



RUSSIA REFORM MONITOR

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Related Categories: Arms Control and Proliferation; Economic Sanctions; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; Russia

THE SUN SETS ON THE INF TREATY

On August 2nd, the end finally arrived for the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. The 1987 bilateral arms control pact's collapse had been months in the making; the Trump administration first declared its intention to withdraw last year, citing Russia's covert development and deployment of a missile that violated the INF treaty's ban on delivery systems with ranges between 500 and 5,500 kilometers. When announcing the U.S.'s formal withdrawal from the agreement, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called Russia "solely responsible for the treaty's demise." While voicing fears about the potential for a new arms race, NATO allies overall expressed support for the U.S. decision to withdraw and criticized Russia for spurning the chance to return to compliance with the treaty's terms. As a rebuttal, Moscow invited the U.S. and NATO to declare a joint moratorium on intermediate-range missile deployment. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg dismissed the offer as "not credible" in light of Russia's current deployments of intermediate-range systems – deployments that the Kremlin continues to deny.

Russia quickly followed suit in formally withdrawing from the treaty's terms and issuing its own plans for retaliation. A statement posted on the Kremlin website shortly after August 2nd publicized President Vladimir Putin's directive that the Defense Ministry, Foreign Ministry, and Foreign Intelligence Services "monitor in the most thorough manner" all new U.S. missile development. In addition to foreshadowing increased espionage, the statement doubled down on the claim that Russia never violated INF and vowed to match any new U.S. systems and deployments with Russian equivalents.

With the INF restrictions lifted, the U.S. wasted no time in testing its own new intermediate-range system. On August 20th, the Pentagon confirmed that a new ground-launched conventional cruise missile was successfully launched off the coast of Los Angeles, traveling more than 500km (within the range previously prohibited by the INF) before hitting its target. According to the Trump administration, the new system is only in the initial stages of development but will help contest years of military advantage built up by Russia on intermediate-range systems through its non-compliance with INF; administration officials have also emphasized that the U.S. would only consider deploying non-nuclear systems in this range. Moscow, for its part, accused the U.S. of deliberately escalating military tensions in the aftermath of the treaty's demise. (*CNN*, August 2, 2019; *Wall Street Journal*, August 5, 2019; *BBC News*, August 20, 2019)

MILITARY DEPOT EXPLOSION ROCKS SIBERIAN TOWN

An ammunition depot has exploded in the town of Achinsk, located in Siberia's Krasnoyarsk region. The Russian Defense Ministry confirmed that the explosion at the depot was caused by a fire in a gunpowder storage facility, injuring eight people in all. In the wake of the explosion, authorities declared a state of emergency and ordered the evacuation of all towns within 20km of the depot – roughly 6,000 residents. (*TIME*, August 5, 2019)

FAREWELL, JON HUNTSMAN

After two years at the diplomatic helm in Moscow, U.S. Ambassador to Russia Jon Huntsman has resigned and will depart on October 3rd. Huntsman, who occupied the position during two years of notable turbulence in U.S.-Russian relations, wrote in his resignation letter that the U.S. "must continue to hold Russia accountable when its behavior threatens us and our allies." In response to the news, the Russian Foreign Ministry lauded Huntsman as "a professional" but blamed U.S. domestic politics for preventing any improvement in the bilateral relationship. (Reuters, August 7, 2019)

MOSCOW SLAPPED WITH SECOND ROUND OF SALISBURY SANCTIONS

On August 2nd, an executive order signed by President Donald Trump paved the way for a new set of sanctions on Russia in response to the March 2018 chemical attack carried out by Russian agents in the United Kingdom. The sanctions represent the second such measure required under the *Chemical and Biological Weapons Control and Warfare Elimination Act*; a first round was enacted last August, and Moscow's continued denials of responsibility triggered the mandatory imposition of the latest round (the Trump administration had delayed imposing the mandatory sanctions, but ultimately moved to impose them after increased Congressional pressure this summer).

The new sanctions, which took effect on August 26th, prohibit U.S. banks from lending to Russia (with the purchases of agriculture or food products currently exempted), prevent international financial institutions from providing loans or other forms of technical or financial assistance to Russia, and authorize the denial by the U.S. Commerce Department of Russian export licenses for any chemical or biological goods and technology. For now, however, they omit ruble-denominated OFZ bonds, a vehicle so popular among foreign investors that the prospect of sanctioning them had been referred to as the "nuclear option." (*Financial Times*, August 3, 2019; *The Moscow Times*, August 26, 2019)