

Russia Accuses U.S. of Loose Arms Control

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The Foreign Ministry accused the United States on Saturday of breaching its obligations over the nonproliferation of weapons, a sign of strained relations between the two powers.

The charge came after the New START arms control treaty between the United States and Russia suffered a setback last week when the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee delayed a ratification vote until mid-September.

The Russian military said it had successfully test-fired two ballistic missiles from the Barents Sea on Friday, Interfax reported, in another sign of muscle-flexing from Moscow.

The Foreign Ministry said on its web site that the United States had been in breach of several arms-related treaties including the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty and a treaty on conventional weapons.

"During the START I period, the United States failed to resolve Russia's concerns over how this treaty was being fulfilled," the ministry said, citing a long list of what it called

irregularities, including a U.S. failure to provide information on ballistic missiles trials.

In Washington, the State Department dismissed the accusation. "We have met our obligations under START," a spokeswoman said.

The Foreign Ministry also accused the United States of preventing international supervision of its compliance with the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention.

The ministry also said secret information from the U.S. Los Alamos nuclear weapons laboratory had ended up in the hands of a drug dealing gang in 2006.

"The peculiarity of the incident was that, unlike in several other such cases when nuclear secrets were obtained by foreign intelligence services, now they were found by police with a criminal group connected to the drug trade," it said.

The ministry also said checks conducted by a U.S. government body last month revealed that several institutions dealing with viruses had failed to provide enough security measures to prevent an intruder from entering their facilities.

The Foreign Ministry also claimed that about 1,500 sources of ionizing radiation were lost in the United States between 1996 and 2001.

"In 2004, it was revealed that Pacific Gas and Electric Company lost three segments of wasted fuel rods, used at the Humboldt Bay nuclear power station," it said in the 11-page report.

The document also castigates the United States for research into biological weapons and smallpox.

The accusations came despite warmer relations between the United States and Russia that paved the way for Presidents Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev to sign New START in April. Obama has cast the treaty, which commits the former Cold War foes to reducing deployed nuclear weapons by about 30 percent, as a first step toward his goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

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