Presidential Nuclear Initiatives, an agreement to remove its military from Georgia and Moldova, the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, the Budapest Memorandum, the Chemical Weapons Convention, and the INF Treaty.²¹ Russia is possibly in violation of the Biological Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty as interpreted by the United States. Moscow has a history of arms control violations; it has in fact violated almost every single arms control agreement it has ever signed with the United States, including an apparent violation of the ABM Treaty in the 1980s. Given this history, the INF Treaty violations should come as a no surprise and certainly will not be the last violations to occur. In the past, Russian officials reportedly made comments about the INF Treaty being detrimental to the Russian interest.²²

The United States historically has not been very effective in bringing the Soviet Union and now Russia (as well as other arms control violators) into compliance with terms of international and bilateral agreements. For example, it took the U.S. five years to bring Russia back into compliance with the ABM Treaty, and the geopolitical situation had to change profoundly before that was possible.²³ Such a change is unlikely today.

The perennial problem of what to do about arms control violations was raised by Fred Iklé, a prominent national security expert, over 50 years ago.²⁴ Iklé emphasized that the United States must be in a position to respond politically, legally, and militarily.

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18. Hans M. Kristensen, "New START Data Exchange: Will it Increase or Decrease International Nuclear Transparency?" Federation of American Scientists, March 22, 2011, <http://fas.org/blogs/security/2011/03/startexchange/> (accessed June 4, 2015), and Paula DeSutter, "Verification and the New START Treaty," Heritage Foundation Lecture No. 1160, July 12, 2010, <http://www.heritage.org/research/lecture/verification-and-the-new-start-treaty>.
 19. Mark Schneider, "Confirmation of Russian Violations and Circumvention of the INF Treaty," National Institute for Public Policy, February 2014, p. 9, <http://www.nipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Confirmation-of-Russian-Violations-of-the-INF-Treaty8.pdf> (accessed June 4, 2015).
 20. Ibid.
 21. Frank Miller, "Does a Modern Deterrent Matter? The Case of Ballistic Missile Defense and Nuclear Forces," speech at Air Force Association, National Defense Industrial Association and Reserve Officers Association Capitol Hill Forum, Washington, DC, May 22, 2015, <http://higherlogicdownload.s3.amazonaws.com/AFA/6379b747-7730-4f82-9b45-a1c80d6c8fdb/UploadedImages/Events/Heussy/052215afamilerfinal.pdf> (accessed June 4, 2015).
 22. Jerome Cartilier and Jo Biddle, "US Calls on Moscow to Get Rid of Banned Arms," Yahoo News, July 29, 2014, http://news.yahoo.com/russia-violated-arms-treaty-testing-cruise-missile-us-002749693.html;_ylt=A0LEVj1Ex3VVO9YAtmwNIIQ;_ylu=X3oDMTEzZWJidTA2BGNvbG8DYmYxBHBvcwMxBHZOaWQDRkZHRtAXzEEc2VjA3Ny# (accessed June 8, 2015).
 23. Rose Gottemoeller, "Russian Arms Control Issues," testimony before the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation and Trade and the Armed Services Subcommittee on Strategic Forces, U.S. House of Representatives, December 10, 2014, <http://www.cq.com/doc/congressionaltranscripts-4589352?3> (accessed June 4, 2015).
 24. Fred Iklé, "After Detection-What?" *Foreign Affairs*, January 1961, <http://csis.org/images/stories/ikle/037.ForAffairs1961.pdf> (accessed May 28, 2015).

An integrated response requires an integrated coordination among different governmental stakeholders as well as international allies, yet the U.S. government tends to stovepipe and treats arms control separately from other national security issues. Some of this separation is justified since arms control requires a particular set of skills and is guided by its own language and requirements. However, in a networked global environment, the U.S. must rethink its approach to bringing Russia back into compliance with the INF Treaty (as well as other international treaties and agreements that Russia is currently violating). Additionally, after properly working and consulting with NATO allies, the United States should not hesitate to withdraw from the INF Treaty should other measures fail.

