
TREATY BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION ON STRATEGIC OFFENSIVE REDUCTIONS (SORT/ TREATY OF MOSCOW)

Signed: 24 May 2002.

Entry into Force: 1 June 2003.

Duration: The Treaty shall remain in force until 31 December 2012 and may be extended by agreement of the Parties or superseded earlier by a subsequent agreement.

Parties: Russian Federation and United States.

Background: The U.S.-Russian summit held in Moscow and St. Petersburg on 24-26 May 2002, capped the process of rapprochement between the two States that began in earlier summits in Ljubljana, Genoa, Crawford, and Shanghai, with both aspiring to leave behind the logjams of the Cold War.

Several documents were signed on a set of issues ranging from arms control to cooperation in the economic, energy, and information technology areas. The most publicized event of the summit was the signing of the Treaty of Moscow. This document was largely a result of compromise: the United States insisted that the two countries did not need a treaty at all, but agreed to insistent Russian proposals to conclude one. At the same time, the United States did not compromise on its top priority, freedom of choice on the fate of its decommissioned warheads, while Moscow gave up its earlier proposals for the guaranteed destruction of warheads.

Obligations:

- Each Party shall reduce and limit strategic nuclear warheads so that by 31 December 2012, the aggregate number of such warheads does not exceed 1,700-2,200 for each Party.
- Each Party shall determine for itself the composition and structure of its strategic offensive arms, based on the established aggregate limit for the number of such warheads.
- The Parties agree that [START I](#) remains in force in accordance with its terms.

- The parties shall meet at least twice a year for a Bilateral Implementation Commission to discuss the progress of implementation of the treaty.
- In February of 2003, the Senate Armed Services Committee, in reviewing the treaty for ratification, stipulated two additional conditions. First, the creation of an annual report on the status of US-Russian Cooperation Threat Reduction initiatives and, second, an annual update on treaty implementation, including information on strategic force levels, planned reductions each calendar year, and verification or transparency measures.

Verification and Compliance: The Treaty does not contain any specific verification or compliance provisions. For purposes of implementing this Treaty, the parties shall hold meetings at least twice a year of a Bilateral Implementation Commission. The Joint Declaration of the United States of America and the Russian Federation, issued on 24 May 2002, states that START I provisions “will provide the foundation for providing confidence, transparency, and predictability in further strategic offensive reductions, along with other supplementary measures, including transparency measures, to be agreed.” START I verification measures allow each country to utilize any accessible “national technical means” of verification, and provide for inspections at declared or suspect facilities in order to authenticate each country's declarations of its weapons and facilities. START I also requires several other types of confidence-building measures, including notification to the other side of weapons testing and open displays of some types of missile launchers. START I will expire in 2009. SORT does not expire until 2012.

Withdrawal: Each Party may withdraw from the Treaty upon 90-days' written notice to the other Party.

Developments:

2004: In January-March 2004 the United States and Russia engaged in talks concerning the implementation of SORT. Though the talks and work were described as useful and a draft document was drawn up setting forth the tasks of the Bilateral Implementation Commission (BIC) of the treaty, the United States expressed concerns over how Russia intended to count its weapons reductions under the treaty because SORT did not have a verification clause.

The treaty text requires the BIC to occur on a biannual basis for the lifespan of the treaty. The United States and Russia held the first two meetings of the BIC on April 8-9 and October 14-15, 2004, in Geneva. The work of the BIC is confidential.

The first steps envisaged by the United States are reducing operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads, retiring 50 Peacekeeper ICBMs, removing four Trident submarines from strategic service, and no longer maintaining the ability to return the B-1B heavy bomber to nuclear service. These steps are already completed (B-1B and Trident submarines) or will be in 2005 (Peacekeeper deactivation). Beginning in FY06, at any given time, the United States will likely have two of the remaining 14 Trident SSBNs in overhaul. Those SSBNs will not contain operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads.

In October 2004, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced that, in the near future, Russia will have arms capable of surmounting all current anti-ballistic missile (ABM) systems. Putin noted that the new technology was not aimed at the United States and that his country fully intended to comply with SORT obligations by 2012.

2003: In February of 2003, the Senate Armed Services Committee reviewed the treaty and added two conditions. First, the committee requested an annual report on the status of U.S.-Russian Cooperative Threat Reduction initiatives. Second, the committee required an annual update on the treaty's implementation, including information on strategic force levels, a schedule of planned reductions each calendar year, and verification or transparency measures that might have been or might be employed.

On 6 March, the United States Senate unanimously ratified SORT after defeating two

amendments. One amendment sought to include an instrument of verification (specifically, a provision requiring U.S. intelligence agencies to file annual reports on the U.S. ability to monitor Russia's compliance). The amendment failed 45-50. The second amendment sought to establish the requirement of presidential consultations with Congress 60 days before any decision to withdraw from the treaty or to extend it. The amendment failed 44-50.

On 9 March, the Russian working group developed a new draft of the bill which was agreed to by President Putin and submitted to the Duma. On 18 March, the Duma postponed ratification of the treaty, citing disagreement with the United States over the decision to invade Iraq. On 14 May, the Duma approved the Federal Law on Ratification for the Treaty by a 294-134 vote.

According to reports, the ratification legislation identifies two possible scenarios in which Russia should consider activating its right to withdraw from the treaty (a step permissible upon the service of three months' notice): a "significant build-up in strategic offensive forces of some nation or a group of nations" or deployment by another state or states of a missile defense system "capable of significantly reducing the efficiency of Russia's nuclear arsenals."

On 1 June, Presidents Bush and Putin met in St. Petersburg to exchange instruments of ratification to bring the treaty into force. The leaders noted in a joint statement that the treaty "codifies...deep reductions of strategic nuclear warheads" and thus stands as "another indication of the transformed relationship between our two countries."

2002: On 13 June U.S. withdrawal from the 1972 Anti Ballistic Missile Treaty took effect.

On 14 June, the Russian Federation announced its withdrawal from the START II Treaty due to U.S. refusal to ratify the treaty and to U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty.

2001: At the G-8 summit in Genoa, Presidents Bush and Putin first met to discuss new bilateral arms control options. The presidents issued a statement noting that the two would "shortly begin intensive consultations on the interrelated subjects of offensive and defensive systems."