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Putin Orders Preparations for Possible Nuclear Tests in Response to Trump

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Kremlin Press Service

Russia may prepare to resume nuclear weapons testing if the United States carries out tests first, President Vladimir Putin said Wednesday in response to U.S. President Donald Trump's comments on testing.

Trump said on social media last week that he had instructed the Pentagon to "start testing our Nuclear Weapons on an equal basis" with Russia and China. It was unclear whether he was referring to tests involving nuclear warheads or not.

"I instruct the Foreign Ministry, the Defense Ministry, the special services and relevant civilian agencies to gather additional information, analyze it at the Security Council and submit coordinated proposals on possible preparations for nuclear weapons tests," Putin said Wednesday.

Russia has not officially conducted a nuclear test since 1990, the year before the collapse of the U.S.S.R.

The world's two largest nuclear powers in 1996 signed the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, a landmark agreement that aims to completely ban all nuclear tests.

Related article: Kremlin Denies Nuclear Testing After Trump Orders U.S. to Resume Tests

While Moscow ratified the CTBT in 2000, Washington never took the final step of codifying it into law and Putin revoked its ratification in 2023.

"Russia has always strictly fulfilled its obligations under the CTBT, and we have no plans to move away from them," Putin told top security and defense officials Wednesday.

"However, if the United States or other treaty participants conduct such tests, then Russia must also take appropriate actions," Putin warned.

Defense Minister Andrei Belousov urged immediate readiness in the Arctic archipelago Novaya Zemlya, citing U.S. weapons modernization and recent statements from senior U.S. officials.

"It's advisable to start preparations for full-scale nuclear tests immediately," he told Putin. "The readiness of the Novaya Zemlya test site allows for their rapid conduct."

The Kremlin later downplayed Putin's statement, saying the president did not order preparations for new nuclear tests.

Putin merely "instructed that the advisability of beginning preparations for such tests be studied. That is what they will be doing now," spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

"No one knows what Trump meant about 'nuclear testing' (he probably doesn't himself). But he's the president of the United States. And the consequences of such words are inescapable: Russia will be forced to assess the expediency of conducting full-fledged nuclear tests itself," former President and Deputy Chairman of the Security Council Dmitry Medvedev wrote on social media.

In October, Putin oversaw two routine tests of nuclear-capable weapons that did not involve atomic warheads.

Trump has been trying to end fighting between Russia and Ukraine since returning to the White House in January, but talks have yielded no significant progress. He has shown increasing frustration with Putin, who has rejected multiple calls for a ceasefire.

Aside from North Korea, no country has carried out an atomic weapon test involving a nuclear explosion in the 21st century.

AFP contributed reporting.

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