Options for U.S. Response

The INF Treaty was negotiated in concurrence with American deployments of a new intermediate-range ballistic missile, the Pershing, to Europe in the 1980s. NATO was able to undertake these deployments despite massive Soviet propaganda. As an additional complicating factor, the United States refused to compromise with the Soviet Union on U.S. space activities, including research and development of space-based missile defense interceptors. Although the geopolitical situation was very different in the 1980s from what it is today, history does offer lessons on how to deal with Putin's Russia. NATO today would be capable of sustaining U.S. nuclear and conventional capabilities designed to counter Russia's aggression and threats, just as it was in the 1980s. After all, darker predictions about increasing the potential for conflict with the Soviet Union on the European territory did not come to pass, and the Soviet Union dissolved peacefully only a few years later.²⁵ While one should treat the issue with caution, there is no certainty that the same dire predictions would come to pass today.

In order to increase the prospects of bringing Russia back into compliance with the INF Treaty, the United States has a range of options. Most important, since Russian violations are occurring in a complex international context, Washington's responses must entail more than unproductive meetings in cozy

hotels in Geneva, and more than talking about Russian violations without doing anything about them. The President, the State Department, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff raised the INF violations with their Russian counterparts to no avail. The Administration did not properly communicate deadlines to Russia for coming back into compliance with the treaty, and has failed to hold Russia accountable. As a consequence, Russian violations have gone unreported and unpunished for years.

U.S. compliance with the INF Treaty while Russia blatantly violates it can give Russia an unfair competitive advantage.

Benefits of INF Treaty Withdrawal for the United States. The INF Treaty played an important role in ending the Cold War because it demonstrated NATO's will to stand up to Soviet propaganda. NATO's perseverance indicated to the Soviets that they would not be able to break up NATO and individually peel off its members and turn them against the United States. Results of NATO's principled stand were astonishing and unprecedented. The INF Treaty eliminated an entire class of ballistic missiles in two nations that had the largest quantities. The INF Treaty set a precedent for setting up an intrusive verification standard that later arms control agreements built upon or aspired to.

While agreement on the benefits of the INF Treaty for the United States is widespread, the discussion of limits and disadvantages of the treaty is almost non-existent. Considering Russia's violations of the treaty, and its belligerent attitude toward U.S. and NATO allies, as well as other countries in Russia's geographic vicinity, this is a discussion that should take place. The treaty has disadvantages, too. Arms control agreements limit a nation's ability to think about and research and develop (when not prohibited by a treaty) the systems that these agreements regulate or ban. A pertinent example is the development of U.S. aircraft carriers between the two

25. Amy F. Woolf, "Russian Compliance with the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty: Background and Issues for Congress," Congressional Research Service *Report for Congress*, December 16, 2014, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/R43832.pdf> (accessed June 4, 2015).

world wars.²⁶ The United States was a party to the 1922 Washington Naval Treaty (later modified by the 1930 London Naval Treaty and the 1936 Second London Naval Treaty), which limited warship building and allowed the United States only a limited number of aircraft carriers. As a consequence, the United States voluntarily restricted its understanding of aircraft carrier operations and experienced a steep learning curve when World War II began. Not surprisingly, Japan and Italy were among the first nations to renounce these treaties. Certainly, when the INF Treaty was negotiated, the end of the Cold War was not envisioned nor was the post-Cold War proliferation of INF-range missiles.

Similarly, the INF Treaty has limited U.S. institutional knowledge of the role of ground-launched intermediate-range ballistic missiles in the U.S. defense posture. The United States has given little or no thought to integrating intermediate-range systems into its force posture since the INF Treaty was signed—despite the aggressive rise of China and threats from rogue states. Washington has given little strategic thought to the benefits of intermediate-range ballistic missiles for Russia in the past two decades, or to how such missiles could be used to counter the Chinese challenge. Only after Russia violated the INF Treaty did the U.S. government scramble to develop response options to these violations, even then doing so only under an intense pressure from leadership in the House of Representatives—and, as of this writing, it has done nothing. The reason is quite understandable: The United States is a global power, and the government's resources, both manpower and finances, are limited and more likely to be used in response to real-world events than hypotheticals. Indeed, the international security environment has not become any friendlier after the end of the Cold War, even though the Department of Defense's capabilities (both nuclear and conventional) have been massively cut.

