

Russia regrets U.S. suspension of cooperation within Open Skies Treaty



Moscow, August 15 (RHC)-- Russia has expressed its deep regrets that the United States has ceased to financially support the Open Skies Treaty, a 16-year-old agreement designed to build up confidence through opening the skies of both countries to mutual military survey flights, Russian state news agency RIA reports.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov made the comment on Tuesday, after U.S. President Donald Trump signed the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act into law, according to which Washington will not allocate any funds to implement the Open Skies Treaty until penalties are imposed on Russia for previous purported violations.

"Instead of addressing this issue within the framework of the Open Skies Consultative Commission, we learn from the new bill that the funding for implementation [of the treaty] would be suspended. Well, this is a choice of the United States. This is the path toward further intoxication of international relations by unilateral methods. We can only regret it," Ryabkov said.

The senior diplomat further said that Moscow was also concerned over the record-high US allocations for

military purposes under the new military budget and that the Kremlin would carefully examine the document.

In September last year, Russia criticized the U.S. for placing restrictions on Russian military flights over American territory, vowing to retaliate against any further restrictions by Washington. Earlier that month, The Wall Street Journal claimed that the U.S. restrictions on Russia had been in response to Moscow preventing US observation flights over its heavily militarized Baltic exclave of Kaliningrad.

The Treaty on Open Skies was struck on January 1, 2002 between the U.S., Russia, and more than thirty other countries. It was designed to enhance mutual understanding and confidence by giving all participants a direct role in gathering information about the military forces and activities of concern to them.

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