



RUSSIA REFORM MONITOR

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Related Categories: Arms Control and Proliferation; Military Innovation; Science and Technology; Resource Security; Israel; Russia

A 21ST CENTURY MODEL OF ARMS CONTROL?

Arms control dominated the discussion between Presidents Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin on the sidelines of June's G20 Summit. After their meeting, the White House confirmed that lower-level engagement between the two countries on a "21st century model of arms control" (which the Trump administration wants to eventually include China) would soon begin. Putin echoed the statement, although he remained non-committal on whether such discussions could achieve an extension to New START, the final remaining strategic arms control agreement that is currently set to expire in 2021.

Putin's comments preceded by only a few days Russia's next official step toward withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, the landmark 1987 pact that committed both the United States and Russia to the destruction of all ground-based nuclear-armed missiles with ranges between 500km and 5500km and prohibited their future deployment. On July 3rd, Putin signed a law formally suspending Russia's participation in the Treaty. Barring further action by the U.S. and Russia, both countries' withdrawal from the INF Treaty will be formalized on August 3rd.

Nevertheless, senior Trump administration officials claim to recognize "strong signals" that Moscow is seeking an improved bilateral relationship as a window of opportunity for the extension of the New START Treaty as well as future broader arms control negotiations. As evidence of the latent opportunity, the anonymous officials cited a decline in provocative Russian activity and the long delay of expected U.S. sanctions originally designed as retaliation for the March 2018 Novichok attack. They added that an upcoming bilateral summit in Geneva between Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov and U.S. Deputy Secretary of State John Sullivan would be the first opportunity for discussion of such an agreement. (*Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, June 29, 2019; *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, July 3, 2019; *Bloomberg*, July 15, 2019)

OPEC CUTS EXTENDED

In a widely anticipated decision, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) voted in early July to extend current supply cuts into next year. The cuts, which will now remain in place through March 2020, are intended to help prop up prices for the bloc's membership and other non-member producers by curbing global output. As the most influential non-OPEC producer, Russia played a major role in discussions of whether or not to extend the cuts, and in the wake of the announcement President Vladimir Putin commented publicly that he agreed with the final decision. The Trump administration, however, has long opposed the supply cut policy, threatening that U.S. support for Saudi Arabia in its ongoing confrontation with Iran may be contingent on Saudi cooperation in driving down oil prices. (Reuters, July 1, 2019)

RUSSIAN JAMMING HITS ISRAELI RADAR

Russia's willingness to test out its electronic warfare toolkit in the Syrian conflict is spilling over into the civilian world. At the end of June, a number of civilian Israeli pilot organizations and the Israeli Defense Forces reported major ongoing GPS disruptions in the vicinity of Tel Aviv, attributing the loss of signal to Russian actions. Indeed, the disruptions are believed to be collateral damage from Russia's broadcasting of a number of new jamming and spoofing signals, potentially as a method of deterring drones or other more rudimentary airspace incursions. Moscow, for its part, has called the EW accusations "fake news." Nevertheless, citing safety concerns, a coalition of fifteen U.S. maritime groups has since submitted a request to the U.S. Coast Guard for a formal international resolution that would mandate greater transparency from nations engaging in GPS jamming and spoofing. (*C4ISRNet*, July 2, 2019)

DEMOGRAPHIC CRISIS DEEPENS

Recent public comments by a senior officials underscore the gravity of Russia's long-building population crisis. Deputy Prime Minister Tatyana Golikova told reporters last month that falling birth rates – evidenced by a decline from 146.8 million people in 2018 to 146.7 million in April 2019 – means that "we're catastrophically losing the population." She castigated regional officials for pervasive underreporting of mortality rates "in pursuit of good indicators." (*The Moscow Times*, July 3, 2019)