Moscow is approaching the issue differently: The Russian military and political establishment has been thinking about intermediate-range systems

and their potential integration with the Kremlin's forces for some time. The Russian leadership considers the intermediate-range systems useful enough to bear the risk and (so far minimal) cost of violating the INF Treaty. U.S. compliance with the INF Treaty while Russia blatantly violates it can give Russia a competitive advantage when it comes to integrating intermediate-range systems into its military and training its forces how to operate these systems.

Some argue that the United States should continue to preserve the INF Treaty even with Russia's violations because it is not in the U.S. interest that Russia fully develop its intermediate-range nuclear forces options. However, evidence suggests that Russia might be doing what it wants regardless of the INF Treaty. The United States and its allies might be more inclined to disregard Russia's intermediate-range threat due to the existing treaty, given resource constraints, until Russia's intermediate-range nuclear advantage is too obvious. At that point, it could well be too late to develop options to counter it.

A withdrawal from the INF Treaty should not be undertaken haphazardly, nor would any government treat it as such. The United States would have to prepare grounds for the withdrawal first, explaining the nature of Russia's actions with respect to violations of the INF Treaty and the international context in which these violations are occurring. Additionally, the United States must work with its NATO allies and deny Russia the benefits of exploiting the issue of the U.S. withdrawal from the treaty to drive a wedge between the United States and its European allies. Just as the alliance held in the 1980s during the deployment of the Pershing II missiles in West Germany, and in 2002 when the United States withdrew from the ABM Treaty, allies can and will follow U.S. leadership when broader European security is at stake.

Russia and China. Russia today has conventional superiority along the entire length of the NATO border. The U.S. Army shut down one hundred installations between 2003 and 2010.²⁷ The Air Force has reduced aircraft and forces stationed in

26. Thomas C. Hone, Norman Friedman, and Mark Mandeles, *American and British Aircraft Carrier Development, 1919-1941* (Annapolis, MD: U.S. Naval Institute Press, 2009).

27. Diane Devens, United States Army in Europe, "Efficient Basing in Europe—Base Realignment and Closure by Any Other Name," *U.S. Army Journal of Installation Management* (September 2010), p. 51, <http://www.eur.army.mil/news/external/EfficientBasingEurope.pdf> (accessed April 25, 2013).

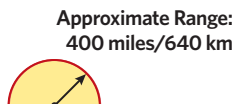
CHART 1

Missiles Within the Range of the INF Treaty

Pershing Missiles

SURFACE-TO-SURFACE
GUIDED MISSILE

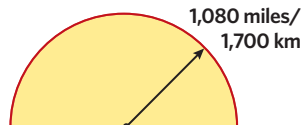
The Pershing missiles were intended to function as Europe's tactical nuclear quick reaction force. The idea behind them was that they would deliver nuclear strikes in order to free up multi-role tactical aircraft in the event of a nuclear conflict.



Pershing II

SURFACE-TO-SURFACE
GUIDED MISSILE

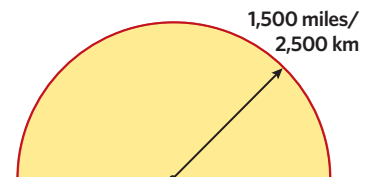
The Pershing II was designed to target fixed installations, such as command and control nodes, missile sites, military airfields and bases, and storage sites.



BGM-109G Gryphon

GROUND-LAUNCHED
CRUISE MISSILE

The BGM-109G was primarily intended to offset the threat of the Soviet SS-20. In Europe, it was to function as a replacement for aircraft in the nuclear strike mission.



