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Russia Delays Chemical Weapons Deadline

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The Foreign Ministry said Tuesday that Russia would delay its deadline for destroying chemical weapons stockpiles by as much as three years because of budget and technical problems.

Under the international Chemical Weapons Convention, Russia was to eliminate all its chemical weapons by 2012.

But Interfax cited the ministry as saying that because of the global financial crisis "we have run into objective financial and technical difficulties which oblige us to extend by 2 1/2 to 3 years the period of concluding the liquidation."

The ministry confirmed the comments but did not elaborate.

Officials in the United States, another treaty signatory, also have acknowledged that they are likely to miss the 2012 deadline.

The treaty obliges signatories to eliminate Class I weapons — chemicals that have no use other than in armaments. Under the convention, Russia so far has destroyed 19,151 tons of weapons chemicals, about 48 percent of the country's stockpiles, according to a statement from the government of the Kirov region, where one of Russia's three weapons-destruction facilities is located.

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