

Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty

START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) was a bilateral treaty between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the United States of America on the limitation and reduction of strategic offensive arms. The treaty was signed on 31 July 1991 and entered into force on 5 December 1994.

On 8 April 2010, the replacement New START Treaty was signed in Prague by US President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev. Following its ratification by the US Senate and the Federal Assembly of Russia, the treaty went into force on 26 January 2011, the first to US tremendous reductions of American and Soviet or Russian strategic nuclear weapons.

Overview of Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty

The treaty barred its signatories from deploying more than 6,000 nuclear warheads atop a total of 1,600 inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and bombers. START negotiated the largest and most complex arms control treaty in history, and its final implementation in late 2001 resulted in the removal of about 80 percent of all strategic nuclear weapons then in existence. Proposed by United States President Ronald Reagan, it was renamed START I after negotiations began on the second START treaty.

Reductions mandated by the treaty were to be completed no later than seven years after its entry into force. Parties were then obligated to maintain those limits during the next eight years.

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Background of START

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The first phase would reduce overall warhead counts on any missile type to 5,000, with an additional limit of 2,500 on ICBMs. Additionally, a total of 850 ICBMs would be allowed, with a limit of 110 "heavy throw" missiles like the SS-18 and additional limits on the total "throw weight" of the missiles.

The second phase introduced similar limits on heavy bombers and their warheads, as well as other strategic systems.

The Soviet Army was not a serious threat to the United States as its doctrine mainly involved attacking American convoys in the Atlantic Ocean as well as surface targets on the Eurasian

landmass. Although the Soviets possessed 1200 medium and heavy bombers, only the Tupolev Tu-95s were capable of reaching mainland North America without mid-air refueling. This made it difficult for them to get through the US airspace, despite it being thinly defended. Having too few bombers available compared to US bomber numbers was evened out by the US forces being required to penetrate the Soviet airspace, which is much larger and more defended.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, treaty obligations passed to twelve Soviet successor states. Of those, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan each eliminated one nuclear-related site, and on-site inspections were discontinued. Inspections continued in Belarus, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine.

How Efficient was the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty?

The former Soviet republics of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine have relinquished, disposed of or transferred their nuclear weapons to Russia. The United States and Russia have reduced their weapon delivery payloads and vehicles to no more than 1600 each.

A report by the US State Department released on 28 July 2010, stated that Russian was not complying to most of the clauses of the treaty. Though it should be noted that the specifics of the non-compliance were not listed.

New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty

The New START Treaty came with even more limitations on the United States and Russia by reducing their strategic assets within seven years of it coming into force.

- The limits were as per stringent analysis by the Department of Defense. These limitations consist of 1550 nuclear warheads which include ICBMs, and submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM) and even those ordinances used in heavy bomber formations.
- Compared to the treaty set in 1991, there is a 74% fewer limitation and 30% less in the Treaty of Moscow. Both parties will also be limited to a combined total of 800 deployed ICBM launchers.
- There won't be any restriction regarding the testing, development or deployment of current or planned US missile defense programs.
- The duration of the New START is 10 years, extendable for another 5 years at a time. It includes a standard withdrawal clause like other control agreements.