

Obama Renews Calls for Nuclear Reductions

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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BERLIN — President Barack Obama renewed his call Wednesday to reduce U.S. and Russian nuclear stockpiles and said he wanted to reignite the spirit that Berlin displayed when it fought to reunite itself during the Cold War.

"Today's threats are not as stark as they were half a century ago, but the struggle for freedom and security and human dignity, that struggle goes on," Obama said at the city's historic Brandenburg Gate before a crowd of 6,000 invited guests under a bright, hot sun. "And I come here for this city of hope because the test of our time demands the same fighting spirit that defined Berlin a half-century ago."

Obama called for a one-third reduction of U.S. and Russian nuclear stockpiles, saying it is possible to ensure American security and a strong deterrent while also limiting nuclear weapons.

But President Vladimir Putin voiced concern Wednesday about U.S. missile defenses and high-precision conventional weapons, signaling that the nuclear cuts proposed by Obama are likely to face obstacles.

For Obama, addressing the issue in a major foreign policy speech indicated a desire to rekindle an issue that was a centerpiece of his early first-term national security agenda.

The U.S. president discussed nonproliferation with Putin when they met Monday on the sidelines of the Group of 8 summit in Northern Ireland. During Obama's first term, the U.S. and Russia agreed to limit their stockpiles to 1,550 as part of the New START Treaty.

In St. Petersburg on Wednesday, Putin reiterated Moscow's concerns about antimissile shields the U.S. and NATO are deploying and said the development of high-precision, long-range conventional weapons could upset the strategic balance.

"These weapons are approaching the level of strategic nuclear arms in terms of their strike capability. States possessing such weapons strongly increase their offensive potential," Putin said at a meeting on defense issues.

Putin did not mention Obama's speech, which began shortly after he spoke.

In Moscow, Putin foreign policy aide Yuriy Ushakov said plans for any further arms reduction would have to involve countries beyond Russia and the U.S.

"The situation is now far from what it was in the '60s and '70s, when only the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union discussed arms reduction," Ushakov said.

Obama's calls for cooperation with Moscow come at a time of tension between the U.S. and Russia, which are supporting opposite sides in Syria's civil war.

Material from Reuters is included in this report.

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