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MISSILE DEFENCE AND THE INTERMEDIATE NUCLEAR FORCES TREATY

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Executive Summary

The question of Russia's possible abrogation of the INF Treaty arose in response to a history of US policies which undermined a wide range of arms control treaties. The Treaty itself was originally seen by the Soviets as a desirable response to new classes of US missiles which outstripped the capacities of their Soviet counterparts, and were seen by the ageing Soviet leadership as directly threatening them. But in the event, under the Treaty, the Soviets eliminated more than twice as many missiles and delivery systems as the Americans.

Withdrawal is permitted by the Treaty if one of the parties regards its "supreme interests" as being threatened. However, the nature of the possible threat in this case is not clear. Former President Putin pointed to development of new classes of short and intermediate range missiles by a number of third countries outside the treaty, while a former Russian military chief has said the threat comes from US plans to station anti-ballistic missile systems close to Russia's borders.

In fact, all seven countries developing new classes of missiles could reach Russian territory with their intermediate range missiles, and some of them even with their shorter range missiles. But whether they are a sufficient threat which justifies withdrawing from the Treaty, and whether there may be other responses, remain open questions. This is even more so since Russia has indicated it would respond to possible future US missile threats on an asymmetrical basis. Indeed, the existing Russian arsenal would already be sufficient for the task of responding to such countries. Although some aspects of this might be limited by START I, these would be overcome if, as seems likely, START I is not extended beyond its current operational phase which ends in December 2009.

Politically, the stationing of US anti-ballistic missile systems near Russia's borders are viewed in Moscow as destabilizing and even provocative. But, in military terms, the number of US missiles involved would not seriously affect Russia's nuclear deterrence capability.

One reason for Russia withdrawing from the INF Treaty which might be attractive to military tacticians could be the option it would thus allow for increasing the range of a new short range cruise missile as a possible response to US ABM systems. But seen in a wider strategic sense, this would not be a sensible justification for withdrawing from the treaty.

The open-ended nature of the US BMD program, however, is a matter of legitimate concern. Moreover, continuing NATO expansion eastwards has taught Moscow the value of a strong response. Nevertheless, there are strong political and financial reasons against withdrawing from the treaty, and doing so could even risk a new arms race. It will also undermine the NPT and place Russia on the same footing as the previous US Administration in this regard. It is to be hoped that the new US administration and the Russian leadership will find a constructive approach to resolving the issues, thus preserving the INF Treaty and complementing it with a range of important new agreements.

Introduction

In recent years, the Russian leadership has on a number of occasions raised the prospect of the country's unilateral withdrawal from the Intermediate and Short-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, signed by the USSR and the USA in 1987, with Russia inheriting the USSR's treaty obligations.¹ This step would have had very serious military, strategic, financial, economic and political repercussions, all the more so as the INF Treaty is one of the few central nuclear disarmament agreements still in force after several years of the Bush Administration's destructive policies which put an end to the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, the 1994 Treaty between the USA and Russia on Strategic Arms Reduction (START-1), the 1997 START-3 framework treaty and agreement on delineation of strategic and tactical missile defense systems, left the 1996 CTBT and talks on the FMCT in deadlock, and made it impossible to complete work on a new SORT treaty (2002) or extend the validity of START-1 (after 2009).

1. History of the INF Treaty.

Historically, this treaty has its roots in the deployment in a number of European NATO member countries at the start of the 1980s of American intermediate-range Pershing-2 missiles with a range of up to 1,800 km, and ground-based nuclear-armed cruise missiles with a range of up to 2,500 km. The USA argued that this step was a response to the Soviet Union's deployment of RSD-10 (Western classification SS-20) ballistic missiles with MIRV warheads.

The American missiles could strike targets deep in Soviet territory: launched from their bases in West Germany, the Pershing-2 missiles could reach as far as the Moscow region, while the ground-based cruise missiles could reach as far as the Urals. Soviet missiles could not reach targets in the United States. Even more important was that the flight time of the Pershing-2 missiles to their targets was approximately three times shorter than that of intercontinental ballistic missiles launched from U.S. territory. The cruise missiles had a much longer flight time—several hours—but they were hard to detect because of their low trajectory and technical characteristics that reduced their visibility to radars.

Moscow therefore had every reason to seek an agreement that would prohibit these missiles. Washington had no desire for such an agreement but came under strong pressure from its NATO allies who feared an increase in nuclear tension in Europe.

