

The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty at a Glance

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The 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty required the United States and the Soviet Union to eliminate and permanently forswear all of their nuclear and conventional ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges of 500 to 5,500 kilometers. The treaty marked the first time the superpowers had agreed to reduce their nuclear arsenals, elimi-

nate an entire category of nuclear weapons, and utilize extensive on-site inspections for verification. As a result of the INF Treaty, the United States and the Soviet Union destroyed a total of 2,692 short-, medium-, and intermediate-range missiles by the treaty's implementation deadline of June 1, 1991. Neither Washington nor Moscow now deploys such systems.

History

U.S. calls for the control of intermediate-range missiles emerged as a result of the Soviet Union's domestic deployment of SS-20 intermediate-range missiles in the mid-1970s. The SS-20 qualitatively improved Soviet nuclear forces in the European theater by providing a longer-range, multiple-warhead alternative to aging Soviet SS-4 and SS-5 single-warhead missiles. In 1979, NATO ministers responded to the new Soviet missile deployment with what became known as the "dual-track" strategy—a simultaneous push for arms control negotiations with the deployment of intermediate-range, nuclear-armed U.S. missiles (ground-launched cruise missiles and the Pershing II) in Europe to offset the SS-20. Negotiations, however, faltered repeatedly while U.S. missile deployments continued in the early 1980s.

INF negotiations began to show progress once Mikhail Gorbachev became the Soviet general-secretary in March 1985. In the fall of the same year, the Soviet Union put forward 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 United States expressed interest in the Soviet proposal, and the scope of the negotiations expanded in 1986 to include all U.S. and Soviet intermediate-range missiles around the world. Using the momentum from these talks, President Ronald Reagan and Gorbachev began to move toward a comprehensive INF elimination agreement. Their efforts culminated in the signing of the INF Treaty on December 8, 1987, and the treaty entered into force on June 1, 1988.

Elimination

The INF Treaty's protocol on missile elimination named the specific types of missiles to be destroyed and the acceptable means of doing so. Under the treaty, the United States committed to eliminate its Pershing II, BGM-109G, Pershing IA, and Pershing IB missiles. The Soviet Union had to destroy its SS-20, SS-4, SS-5, SSC-X-4, SS-12, and SS-23 missiles. In addition, both parties were obliged to destroy all INF-related training missiles, rocket stages, launch canisters, and launchers. Most missiles were eliminated either by exploding them while they were unarmed and burning their stages or by cutting the missiles in half and severing their wings and tail sections.

Inspection and Verification Protocols

The INF Treaty's inspection protocol required states-parties to inspect and inventory each other's intermediate-range nuclear forces 30 to 90 days after the treaty's entry into force. Referred to as "baseline inspections," these exchanges laid the groundwork for

future missile elimination by providing information on the size and location of U.S. and Soviet forces. Treaty provisions also allowed signatories to conduct up to 20 short-notice inspections per year at designated sites during the first three years of treaty implementation and to monitor specified missile-production facilities to guarantee that no new missiles were being produced.

The INF Treaty's verification protocol certified reductions through a combination of national technical means (i.e., satellite observation) and on-site inspections—a process by which each party could send observers to monitor the other's elimination efforts as they occurred. The protocol explicitly banned interference with photo-reconnaissance satellites, and states-parties were forbidden from concealing their missiles to impede verification activities. Both states-parties could carry out on-site inspections at each other's facilities in the United States and Soviet Union and at specified bases in Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, West Germany, and Czechoslovakia.

The INF Treaty Today

States-parties' rights to conduct on-site inspections under the treaty ended on May 31, 2001, but the use of surveillance satellites for data collection continues. The INF Treaty established the Special Verification Commission (SVC) to act as an implementing body for the treaty, resolving questions of compliance and agreeing on measures to "improve [the treaty's] viability and effectiveness." Because the INF Treaty is of unlimited duration, states-parties can convene the SVC at any time, and the commission continues to meet today.

Although the INF ban originally applied only to U.S. and Soviet forces, the treaty's membership expanded in 1991 to include successor states of the former Soviet Union. Today, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine join Russia and the United States in the treaty's implementation. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan possessed INF facilities (SS-23 operating bases) but forego treaty meetings with the consent of the other states-parties.

Although active states-parties to the treaty total just five countries, several European countries have destroyed INF-banned missiles since the end of the Cold War. Germany, Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic destroyed their intermediate-range missiles in the 1990s, and Slovakia dismantled all of its remaining intermediate-range missiles in October 2000 after extensive U.S. prodding. On May 31, 2002, the last possessor of intermediate-range missiles in eastern Europe, Bulgaria, signed an agreement with the United States to destroy all of its INF Treaty-relevant missiles. Bulgaria completed the destruction five months later with U.S. funding.

-Assisted by Ryan Scoville