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Putin Exits Open Skies Treaty, Mirroring U.S. Departure

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Russia's exit from the Open Skies Treaty takes effect six months after Putin's signing. **Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency**

Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a law Monday formalizing Russia's exit from the Open Skies Treaty, an international pact that allows surveillance flights over fellow members' military facilities, after the United States' withdrawal last year.

Putin's signature comes 10 days ahead of his first summit with U.S. President Joe Biden in Geneva, where the two leaders are expected to seek de-escalation on a slew of issues.

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The United States left the treaty in November, accusing Russia of non-compliance. Late last month, the Associated Press reported that the Biden administration informed Russia's Foreign Ministry that it "does not intend to seek to rejoin" the Open Skies Treaty.

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The Open Skies Treaty, which was signed in 1992 and came into force in 2002, allows its three dozen members to conduct joint unarmed short-notice observation flights over countries’ territories to monitor potential military operations.

Russia and the U.S. have long accused each other of breaching Open Skies, with Moscow blaming Washington for cold-shouldering its proposals to retain the treaty’s viability.

Lawmakers in Russia’s two-chamber parliament had approved legislation on the treaty’s renunciation in less than a month since Putin first submitted it on May 11.

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