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Russia Says Leaving Open Skies Military Treaty

By AFP

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The Open Skies treaty was signed in 1992 and came into force in 2002. **Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency**

Russia's foreign ministry said Friday it is leaving the Open Skies treaty, a post-Cold War defense accord that allows its signatories to carry out unarmed surveillance flights over each other's territories.

Citing "lack of progress" on maintaining the functioning of the treaty after the United States withdrew from it last year, the ministry said in a statement it is beginning "domestic procedures for Russia's withdrawal from the Open Skies treaty."

The Open Skies treaty was signed in 1992 and came into force in 2002. It allowed its nearly three dozen signatories to carry out short-notice flights over one another's territory to monitor potential military operations.

Members include countries across Europe, the former Soviet Union and Canada.

Washington announced it would be leaving the treaty after accusing Russia of violations, including blocking flights over certain sites and forbidding surveys of military exercises.

The Russian foreign ministry said Friday that the United States had used a "fictitious pretext" for its withdrawal and in doing so disturbed "the balance of interests of the participating states".

The ministry added that Russia had put forward proposals to retain the "viability" of the treaty but did not receive support from Washington.

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