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The New START Treaty

This article provides a brief overview of the New Strategic Arms Reductions Treaty (New START or NST), which entered into force on February 5, 2011. New START replaces the previous START treaty which expired on December 5, 2009, in addition to superseding the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT or Moscow Treaty).

Overview

New START is a legally-binding bilateral agreement between Russia and the United States, composed of three integral parts: the treaty text; a technical protocol specifying additional rights and obligations associated with the treaty text; and detailed technical annexes to the protocol.

The treaty will remain in force for ten years unless both Parties agree to extend it for up to five additional years. Alternatively, New START can expire sooner than ten years if another treaty supersedes it or if either Party withdraws from the treaty after providing three months advance notice.

New Limits

New START limits the number of warheads as well as the number of deployed and non-deployed nuclear weapon delivery systems each Party may possess. Each Party is obligated to achieve the following limits by February 5, 2018 – within seven years after the treaty's entry into force:

- 1,550 deployed warheads;
- 800 deployed and non-deployed intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) launchers, submarine launched ballistic missile (SLBM) launchers, and heavy bombers equipped for nuclear weapons;
- 700 deployed ICBMs, SLBMs, and heavy bombers equipped for nuclear weapons.

Within the 800 delivery systems' limit, the treaty allows each Party to determine how many of each type it maintains. Warheads are counted according to the actual number on each deployed ICBM and SLBM. One warhead per deployed heavy bomber equipped for nuclear weapons counts against a Party's 1,550 limit for deployed warheads.



Verification Provisions

To verify treaty compliance, New START contains provisions for on-site inspections and exhibitions, data exchanges and notifications related to strategic offensive arms and facilities covered by the treaty, and provisions to facilitate the use of national technical means for treaty monitoring. In addition, to increase confidence and transparency of weapon system capabilities, the treaty provides for the exchange of telemetric information (missile flight test data) on up to five launches each year.

Implementation

The United States and Russia conducted the first data exchange on March 22, 2011, fulfilling a treaty requirement to exchange information within 45 days of entry into force. This information is continually updated through the treaty's notification processes and exchanged anew every six months.

As of April 6, 2011 the Parties were permitted to begin on-site inspection activities, which enable each Party to have "boots on the ground" and inspect the other Party's treaty-related facilities and arms. The first inspections occurred in mid-April. Type One inspections can occur at ICBM bases, submarine bases, and air bases that house deployed or non-deployed launchers, missiles and bombers. Type Two inspections can occur at facilities housing non-deployed or converted strategic offensive arms.

The Bilateral Consultative Commission (BCC) met from March 28 to April 8 to discuss technical issues regarding treaty implementation procedures. The BCC released two statements after this inaugural meeting, clarifying inspector arrival times and use of photography. The BCC meets at least twice a year.

For more information and the latest news on New START, visit the DTIRP Website: <http://dtirp.dtra.mil>