Sources: Heritage Foundation research based on information from the Federation of American Scientists, "Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force [INF] Chronology"; U.S. Department of the Army, "Pershing II Weapon System (System Description)," June 1986, p. 2-1, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/64061132/TM-9-1425-386-10-1> (accessed June 29, 2015); and Hill Air Force Base, "BGM-109G 'Gryphon' Ground-Launched Cruise Missile," October 15, 2008, <http://www.hill.af.mil/library/factsheets/factsheet.asp?id=5739> (accessed June 26, 2015).

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Europe by 75 percent since 1990.²⁸ As much as Moscow likes to point to NATO as its main adversary, geopolitically, the Kremlin has a much more serious challenger to the east: China. Relations between Russia and China have been collaborative in the past few years, even though both countries continue to compete in the region. The partnership is buttressed by a shared aversion to the global role the United States has played since the end of the Cold War. On the other hand, Russia's structural problems (especially negative demographic trends) could present opportunities for an expanding Chinese population and a more assertive Chinese leadership. Hundreds of thousands of illegal Chinese immigrants settle in Siberia each year, changing the ethnic makeup of the area. Asymmetry in economic might between the

two countries is certain to complicate their relationship in the future.²⁹

China is not a party to the INF Treaty and is not a participant in arms control processes between the United States and Russia. On the contrary, Beijing is developing new intermediate-range systems.³⁰ The National Air and Space Intelligence Center assessed that many of these systems "will be armed with nonconventional warheads." Even though Russian generals or political leadership never speak about China as a potential adversary or a competitor, Russia's desire to develop intermediate-range nuclear capabilities could be seen as a precautionary desire to match the Chinese strategic buildup.³¹ Such an approach could be considered sensible and realistic in the Russian worldview.

28. Kathleen I. Ferguson, "Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC)," testimony before the Subcommittee on Readiness, Committee on Armed Services, U.S. House of Representatives, March 14, 2013, <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/AS/AS03/20130314/100429/HHRG-113-AS03-Wstate-FergusonK-20130314.pdf> (accessed April 25, 2013).

29. Dean Cheng and Ariel Cohen, "How Washington Should Manage U.S.-Russia-China Relations," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 2841, September 12, 2013, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2013/09/how-washington-should-manage-usrussiachina-relations>.

30. National Air and Space Intelligence Center, "Ballistic & Cruise Missile Threat," <http://www.25af.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD-130710-054.pdf> (accessed June 4, 2015).

31. Mark Schneider, "The Nuclear Doctrine and Forces of the People's Republic of China," National Institute for Public Policy, November 2007, <http://www.nipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/China-nuclear-final-pub.pdf> (accessed June 4, 2015).

Implications for U.S. Allies. The INF Treaty issue is critical for European allies because of the context in which violations are occurring. Russia has been threatening NATO with nuclear attacks, thus severely undermining the 1970 Nonproliferation Treaty regime, and has been intent on changing the post-Cold War security order in Europe by annexing Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014. Even before the U.S. government determined that the cruise missile test constituted a violation of the INF Treaty, Philip Breedlove, Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, said that a “weapon capability that violates the I.N.F., that is introduced into the greater European land mass is absolutely a tool that will have to be dealt with.”³² Allies were informed about Russia’s violations in January 2014.³³

The United States should seriously consider pursuing an in-kind response to Russia’s nuclear capabilities in Europe, including tactical nuclear weapons.

In May 2015, Jens Stoltenberg, the NATO Secretary General, called Russia’s nuclear threats “unjustified, destabilizing and dangerous.”³⁴ He deemed Russia’s nuclear rhetoric “deeply troubling” and noted NATO’s “concerns regarding its [Russia’s] compliance with the INF Treaty.”³⁵

The United States must include consideration of its allies in its decision about how to respond to Russia’s violations while strengthening deterrence

vis-à-vis Russia and providing credible assurances to allies. Allies in Europe are most affected by changes in the status quo of the European security order. The Polish government stated that any undermining of the INF Treaty “would represent a serious challenge to Europe’s security” and condemned Russian violations.³⁶

Toward a More Sustainable Security Environment

Russia’s INF Treaty violations are yet another indicator that Russia intends to challenge the post-Cold War security order in Europe. Russian officials often threaten NATO with nuclear attacks and are intent on challenging the alliance’s resolve. So far, the Administration has failed to put forth any credible proposals on how to deal with Russian violations. Congress, the Administration, and NATO should take the following steps.

