
CHINA, OTHER COUNTRIES SHOULD JOIN INF TREATY, RUSSIAN SENATOR SAYS

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The Russian-US Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty should become universal and involve China and also other countries, including the United Kingdom and France, Chairman of the Russian Federation Councils (upper house of parliament) Foreign Affairs Committee Konstantin Kosachev said on Tuesday.

"The criticism of the INF Treaty that it imposes restrictions only on the United States and Russia is justified in general and our country has also voiced a similar position many times in the past. The treaty should become universal and the Russian initiative put forward back in 2007 is on the table," Kosachev wrote on his Facebook page.

The Russian senator has rejected the call by US President Donald Trump on China to join the treaty as "political cynicism of the highest degree." Kosachev noted that the UK and France, as well as India, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel possess short-and intermediate-range missiles.

The suggestion that the problem will be solved by eliminating missiles of this type belonging only to Washingtons hypothetic enemies means an attempt to reshape the world and "create privileged security conditions for the West," the senator said. Meanwhile, others will depend on the West: "the security umbrella" will be given only to those who will behave in "a right way," he noted, voicing hope that this wont happen under any circumstances.

"If the US withdraws from it unilaterally, there still wont be any guarantees that a new multilateral document will be drawn up, while the US (and certainly, Russia) will have a free hand with all that it implies," he stressed.

INF Treaty and Trumps announcement

On October 20, US President Donald Trump said that Washington would withdraw from the INF Treaty because Russia was allegedly violating the terms of the agreement. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov branded this as a dangerous move, while Berlin and Beijing also criticized the US plans.

Meanwhile, London voiced support for the US, while NATO held Russia responsible for Trumps decision saying that "allies believe that the most plausible assessment would be that Russia is in violation of the INF Treaty."

The INF Treaty was signed between the Soviet Union and the United States on December 8, 1987 in Washington, DC and took effect on June 1, 1988. The INF Treaty eliminated operational and non-

operational medium range (1,000-5,500 kilometers) and shorter range (500-1,000 kilometers) ground-launched missiles.

In 2014, the United States accused Russia of developing a missile with an operational range of 500 to 5,500 km. US media outlets reported that the missile was codenamed 9M729 (NATO reporting name: SSC-8). Since then, the US has repeated this claim more than once. Russia strongly dismissed it and struck back at the US with counterclaims that America had violated the deal. Moscow accused Washington of developing missiles, which are tested at a range prohibited by the treaty and deploying missile defense elements, which may be used for launching short- and intermediate-range missiles.

<http://tass.com/politics/1027304>

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