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Lavrov Says Russia Will Stick to Nuclear Weapons Limits if U.S. Does

By AFP

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A Bulava missile launched by the Russian Navy Northern Fleet's Project 955 Borei nuclear missile cruiser submarine. **Russian Defense Ministry / TASS**

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Wednesday that Moscow would abide by limits on its nuclear weapons set out in a lapsed arms control treaty with the United States, so long as Washington did the same.

The New START agreement — the last remaining treaty between the world's top two nuclear powers — expired earlier this month, with Washington not responding to an offer by Russian President Vladimir Putin for a one-year extension of a cap on the size of each side's nuclear arsenal.

Lavrov said Moscow was in no rush to start developing and deploying more weapons, backtracking on comments by his ministry last week that said Russia considered itself no longer bound by the treaty's terms.

"We proceed from the fact that this moratorium, which was announced by our president, remains in effect, but only while the United States does not exceed the outlined limits," Lavrov said in an address to Russia's parliament.

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Both sides have indicated they want to strike a new arms control agreement.

Washington is pushing for China to be included in the talks, pointing to its growing nuclear arsenal.

Moscow says if China is brought into a new deal, then so too should the United States' nuclear allies, Britain and France.

The expiration of New START, which restricted the United States and Russia to 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads each, marks the first time in decades that there is no treaty to curtail the positioning of the planet's most destructive weapons, sparking fears of a fresh arms race.

U.S. President Donald Trump has said New START was "badly negotiated" and "is being grossly violated."

Russia in 2023 rejected inspections of its nuclear sites under the treaty, as tensions rose with the U.S. over the war in Ukraine.

But it said it had remained committed to the quantitative limits set down.

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