

Russian President Vladimir Putin formally suspends INF treaty with Washington



Moscow, July 4 (RHC)-- Russian President Vladimir Putin has signed into law a bill to suspend the country's participation in the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) with the United States after Washington suspended its obligations under the landmark nuclear arms control agreement.

Putin on Wednesday signed the legislation which says the decision to resume the treaty is to be made by the Russian president, according to the law published on an official government website.

Moscow decided to suspend its participation in the INF on February 2nd, a day after U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced that Washington would suspend the treaty for 180 days and would fully withdraw from it later if Russia did not stop what he called "violations" of the treaty.

In retaliation, Putin signed a decree on March 4th aimed at suspending his country's participation in the INF over U.S. violations. The INF was signed toward the end of the Cold War, in 1987, by then U.S. President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

Under the treaty, both sides were banned from creating ground-launch nuclear missiles with ranges from 500 to 5,500 kilometers. The pact also banned the sides from deploying short and intermediate-range, land-based missiles in Europe.

Washington claims that Russia's new 9M729 missile is in violation of the treaty and should be dismantled. Russia rebutted the claim in January by unveiling the missile and its key specifications. Major General Mikhail Matveevsky, the Russian chief of missile and artillery troops, said the missile's maximum range was about 480 kilometers, well within what is allowed under the INF.

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