



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on November 2, 2009

Russia Accused of Violating Arms Treaty

As the Obama administration and Moscow rush to negotiate a new arms-control treaty by the end of the year, Russia is being accused of testing new Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) that would violate the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START).



The White House has made a new arms-control agreement with Russia a top priority because START expires on December 5. Late last month, both countries held talks in Geneva about a new accord, and more consultations will follow on November 9.

The treaty was supposed to cut nuclear stockpiles in half while allowing inspections, among other arms-control measures. President Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev have both announced that they will seek further reductions, and the Kremlin has said a new deal is "imminent."

But critics in the Senate, which must approve any treaty by a two-thirds majority for it to become law, are already gearing up for a fight. Allegations that Russia is continuing to violate START will make the battle difficult, and critics wonder whether it would be really be a good idea to make new agreements while the Russians appear to be ignoring the one already in existence.

"That would be illegal for the Russians to deploy under START. So why are they testing it?" wondered Republican Senator Jon Kyl of Arizona on the Senate floor, referring to the new RS-24 missile (known as SS-27 by the U.S. Department of Defense), which was tested by Russia back in 2007. "In this case, it appears the Russians have cheated — if not in the letter of the START agreement, at least in its spirit — by converting one of their existing missiles, the Topol-M, to this new multiple-warhead variant."

As early as 2005, the State Department's Bureau of Verification and Compliance highlighted concerns about the agreement's implementation: "A significant number of longstanding compliance issues that have been raised in the START Treaty's Joint Compliance and Inspection Commission remain unresolved." Since then, no updates have been issued.

But experts who have worked on the issue say the concerns have not been addressed. "The more recent compliance report, when it does go to the Senate and House, will be disturbing in a lot of ways because Russia continues to be in violation of the START treaty," the Assistant Secretary of State for verification and compliance until this year, Paula DeSutter, told the [Washington Times](#). According to DeSutter, the Russians have increased cooperation regarding inspections but "remain in noncompliance on a whole range of START treaty issues."

But the Obama State Department is committed to a tough new treaty. "Clinging to nuclear weapons in excess of our security needs does not make the United States safer," [said](#) Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, urging support for tough new measures. "And the nuclear status quo is neither desirable nor sustainable. It gives other countries the motivation — or the excuse — to pursue their own nuclear options.... We must do more than reduce the numbers of our nuclear weapons. We must also reduce the



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role they play in our security."

Meanwhile, as the United States struggles to get a treaty with Russia that would further reduce its nuclear capabilities, China continues to develop its missile stockpile while refusing to engage in serious talks about the subject. China is also not a party to the START agreement.

If a new deal with Russia fails to materialize before the end of the year, [analysts](#) predict some sort of "gap filling measure" will go into effect while the treaty is finalized and goes into force. But U.S. officials have said neither America nor Russia would "undertake any activities to increase our strategic forces or undermine strategic stability."

But if Russia is indeed violating the treaty, or even the "spirit" of the treaty, Senators should carefully consider the facts before joining any new agreements and reject proposals that would undermine the security of the United States. In the rush to reach a new deal, Obama seems ready to overlook Russia's flaunting of the current pact. So it will be crucial for the Senate to stand up for American interests and not compromise on national security.

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