The Moscow Times
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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia Suspends Arms Inspections Under Treaty With U.S.

By AFP

August 09, 2022



Moscow accused Washington of seeking "to create unilateral advantages" and deprive Russia of "the right to carry out inspections on American soil." **Russian Foreign Ministry Press Office/TASS**

Russia said Monday it was suspending U.S. on-site inspections under a strategic arms reduction treaty with Washington, pointing to Western sanctions and coronavirus infections.

The Russian foreign ministry said facilities that are subject to inspections under the New START treaty will be "temporarily" exempt from such inspections.

The announcement comes as ties between Russia and the United States unravel over Moscow's intervention in Ukraine and debilitating Western sanctions.

New START is the last remaining arms reduction pact between the former Cold War rivals and caps to 1,550 the number of nuclear warheads that can be deployed by Moscow and

Washington.

"Russia is now forced to resort to this measure as a result of Washington's persistent desire to implicitly achieve a restart of inspections on conditions that do not take into account existing realities," the foreign ministry said in a statement.

Moscow also accused Washington of seeking "to create unilateral advantages" and deprive Russia of "the right to carry out inspections on American soil."

The statement indicated it had become hard for Moscow to carry out inspections on American soil due to Western sanctions including the closure of air space for Russian planes and visa restrictions.

Moscow also pointed to a new spike in coronavirus cases in the United States.

"We believe that in the current circumstances, the parties should abandon patently counterproductive attempts to artificially speed up the resumption of START inspection activities and focus on a thorough study of all existing problems in this area," the foreign ministry said.

Last year, the United States and Russia extended New START by the maximum allowed time of five years.

Moscow's announcement came after U.S. President Joe Biden called on Russia and China to demonstrate their commitment to limiting nuclear arms.

Russia should demonstrate its willingness to renew the nuclear arms reduction pact when it expires in 2026, Biden said.

In an emailed comment, a U.S. State Department spokesman said that Washington is committed to the New START treaty, "but we keep discussions between the parties concerning treaty implementation confidential."

"The principles of reciprocity, mutual predictability, and mutual stability will continue to guide the U.S. approach to implementation of the New START Treaty," the official said.

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