

Time to Sign a Super New START

By [Vladimir Kozin](#)

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Two prominent U.S. House representatives, Trent Franks and Doug Lamborn, [writing on these pages](#) last week, said they are "in complete agreement" with Moscow's possible initiative to withdraw from the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, or New START, if the U.S. does not halt its missile defense program in Europe.

"It is not very often that two Republican congressmen like us find ourselves in complete agreement with President Vladimir Putin, but on the issue of New START we could not agree more," they wrote, adding later, "The New START treaty, which only benefits Russia, was a terrible idea in the first place. If Russia wants to exit it, we would be delighted."

Russia has made it clear several times, especially after Washington announced its "European Phased Adaptive Approach," or EPAA, in 2009, that it would cancel all its commitments under New START if Russia's worries that the U.S. missile shield was expanding too widely and too quickly were not resolved.

The same day that Presidents Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev signed New START in Prague in April 2010, the Russian government declared that Moscow would withdraw

from the treaty if the U.S. pursued a qualitative and quantitative buildup in its missile defense system. Washington issued its own statement at the time, saying it would continue to develop and deploy missile defense systems in order to protect itself.

Recently, the head of the Russian Foreign Ministry's arms control and disarmament directorate reiterated that Moscow might quit New START after Washington dispatched the warship "Donald Cook," capable of Aegis missile defense, to European shores.

Of course, many treaties contain a stipulation that allows either side to withdraw for the sake of their "supreme interests." In this case, the withdrawal clause in the New START Treaty sets a higher bar. It gives a party the right to withdraw if it decides that "extraordinary events" related to the treaty have "jeopardized its supreme interests."

Washington, incidentally, unilaterally ended all its obligations under the Anti-Ballistic Missile, or ABM, Treaty and the relevant protocol to it in 2002 when it found that they hampered its intention to create the missile defense system at home and globally.

So there is nothing new or unusual in both the Russian and U.S. warnings to block the implementation of New START.

But at the same time it is difficult to agree entirely with a number of notions that Franks and Lamborn raised.

1. New START is not "a Cold War artifact," as they put, because it works. The treaty substantially reduced the window of opportunity that Moscow and Washington have to use strategic nuclear missiles. Steven Pifer, director of the Arms Control and Nonproliferation Initiative at the Brookings Institution, [rightly observed in a rebuttal to the congressmen on these pages](#) that both the U.S. and Russia have conducted more than 100 inspections under the treaty in its four-year lifespan. No one has suggested that Russia has violated the treaty. Indeed, Russia has already met the goal of deploying 1,550 warheads and 700 strategic missiles and bombers. According to the latest data released at the beginning of this year, Moscow has 1,400 deployed warheads and 473 deployed strategic missiles and bombers.

2. The congressmen say that the U.S. should not have signed the treaty without China's, India's and Pakistan's agreement to lower their own growing nuclear stockpiles. Why only these nations? Why aren't Israel and North Korea on the list? Well, that is not Russia's fault. Can't the White House persuade Pakistan and Israel, as U.S. allies, to join in the nuclear arms control discussions?

3. The congressmen justifiably point out that Russia is actively deploying its own missile defense. But they fail to mention that Russian missile defense hardware has not been moved to continental U.S., much like how U.S. missile defense infrastructure is being placed on Russia's borders — in Romania and Poland — and on adjacent European seas.

4. The congressmen claim that U.S. missile defenses are not aimed at intercepting Russian nuclear weapons and have no capability of weakening Russia's nuclear deterrence. But in the more than 12 years since the ABM Treaty was declared dead, Washington has not provided any legally binding assurances that U.S. interceptors will not be used against Russia's defense interests. Reciprocally and logically, Moscow should give the U.S. the same assurances.

5. Russia has never violated the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces, or INF, Treaty signed in 1987. But, the U.S. has violated the treaty many times by using INF missiles for testing missile defense "hit-to-kill" capabilities. Moreover, Moscow has proposed expanding the U.S.-Russian INF Treaty into a global pact. Washington, after initially agreeing to support the idea, later became deaf to it.

6. Russia does not have tactical nuclear arsenals outside its territory, while the U.S. still does in five European nations. Russia cannot neglect this reality after the NATO summit in Chicago in May 2012 decided to operationally mix U.S. nuclear, conventional and missile defense hardware.

So Russia has every right and justification to withdraw from both the New START and INF treaties through the "extraordinary events" clause. What are these "events?" The events are not only U.S. missile defense. They also include the operational mix of nuclear, conventional and missile defense weapons as forward-based weapons that either have been moved or are being moved to Russia's borders under a U.S. offensive nuclear deterrence strategy adopted last summer.

It is high time to sign a super New START deal with Russia that would reshape the U.S. missile defense pattern of deployment. But if the U.S. shield continues to be installed under the EPAA plan, Russia has the formidable right to withdraw from the current New START and resort to tough responsive measures to counterbalance the U.S. project.

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