Congress should:

- **Direct the Department of Defense to decide on a response to Russian violations within three months.** The Department of Defense began exploring potential military responses to Russian INF Treaty violations partly in response to House of Representatives leadership on the issue.³⁷ The Senate Armed Services Committee’s fiscal year 2016 National Defense Authorization Act calls for the research and development of military capabilities to counter the Russian threat.³⁸ The treaty does not restrict research and development related to these capabilities, although history shows that the United States is unlikely to invest in capabilities regulated by arms control

32. Michael R. Gordon, “NATO Commander Says He Sees Potent Threat from Russia,” *The New York Times*, April 2, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/03/world/europe/nato-general-says-russian-force-poised-to-invade-ukraine.html> (accessed June 4, 2015).

33. Michael R. Gordon, “U.S. Says Russia Tested Missile, Despite Treaty,” *The New York Times*, January 29, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/30/world/europe/us-says-russia-tested-missile-despite-treaty.html?_r=0 (accessed June 4, 2015).

34. Jens Stoltenberg, “Adapting to a Changed Security Environment,” speech at Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, DC, May 28, 2014, http://nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_120166.htm (accessed June 4, 2015).

35. Ibid.

36. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Poland, “MFA Statement on Information About Russia’s Non-Compliance With the INF Treaty,” July 30, 2014, http://www.msz.gov.pl/en/news/mfa_statement_on_information_about_russia_s_non_compliance_with_the_inf_treaty (accessed June 8, 2015).

37. Paul McLeary, “U.S. Readying Military, Economic Options to Russian Missile Treaty Violation,” *Military Times*, December 11, 2014, <http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/capitol-hill/2014/12/11/us-readying-military-economic-response-russian-missile-treaty-violation/20254965/> (accessed June 4, 2015).

38. National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016, Armed Services Committee, U.S. Senate, May 19, 2015, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/F?c114:1:./temp/-c114ez8Gr2:e915144:> (accessed June 4, 2015).

agreements. The United States should assess how these capabilities would improve its defensive posture not only in the context of the potential Russian aggression in Europe but also in other possible conflict scenarios, such as in the Middle East and Asia.

- **Sanction Russian individuals and organizations involved in Russia's intermediate-range nuclear forces program and those making threats to U.S. allies.** The United States should identify and sanction personnel affiliated with Russia's intermediate-range ballistic missile program. A model for this step can be the Russia and Moldova Jackson–Vanik Repeal and Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act of 2012 (H.R. 6156). These pieces of legislation provide the option of banning specific persons identified in the law from travelling to the United States, and allows the United States to freeze their assets.³⁹ Under Secretary of State Rose Gottemoeller testified in December 2014 that the Administration is “actively reviewing potential economic measures in response to Russia’s violation,” but so far the Administration has been silent on describing what these measures are, let alone taking them.⁴⁰
- **Coordinate with the President in continuing to develop and deploy ballistic missile defense systems, including those capable of addressing the Russian ballistic missile threat.** The United States needs stronger missile defense capabilities to protect the U.S. homeland, space-based sensors and interceptors, more SM-3 interceptors, and programs to counter ballistic missiles in the boost and ascent phases of flight.
- **Continue to invest in U.S. tactical nuclear weapons and their delivery vehicles.** U.S. tactical nuclear weapons have dissuaded allies from pursuing their own nuclear weapon capabilities

or enlarging their nuclear arsenals. They will continue to serve this important role in the future, as other nations are vigorously modernizing their nuclear arsenals and new nuclear-armed states emerge. U.S. tactical nuclear weapons in Europe are a visible sign of a political commitment to NATO and the security of its members. To that end, the U.S. must, at the very least, conduct the B-61 gravity-bomb life-extension program, provide the F-35 jet fighter with a nuclear delivery capability, and modernize the air-launched cruise missile.⁴¹ As an additional measure, the United States could also provide the Navy version of the F-35 with a nuclear delivery capability and start development of a nuclear submarine-launched cruise or ballistic missile for theater targeting.⁴² The United States should seriously consider pursuing an in-kind response to Russia’s nuclear capabilities in Europe, including tactical nuclear weapons.

