
US ACCUSES RUSSIA OF DISMANTLING SECURITY AGREEMENTS

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Russia is slowly but surely dismantling the security and arms control agreements that were put in place in Europe at the end of the cold war, according to a senior US state department official.

Speaking ahead of a major international nuclear security summit in Washington this week that Russian leaders are boycotting, Frank Rose, assistant secretary for arms control, said that Russia now saw many of those agreements as a sign of weakness.

My personal view is that Russia no longer sees value in that architecture put in place at the end of the cold war, he said, citing Russias withdrawal from a conventional weapons agreement and its alleged testing of medium-range ballistic missiles.

They are slowly but surely taking out the key building blocks of the Euro-Atlantic architecture put in place in the late 80s and 1990s.

The Russian intervention in eastern Ukraine has frozen significant parts of US diplomatic interaction with Russia. Mr Roses comments underline the administrations growing pessimism about working with Russia on arms control and other nuclear issues □ which had been one of President Barack Obamas key objectives when he took office in 2009.

The summit on securing nuclear material, which begins on Thursday, is the fourth to be held since Mr Obamas 2009 speech in Prague warning about the risks of terrorists getting hold of a nuclear weapon. The 2010 New Start Treaty with Russia agreed reductions in long range nuclear missiles and in 2013 Mr Obama announced plans for new reductions.

While the Pentagon has been publicly blunt about what it sees as the new military threat that Russia represents in Europe and has criticised Russian sabre-rattling about the potential use of tactical nuclear weapons, the state department has generally been less willing to write-off co-operation with Russia on arms control and is still keen to work with Moscow on projects to secure nuclear material in third countries.

Mr Rose said that Russia was still abiding by the terms of the New Start treaty, in part because it valued the verification procedures that it created.

However, he said Russias opposition to the post-cold war architecture was evident in its decision to withdraw from the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and its breach of the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, which bans short and medium-range ballistic missiles. Russia had also shown no interest in discussing limitations or transparency measures for tactical

nuclear weapons, he said.

The State Department accused Russia two years ago of breaching the INF Treaty. Speaking last week, Rose Gottemoeller, undersecretary of state for arms control, said it had been one of the most difficult issues that she had ever dealt with because the Russians simply have not wanted to engage in a way that would resolve this problem.

Ben Rhodes, deputy national security adviser, said Russias decision not to attend this weeks summit was a missed opportunity for Russia. All they are doing is isolating themselves, he said.

However, despite the conflict in Ukraine, he said the US had been able to work with Russia on the Iran nuclear deal and on some issues related to dangerous nuclear material. US officials said that the US and Russia had worked together on a project to remove material from Uzbekistan.

Olga Oliker, director of the Russia programme at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, said that Russias absence would make it harder to make meaningful progress at the summit given that 90 per cent of the highly-enriched uranium in the world was either in the US or Russia.

Russias absence is a sort of missing elephant in the room, she said, which was the result of tension with the US and the Russian lack of a desire to appear at something that is so clearly a US baby. Russia also prefers broader international structures, where its voice is heard louder, she said.

Kaynak/Source: