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Russia Ends Voluntary Ban on Intermediate-Range Missile Deployments

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A missile test at the Kapustin Yar testing ground near Astrakhan in southern Russia. **Russian Defense Ministry**

Russia will no longer observe its voluntary ban on deploying intermediate-range missiles, the Foreign Ministry announced on Monday, citing what it called growing threats from the United States and other Western countries.

Moscow imposed the unilateral moratorium after the U.S. withdrew from the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in 2019. Washington had accused Russia of violating the agreement, which banned the deployment of land-based missiles with ranges between 500 and 5,500 kilometers.

"Russia directly called upon NATO countries to declare a reciprocal moratorium," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement, adding that it sought to prevent an arms race in the Asia-Pacific. No agreement was ever reached.

On Monday, the ministry accused the United States of testing, producing and deploying INF-class missiles in regions critical to Russian security and said the conditions for maintaining its unilateral moratorium "have ceased to exist."

"We are authorized to declare that the Russian Federation no longer considers itself bound by the previously adopted self-imposed restrictions," the ministry said, adding that future "response measures" would depend on the scale of Western deployments.

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Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov had signaled in June that Moscow could abandon the moratorium, calling it a "logical" step given what he described as "highly sensitive missile threats" from the West.

Later on Monday, Russian Security Council Deputy Chairman Dmitry Medvedev called the move a direct result of NATO's "anti-Russian policy."

"This is a new reality all our opponents will have to reckon with. Expect further steps," he wrote in English on X.

Medvedev, who served as president from 2008 to 2012, has recently exchanged barbs with U.S. President Donald Trump, who announced last week that he ordered the deployment of two nuclear submarines in response to Medvedev's nuclear saber rattling on social media.

On Tuesday, the Kremlin said it "believes it has the right to take appropriate measures and steps if necessary" following the decision to suspend its unilateral moratorium.

"One should not expect a formal announcement here," spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters, referring to the possibility of Russia deploying INF-class missiles in the future. "After all, this concerns the defense sector, a rather sensitive and non-public area."

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