

Putin Submits Open Skies Treaty Withdrawal Bill

May 11, 2021



The U.S. exited the Open Skies Treaty in November, citing Russian violations that Moscow denies. **CTK / TASS**

President Vladimir Putin has submitted a bill Tuesday to [withdraw](#) Russia from an international treaty that allowed surveillance flights after the United States' exit last year.

Russia said in January it was launching the necessary procedures to leave the Open Skies Treaty after the U.S. quit it in November, citing Russian violations including blocking certain flights and forbidding surveys of military exercises. Moscow has denied breaching the pact.

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“The U.S. withdrawal from the Treaty violated the balance of interests among the Treaty’s member states, which led to threats to Russia’s security,” the bill submitted by Putin states.

“In this regard, Russia cannot remain a party to the treaty.”

To become law, Putin's legislative initiative would need three votes of approval in the State Duma and one in the upper-house Federation Council before receiving his signature.

Lawmakers [said](#) they will begin voting for Putin's bill as early as next week.

"All the procedures for withdrawing from the Open Skies Treaty should be completed by the end of May, we definitely won't delay here," Leonid Slutsky, who chairs the Duma's international affairs committee, told the state-run RIA Novosti news agency.

The 2002 Open Skies Treaty, which Russia and the U.S. had long accused each other of breaching, allowed its three dozen members to conduct joint unarmed short-notice observation flights over countries' territories to monitor potential military operations.

Experts have warned that the U.S. withdrawal would debilitate its European NATO allies' overflights because they lack satellite reconnaissance capabilities.

Russia has said that its proposals to retain the treaty's "viability" had been cold-shouldered by the U.S.

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