

U.S. to Sign New Arms Trade Treaty, Russia Undecided

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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UNITED NATIONS — U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said that the United States will sign a landmark treaty regulating the multibillion-dollar global arms trade, while other key arms exporters, including Russia, have given no indication yet that they will sign it.

The announcement came late Monday, when the treaty had already gathered the signatures of 67 out of 193 of the UN's member states, which UN disarmament chief Angela Kane called "impressive."

Australian Ambassador Peter Woolcott, president of the final treaty conference, told a news conference that "all the major exporters and importers played a highly constructive role in the negotiations ... so I'm hopeful that they will be able to sign up." Amnesty International's arms control chief Brian Wood said it understands that "China is looking positively at this treaty," but "Russia is more skeptical."

While the treaty was overwhelmingly approved on April 2 by the UN General Assembly, key arms exporters including Russia and China and major importers including India, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia and Egypt abstained and have not yet said they will sign it.

The treaty will only take effect after 50 countries ratify it.

The treaty will require countries that ratify it to establish national regulations to control the transfer of conventional arms and components and to regulate arms brokers, but it will not control the domestic use of weapons in any country. It prohibits the transfer of conventional weapons if they violate arms embargoes or if they promote acts of genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes, and if they could be used in attacks on civilians or civilian buildings such as schools and hospitals.

What impact the treaty will have in curbing the global arms trade — estimated at between \$60 billion and \$85 billion — remains to be seen. A lot will depend on which countries ratify it, and how stringently it is implemented once it comes into force.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said he urged all countries — especially major arms-trading countries — to sign and ratify the treaty saying "the eyes of the world are watching arms traders, manufacturers and governments, as never before."

Kerry said the United States looks forward to signing the document "as soon as the process of conforming the official translations is completed satisfactorily." Once that happens, the treaty would have to be ratified by the U.S. Senate where it is expected to face an uphill struggle because of opposition from the powerful National Rifle Association, the gun rights lobbying group.

Several of the world's top arms exporters including Britain and France signed alongside emerging exporters such as Brazil and Mexico.

The treaty covers battle tanks, armored combat vehicles, large-caliber artillery systems, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, warships, missiles and missile launchers, and small arms and light weapons.

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