

U.S. Exit From Nuclear Arms Pact Increases Risks of War, Gorbachev Says

By [Reuters](#)

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Mikhail Gorbachev (Sergei Vedyashkin / Moskva News Agency)

Mikhail Gorbachev, the last Soviet leader, denounced on Friday a U.S. decision to leave an arms control treaty that helped end the Cold War, saying it heralded a new arms race which increased the risk of nuclear conflict.

President Donald Trump has said Washington plans to quit the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty which Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan signed in 1987. The pact eliminated all short- and intermediate-range land-based nuclear and conventional missiles held by both countries in Europe.

Gorbachev, in a column for the New York Times newspaper, said the U.S. move was "a dire threat to peace" that he still hoped might be reversed through negotiations.

"I am being asked whether I feel bitter watching the demise of what I worked so hard to

achieve. But this is not a personal matter. Much more is at stake," he wrote. "A new arms race has been announced."

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Washington has cited Russia's alleged violation of the treaty as its reason for leaving it, a charge Moscow denies. Russia in turn accuses Washington of breaking the pact.

Stationing of U.S. land-based nuclear missiles in western Europe provoked mass protests in the 1980s. Some U.S. allies now fear Washington might deploy a new generation of them in Europe, with Russia doing the same in its exclave of Kaliningrad, once again turning the continent into a potential nuclear battlefield.

If the United States made good on its pledge to leave the treaty, Gorbachev said he hoped that U.S. allies would refuse to be what he called launchpads for American missiles which Trump has spoken of developing.

President Vladimir Putin said on Wednesday that Russia would be forced to target any European countries that agreed to host U.S. missiles.

Gorbachev, 87, said that any disputes about compliance could be solved if there were sufficient political will.

It was clear, however, that Trump's aim was to release the United States from global constraints, he said, accusing Washington of destroying the "system of international treaties and accords" that underpinned peace and security after World War Two.

"Yet I am convinced that those who hope to benefit from a global free-for-all are deeply mistaken. There will be no winner in a 'war of all against all' — particularly if it ends in a nuclear war. And that is a possibility that cannot be ruled out. An unrelenting arms race, international tensions, hostility and universal mistrust will only increase the risk."

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