The Administration should:

- **Integrate political, legal, military, and economic aspects of responding to Russian aggression.** The government is used to dealing with national security issues in a stovepipe manner. While it has been working on a better integration and coordination process between various national security stakeholders, the government must stop thinking this way when it comes to dealing with Russia’s INF Treaty violations. In addition to the Departments of State and Defense, the Administration should involve the Department of the Treasury for sanction operations. More important, the President must exercise leadership and recognize that his benevolent approach to Russia has emboldened Russia’s aggression rather than encouraging a more constructive relationship. The Administration should consult allies with respect to development of a broader response.

39. Russia and Moldova Jackson–Vanik Repeal and Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act of 2012, Public Law 112–208.

40. Gottemoeller, “Russian Arms Control Issues.”

41. Michaela Dodge, “U.S. Nuclear Weapons in Europe: Critical for Transatlantic Security,” Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 2875, February 18, 2014, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2014/02/us-nuclear-weapons-in-europe-critical-for-transatlantic-security>.

42. The United States explicitly reserved the right to redeploy these systems in a crisis under the Presidential Nuclear Initiative agreements.

- **Strengthen the U.S. ballistic missile defense program.** The United States should start with improving its radar and tracking capabilities to ensure a timely detection of an intermediate-range system aimed at a NATO member. The Administration, in concurrence with Congress, should increase missile defense funding and develop a layered, comprehensive missile defense system capable of shooting down intermediate-range systems, including salvo launches in quantities that Russia could be capable of launching.
- **Withdraw from the INF Treaty.**⁴³ The treaty has outlived its utility and no longer makes strategic sense in the context of Russia's violations and overall security actions. Experience indicates that it is unlikely that the United States will be successful in bringing Russia back into compliance with the terms of the treaty. At a minimum, the Administration should suspend the operation of the treaty in appropriate part, to increase pressure on Russia to stop its illegal activities and comply with the treaty.⁴⁴ The Administration, however, must work in accordance with NATO allies in implementing the response to Russia's INF Treaty violations, plan for Russia's deployments of intermediate-range systems, and prepare the ground for the withdrawal itself.

NATO should:

- **Revitalize the alliance's strategic thinking and nuclear war-planning.** NATO Headquarters must increase the number of professional staff in its Nuclear Policy Directorate, which has been reduced significantly in the past several years, and increase its budget accordingly. This would empower the directorate to engage in curriculum development on nuclear policy and strategy at the NATO Defense College, reactivate an outreach program to educate senior elected officials on NATO's nuclear force posture, develop and conduct nuclear planning exercises for the North Atlantic Council, and lead in developing NATO's deterrence posture in response to a changing security environment. Likewise, manning levels and subject matter expertise at the Nuclear Operations Branch of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe should be increased to enable the development of more robust concepts of operations, doctrine, and exercises. Increasing the rank of the branch director to a one-star flag or general officer should be considered. The alliance must devote resources and time to nuclear issues and alternative futures at the staff level. The atrophy of the Nonproliferation Treaty regime, potential weapons of mass destruction threats from rogue states, and Russia's nuclear threats should shape how the alliance thinks about its nuclear capabilities.

43 Article XV, clause 2, of the INF Treaty states: "2. Each Party shall, in exercising its national sovereignty, have the right to withdraw from this Treaty if it decides that extraordinary events related to the subject matter of this Treaty have jeopardized its supreme interests. It shall give notice of its decision to withdraw to the other Party six months prior to withdrawal from this Treaty. Such notice shall include a statement of the extraordinary events the notifying Party regards as having jeopardized its supreme interests."

