

# Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty background and overview



## History of the treaty

In the mid-1970s the US began to call for control of intermediate-range missiles as a result of the Soviet Union's deployment of SS-20 intermediate-range missiles

In response to the SS-20 missiles, NATO developed a dual strategy of pushing arms control negotiation and continuing to deploy intermediate-range US missiles to offset the Soviet threat. Negotiations between NATO and the Soviet Union failed

In 1985, the Soviet Union proposed a plan to “establish a balance between the number of SS-20 warheads and the growing number of allied intermediate-range missile warheads in Europe”

The US expressed an interest in the proposal, and the scope widened to cover all US and Soviet intermediate-range missiles around the world

Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev signed the INF Treaty in 1987 and it went into effect in 1988



## What does the treaty entail?

The INF Treaty eliminated nuclear and ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges between 500 and 5,500 kilometers

The US and Soviet Union destroyed a total of over 2,600 missiles by 1991

The treaty marked the first time two superpowers had agreed to reduce their nuclear arsenals and eliminate an entire category of nuclear weapons

## Recent actions:

- Russia was accused in 2014 and again in February of violating the treaty by testing banned missiles. Moscow has denied these allegations
- The Trump administration is debating whether the US should pull out of the agreement in response to Russia's violations
- Rep. Mike Rogers (R-AL) said it is “irresponsible for us to continue to adhere to a treaty when the only other participant has long moved on from it”
- Spokespeople from the DOD and DOS say the treaty remains in the national security interest of the United States
- NATO defense ministers approved expansion of allied operations for the first time since the Cold War on November 8th in response to Russia's violations

Sources: Gregory Hellman and Bryan Bender, “The other treaty on the chopping block,” Politico, June 24, 2017; Daryl Kimball and Kingston Reif, “The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty at a Glance,” Arms Control Association, June 2017; Michael Birnbaum, “Facing Russian threat, NATO boosts operations for the first time since the Cold War,” The Washington Post, November 8, 2017.