Five years of difficult on-and-off negotiations finally led to the conclusion of the INF Treaty, which had no time limit and stipulated the complete worldwide destruction of two classes of Soviet and U.S. ballistic and ground-based cruise missiles.

The completely closed Soviet totalitarian system played a cruel joke on the Kremlin. In their efforts to whip up a campaign about national security threats, raise tension

¹ See for example: *Myasnikov V.* The Ministry of Defence withdraws from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty // *Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie (Independent Military Review)*. _31(489), 1 September 2006. p. 1; *Litovkin D.* An adequate «Iskander» // *Izvestia*. 21 February 2007. (<http://www.izvestia.ru/russia/article3101392/index.html>); *Safranchuk I.* A mess of military and diplomatic bearings // *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*. 26 February 2007. p. 3.

and get more money for their military programs at the same time, the Soviet generals went too far in frightening the old gentlemen of the Communist Party Politbureau with tales of the American missiles' short flight time (6–7 minutes it was said), that would not even give time to take shelter in underground or air-based command centers, let alone decide on a counterstrike. Furthermore, the parties had asymmetrical interest in an agreement, because the missile systems under discussion were a direct threat to the Soviet Union but not to the USA. Finally, because Moscow insisted on destruction of all of the U.S. missiles, it had to agree, after stubborn resistance, to destroy all Soviet arms of a comparable type, and because of the way Soviet military practice and the essentially uncontrolled defense industry worked, it had many more of these weapons.

The INF Treaty therefore resulted in the Soviet Union having to destroy two times more missiles than the USA (1836 and 859 respectively), including its very high-performing new OTR-23 Oka (SS-23 by NATO designation) theater missiles, which had a tested range slightly below the agreed limits (500–1000 km for intermediate-range missiles)². The designers of this missile, classified as a short-range missile, to this day have not forgiven Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and his foreign minister, Eduard Shevardnadze, for agreeing to this concession. Giving up the OTR-23 was the price to pay for obtaining the destruction of the U.S. Pershing-1 missiles, which could hit Kaliningrad Oblast from West Germany. The USA also gave up its Lance-2 ground-based tactical missiles and SRAM-2 air-to-surface missiles, which if launched from West Germany or from tactical strike aircraft could hit targets in the territory of the USSR's Warsaw Pact allies. Russia's military designers and engineers did get their own back for the OTR-23 in the end, and developed a new dual-purpose theater missile that entered service in 2007, and was for some reason given the Persian-Arabic-Turkish name of Iskander³.

2. Motives for Withdrawal from the Treaty

The treaty was implemented in full within the deadlines and remains in force. But now, 20 years later, the totalitarian communist Soviet Union's successor, democratic capitalist Russia, has declared that it might withdraw. This is possible under the terms of Article XV.2 with six months notification if one of the parties decides that "extraordinary events related to the subject matter of this Treaty have jeopardized its supreme interests". Let us now take a closer look at the motives for Russia's possible withdrawal from the treaty and the likely consequences of such a step.

For a start, the nature of the threats to Russia's 'supreme interests' is not entirely clear. In his speech in Munich in February 2007, then President Putin noted that other countries (actually these are Iran, Pakistan, India, China, North and South Korea) are developing intermediate-range missiles, while Russia and the USA are prohibited from having these types of weapons⁴. Former Defense Minister and then Russian First Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov has made the same point on a number of

² On the INF Treaty see: *Dean, J.* "The INF negotiations", *SIPRI Yearbook* 1988: World Armaments and Disarmament. Oxford, 1998.

³ *Kotenok Y.* "Rossia ustroit iz PRO resheto". <http://www.utro.ru/articles/2007/06/04/652965.shtml>.

⁴ Speech and Discussion at the Munich Conference on Politics and Security Issues, February 10 2007, Munich.
http://www.kremlin.ru/appears/2007/02/10/1737_type63374type63376type63377type63381type82634_118097.shtml.

occasions. A little later, the then Russian Armed Forces Chief of General Staff General Yury Baluyevsky, cited U.S. plans to deploy components of a missile defense system in Poland and the Czech Republic as motivation for Russia's possible withdrawal from the INF Treaty⁵.