44 The INF Treaty does not contain a provision for suspension of the operation of the treaty in whole or in part. However, the United States, which has signed but not ratified the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (VCLT), considers many of the provisions of the VCLT as reflective of customary international law. See U.S. Department of State, "Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties," at <http://www.state.gov/s/l/treaty/faqs/70139.htm> (accessed July 24, 2015); see also *Chubb & Son, Inc. v. Asiana Airlines*, 214 F. 3d 301, 308 (2d Cir. 2000) ("The United States recognizes the Vienna Convention as a codification of customary international law. The United States Department of State considers the Vienna Convention 'in dealing with day-to-day treaty problems' and recognizes the Vienna Convention as in large part 'the authoritative guide to current treaty law and practice.'") (citations omitted). Russia is a party to the VCLT. See United Nations Treaty Database, at https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetailsIII.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XXIII-1&chapter=23&Temp=mtdsg3&lang=en (accessed July 24, 2015). Article 60 of the VCLT provides that, in the case of a "material breach" of a bilateral treaty, which includes a "violation of a provision essential to the accomplishment of the object or purpose of the treaty," the material breach "by one of the parties entitles the other to invoke the breach as a ground for terminating the treaty or suspending its operation in whole or in part." VCLT, Article 60, paragraphs 1 and 3(b), at http://legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/conventions/1_1_1969.pdf (accessed July 24, 2015). In light of Russia's accession to the VCLT, and the U.S. recognition that the VCLT generally reflects customary international law, it is reasonable to conclude that both the U.S. and Russia would understand the principles articulated in Article 60 of the VCLT as the principles to apply with respect to suspension of operation in whole or in part of the INF Treaty.

- **Continue to hold military exercises that are tailored to respond to Russia’s potential moves in the European theater, including ballistic missile shoot-downs.** NATO should continue its efforts to plan military exercises designed to counter Russia’s military capabilities, including the nuclear dimension. While Russian threats are political, no one can know for certain that Russia will not carry out its nuclear threats. NATO must be prepared in the event that it does.
- **Integrate new NATO members into nuclear war plans in conventional roles.** The 1997 NATO–Russia Founding Act states that the alliance has “no intention, no plan, and no reason” to deploy nuclear weapons on new NATO member territory, including constructing new nuclear storage facilities or adapting old nuclear storage facilities.⁴⁵ Russia today is different; it threatens NATO with nuclear attacks and violates its airspace with nuclear bombers. By nature of its actions, Russia gave NATO the right to disregard this agreement as necessary to respond to Moscow’s belligerent actions. Poland took a leadership role when it participated in the 2014 Steadfast Noon exercise.⁴⁶ Other NATO members should follow suit.
- **Develop infrastructure supporting nuclear weapon deployments in new NATO states.** Such developments would give the alliance an additional tool to signal its resolve should Russia

continue its nuclear threats or escalate the conflict. The goal is to create a range of options for the alliance to respond to Russia’s aggressive behavior and to increase chances of de-escalating conflicts as soon as possible.

- **Strengthen the alliance’s conventional capabilities.** Strengthening NATO’s conventional capabilities is critical for increasing chances of successfully managing potential escalation from the Russian side. All NATO members should spend at least 2 percent of their gross domestic product on defense. The refusal by many allies to meet this agreed standard is undermining the alliance as a whole, and partnership with the United States in particular.

U.S. leadership is absolutely critical for making sure that the alliance addresses Russia’s actions effectively and increases its potential to de-escalate conflict with Russia. The alliance can and must boost its political and military capability to deal with Russia’s threats, increase its credibility, and further assure its new members. Such an approach will tame Russia’s aggressiveness and prevent further escalation of conflict in the European theater.

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45. NATO, “Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation,” May 27, 1997, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_25468.htm (accessed June 4, 2015).

46. Defence24, “Polish F-16 Take Part in Steadfast Noon NATO Nuclear Exercise,” October 29, 2014, http://www.defence24.com/news_polish-f-16-take-part-in-steadfast-noon-nato-nuclear-exercise (accessed June 4, 2015).