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First U.S. - Russia Joint Open Skies Observation Flight

Media Note

Office of the Spokesman

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Today, the United States and the Russian Federation will begin the first ever joint U.S.-Russian Observation flight under the Treaty on Open Skies. On March 14-18, this historic joint mission will be conducted over the territory of Sweden on a Russian aircraft with a team of Russian, American and Swedish personnel.

This observation flight will complete a series of joint missions conducted among Russia, Sweden and the United States that began three years ago: in 2008, Russia and Sweden flew a joint mission over the United States; and in 2009, Sweden and the United States flew together over the Russian Federation. None of these joint flights was envisioned when the Treaty was first drafted, but improved trust gained through over 750 observation flights conducted by Treaty parties since 2002 has opened new opportunities for greater cooperation among its members.

The Treaty on Open Skies establishes a regime for unarmed aerial observation flights over the territories of its signatories. Stretching from Vancouver in the west to Vladivostok in the east, the Treaty on Open Skies is one of the most wide-ranging international arms control efforts ever undertaken to promote openness and transparency in military forces and activities. As such, the Treaty provides a key mechanism in support of U.S. Euro-Atlantic security objectives.

The United States is committed to promoting and implementing transparency and confidence-building measures with Russia, Sweden, and all of our Open Skies Treaty partners. We

consider this joint effort an important contribution to that commitment, as well as a stronger security environment for all Open Skies Treaty parties.

For more information about the Treaty on Open Skies, please see:

<http://www.state.gov/t/avc/cca/os/index.htm> and <http://dtirp.dtra.mil/OST/ost.aspx>