

Russia, U.S. Boosted Nuclear Arsenals in 2020 Amid Global Decrease – Think Tank

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Both Russia and the U.S. are estimated to have had around 50 more nuclear warheads in operational deployment at the beginning of 2021 than a year earlier. **Sergei Bobylev / TASS**

Russia and the United States grew their nuclear arsenals in 2020, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) think tank [said](#) in a new report Monday.

The world's two largest nuclear powers boosted their stockpiles even as the overall number of nuclear warheads decreased globally last year, (the Swedish based) SIPRI said.

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Both are estimated to have had around 50 more nuclear warheads in operational deployment at the beginning of 2021 than a year earlier, SIPRI said, despite both countries reducing their overall inventories by dismantling retired warheads in 2020.

Russia also increased its overall military nuclear stockpile by around 180 warheads, the think tank said, linking the increase to deployment of more multi-warhead land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and sea-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs).

SIPRI's findings come months after Moscow and Washington [extended](#) the New START — the last remaining arms control agreement between the former Cold War rivals — for another five years just days before it was set to expire.

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Both countries' deployed strategic nuclear forces remained within the limits set by the New START, SIPRI said, adding that the treaty does not limit total nuclear warhead inventories.

The pact is seen as a rare opportunity for compromise between Russia and the U.S., whose ties have dramatically deteriorated in recent years.

Nuclear arms control will be one of a slew of issues on the table at U.S. President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin's summit this week in Geneva.

But while the last-minute New START extension came as a "relief," prospects for further bilateral nuclear arms control efforts between the two powers "remain poor," said Hans M. Kristensen, an associate senior fellow with SIPRI's Nuclear Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-Proliferation Program.

"Both Russia and the U.S. appear to be increasing the importance they attribute to nuclear weapons in their national security strategies," Kristensen added.

Both countries have also [exited](#) the Open Skies Treaty, an international pact that allows surveillance flights over fellow members' military facilities, in recent months after accusing each other of violations.

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