Without going into their substance for now, we would note that these very different and unrelated motives do not make clear the real reasons for taking as serious a step as denouncing one of the few remaining nuclear arms control treaties. It seems very strange that different ministries, agencies and officials in the 'executive vertical' power system the Russian authorities have built diverge in their interpretation of a subject as important as 'extraordinary events' that could jeopardize Russia's 'supreme interests', the existence of said 'extraordinary events' being the only grounds that can justify withdrawal from the INF Treaty in accordance with Article XV.2.

3. Missile Threat from Third Countries

Development of intermediate- and short-range missiles by third countries is often not an aim in itself but a natural step on the way to developing missile technology needed to build ICBMs and space launchers. It is entirely possible, however, that some countries, based on their military objectives or technical and economic possibilities, could renounce development of long-range missiles. Around 40 countries currently have ballistic missiles of various types. Five countries have intercontinental ICBMs and/or SLBMs (USA, Russia, Britain, France, and China), and seven have intermediate-range missiles (1,000–5,500 km)—China, India, Israel, Iran, North Korea, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia. The others have theater missiles with ranges up to 1,000 km. Apart from the seven countries already mentioned, they include Egypt, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Turkey, and South Korea. This group also used to include Brazil, Argentina, South Africa and Iraq⁶. In terms of geography, all seven of the countries with intermediate-range missiles are within reach of Russian territory (including China, India, Israel and Pakistan with their nuclear-armed missiles), and some of them (China, North Korea, Turkey) could theoretically reach Russia's outer areas with short-range missiles.

This could be seen as a potential threat given that not all of the countries named above are Russia's allies or reliable partners, and some of them have an internal political situation that makes them quite unstable and unpredictable. The practice of military deterrence (including nuclear) is applied to these countries by creating a credible threat of a devastating retaliation (second or response strike) against them if they ever launched a missile or nuclear-missile attack. Doubts that this threat would be sufficient to deter regimes that would not be stopped even by the prospect of huge human and material losses, call for further defense in the form of anti-missile and anti-air defense systems and/or the capability to carry out a preemptive or preventive disarming strike using nuclear or precision-guided conventional weapons.

If this situation were examined in complete separation from all past agreements and obligations, new intermediate-range and theater missiles based on the latest technology would probably look like an attractive option as part of the response to

⁵ See: *Litovkin D. Op. Cit.; Safranchuk I. Op. cit.*

⁶ See: *Mizin V. "Missiles and Missile Technology"*, in *Nuclear Weapons after the Cold War*, Edited by A. Arbatov and V. Dvorkin; Carnegie Moscow Center. M.: ROSSPEN, 2006. — pp. 274—277.

this threat. But this issue has a long history and complex military-strategic, economic and political aspects, and in this respect a number of questions can be raised. What other military means could Russia use to ensure it is able to carry out a retaliatory or preemptive strike against countries that possess intermediate- and short-range missiles? Are the new Russian intermediate- and short-range missiles optimum means, taking the economic situation into account? Would the program to develop such means justify the withdrawal from the INF Treaty in light of the possible military and political consequences this step could have?

If, as Russia's political leadership says, Russia does not intend to compete 'missile for missile' with the USA at the strategic level, but will if necessary respond with asymmetrical measures, the idea of competing against third countries in intermediate- and short-range missiles seems even stranger. If the threat they pose is seen as serious, Russia has the possibility of responding (more successfully than with the regard to the USA) with asymmetrical means that are cheaper and no less effective. Such means include: ICBMs, which can fly a shortened trajectory to strike targets at intermediate range; submarine launched ballistic missiles; medium and heavy bombers with nuclear and conventional bombs and cruise missiles (in particular the Tu-160 with the precision-guided air-to-surface X-101 dual purpose cruise missile). Tactical attack aircraft with nuclear bombs could be used against some countries closer in proximity, and nuclear and conventionally-armed missiles launched from ships and submarines could be used against coastal countries.

In total, Russia's Strategic Nuclear Forces currently have around 700 delivery systems and 3,000 warheads in service, of which many dozens and hundreds could be directed at targets in Eurasia. The latest versions of Russia's nuclear strategy envisage the possibility of using the Strategic Nuclear Forces to carry out selective nuclear strikes that allegedly could be directed not only against the USA but also against other countries, in particular those with intermediate- and short-range missiles. An example of this is an operation to "de-escalate aggression... threatening to or actually carrying out strikes of varying scale using conventional and/or nuclear weapons". Another potential mission worthy of attention is that of "selective (dosed) military use of individual components of the strategic deterrent forces"⁷.

