



ABOLITION 2000

GLOBAL NETWORK TO ELIMINATE NUCLEAR WEAPONS
NO NUKES, NO WAR

Webinar – Preserve the INF Treaty

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Thank you very much, Jackie. It's a tough act to follow. I cannot possibly be as eloquent as Andy. I'll try to stick to more practical issues that are related to this debate.

And one thing I want to start with is that, now that the treaty is actually almost coming to the end – you heard earlier that the United States and Russia had an unsuccessful meeting in Geneva that tried to resolve some of the issues, and apparently the United States indicated that they will submit the notice of withdrawal on February 2nd, although it's not entirely clear, but that's where we're going, and six months after that the treaty will cease to exist – so, we are on a kind of finishing line.

I don't think that much more can be done to save the treaty, but the problem is that we still don't really know what this is all about. So what is this violation that the United States is accusing Russia of, and since we don't know what the violation is, it's difficult to judge whether it really could be justified at all, the dismantling of one of the few arms control and disarmament agreements.

And so I will try to walk through that.

The first question is, **do we know if Russia actually violated the treaty?** The answer to that is probably yes. In a sense that it's very likely that there was a technical violation of the treaty, and in the treaty there are some provisions that are very detailed, and it is entirely possible that, yes, Russia did develop and test a missile that has the capability to fly to the ranges that are prohibited by the INF treaty.

But again, as I said, Russia of course denies that, and we don't know this for certain, because we haven't seen actual evidence that the United States claims it has, but I would not discount that possibility.

I think in all likelihood it is possible. However the next question is, **was this violation in any way serious enough from a military or political standpoint to warrant the kind of reaction that we see**, which is the dismantling of one of the few arms control agreements. And I think the answer to that is probably not, in a sense that from the military point of view, this missile – even if we assume that it was deployed in violation – militarily doesn't really add anything to Russia's capabilities, and it doesn't really change the level of threat that Russian nuclear forces could pose to Europe.

And partly that is because there are plenty of other nuclear weapons around and in Russia in particular. Russia for example has the capability to deploy sea-launched cruise missiles and these are not limited by any treaty, the air-launched cruise missiles are somewhat limited by the New START, but not really limited. So in that sense, and it is, I think, a very important point to make, we should not think that even if this issue is resolved, if all of a sudden Russia decides to come back to compliance and eliminate the missile in question that if that happens then all the problems in Europe would be resolved. No, not at all, because, as I said, I mean there are plenty of other nuclear weapons around, there are plenty of other nuclear missiles deployed around Europe and arguably the very presence of nuclear weapons is the threat to the security of Europe.

So that is, I think, one of the points that I really wanted to underline.



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What are the negative consequences of what we are looking at?

Of course it's not very often that it happens that a certain political move has negative consequences and doesn't really have any upside to it for either country.

I am genuinely puzzled that the United States actually decided to go ahead and withdraw from the treaty, because there is no positive outcome that the United States could achieve, because one immediate result would be that Russia would be free to deploy whatever cruise missiles it wants to deploy, including the missile that raises all these issues with the United States. More than that, Russia could probably deploy other systems like ballistic missiles of intermediate range which are currently not deployed, but Russia has a system that can be deployed in that capacity.

I just don't see how the security of anyone in Europe or the United States would benefit from that. And on the other side, talking about the United States, then we could probably see the deployment or return of nuclear sea-launched cruise missiles.

I don't think that we will see a return of deployment of nuclear systems in Europe, because the opposition to that would be very strong. And the other potentially very negative consequence would be the demise of the New START treaty. This treaty limits strategic forces, and it's very difficult to see, in the atmosphere that is created by the dismantling of the INF Treaty, how New START could survive. So it is probably very likely that it will not be extended when it comes to that point in 2021.

The final point which I'm really grateful to Andy for speaking about it so eloquently, and I would concur with him here, is that it is wrong to assume that somehow the United States and the Europeans and Russia would come to their senses and seek to make this a calculated decision and weigh all the consequences about security interests and everything, and come to the conclusion that they really need to limit missiles or return to compliance or return to arms control. That wasn't how it worked the last time around, when the original INF treaty was concluded.

In my view, the most important factor that actually made the INF Treaty possible, arguably made the START treaty and equal reductions in general possible, was the pressure that was the government's in the United States and Europe, to some extent, in the Soviet Union, not that much, that the governments felt that there are these weapons, the systems are dangerous, and the arms race is getting out of control. So unfortunately, I think, unless we get to the point where it will become so dangerous that people will actually start raising their voices in a serious way, it's very difficult to expect that the United States, Russia and others would return to serious arms treaty discussions.

There is hope, of course. And the hope is that in the 38+ years since the last round of these tensions, we have a better understanding of the dangers of these weapons. We have some kind of experience of tackling them and dealing with that. And so maybe the hope is that it will not come to the point where it will become really dangerous and will threaten really serious consequences.

So I think that the work that Abolition 2000 does is actually very important, precisely because you are part of the system that tries to exert that pressure on the governments and communicates these dangers.

Let me stop here. I'll be happy to answer any questions.