Data on non-strategic nuclear weapons (medium-range and theater weapons) is confidential, but unofficial estimates suggest that Russia has about 2,000–3,000 deployed operational and tactical nuclear warheads⁸, of which a large portion are able to strike targets in regions close to Russia's borders.

If need be, instead of a new intermediate-range missile program, it would be a lot cheaper to deploy several additional Topol-M ICBM regiments or develop a precision-guided conventional warhead for existing ballistic and cruise missiles not prohibited by the INF Treaty. Deployment of the Topol-M with a single warhead or MIRV nuclear (or conventional) warheads is not in any way restricted by the 2002 Moscow treaty on strategic offensive reductions, and the ceilings it sets on nuclear warheads (1,700–2,200) leaves a comfortable margin for deploying this system.

⁷Aktualniye zadachi razvitiya Vooruzhennykh Sil Rossiiskoy Federatsii. Russian Federation Ministry of Defense. M., 2003. — P. 42.

⁸ Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons: Problems of the Control and the Reductions. The Center for Arms Control, Energy and Environmental Studies of Moscow Inst. of Physics and Technology. Dolgoprudny, 2004.

4. Response to Missile Defense

The USA currently plans to deploy by 2012–2013 missile defense radar stations in the Czech Republic and ten interceptor missiles in Poland⁹. There is no doubt that these plans are clearly destabilizing and even provocative with regards to Russia, above all in political terms. The people behind these plans in Poland and Washington perhaps were envisaging just such an effect. What is more, like the entire U.S. strategic missile defense program at the moment, there are doubts that this project would actually be militarily and technically effective against the officially declared threat—Iranian missiles—but it could have big military and political costs for relations with Russia and China. Finally, this plan, which Washington did not bother trying to coordinate in timely fashion with Moscow, violates the spirit of the Russian–U.S. Declaration on the New Strategic Relationship of 2002, which made direct provision for cooperation between the two countries on developing these kinds of weapons¹⁰.

Whether in terms of the numbers of planned interceptor missiles or the trajectory, speed and other technical characteristics, this system has very little effect on Russia's nuclear deterrent capability. All of Russia's ICBM bases are located a long way farther northeast than the proposed base in Poland (this is all the more true of the Northern Fleet's sea-based missiles), and their trajectories are programmed following northern azimuths across the Arctic circle. The American ground-based interceptor (GBI) missiles it plans to deploy cannot intercept ICBMs during the active (boost) phase of the trajectory. Purely theoretically, in rare cases and with the best possible combination of circumstances, they would be able to 'catch up' with ICBMs launched from Russia's most western or southern bases, and then only if the ICBMs in question were targeted at the USA's eastern coast (Boston, New York, Washington). But the interceptor missiles have never been tested in such conditions, and Russia deploys only a small number of its strategic nuclear forces at these bases¹¹.

If Russia does withdraw from the 1987 INF Treaty and develop new intermediate-range missiles, they could theoretically be intercepted by American missile defenses in Europe, but this would depend on the correlation between their numbers and technical characteristics. As things stand now, Russia does not have missiles which would be the subject of interception by the missile defense systems due to appear in Poland and the Czech Republic in four years time. It is entirely possible that since it does not have intermediate-range missiles, Russia will give part of its strategic nuclear forces the mission of striking targets in Europe. Europe is home to two nuclear powers—France and Britain—whose nuclear deterrent capability is largely directed against Russia. There are also 400–500 U.S. tactical nuclear air bombs (another estimate is 150–200, but the number is kept secret), to be delivered by NATO attack aircraft, kept in storage facilities in six different countries. Missile defenses in Europe could theoretically directly intercept these Russian ICBMs, but the capability of such a defense system is paltry nonetheless compared to Russia's

⁹ See: Interview with Henry Obering, Director of the U.S. Missile Defense Agency: [RLS i protivorakety SSha stanut na dezhurstvo do 2013](#), *Nezavisimaya gazeta*. 20 April 2007.

¹⁰ See: [Nuclear Weapons after the Cold War](#), Edited by A. Arbatov and V. Dvorkin; Carnegie Moscow Center. M.: ROSSPEN, 2006. — P.528.

¹¹ See: Postol T. A., Lewes G. N. [The Proposed US Missile Defense in Europe: Technological Issues Relevant to Policy](#). Washington, 2007.

existing nuclear forces. Furthermore, it is absolutely unrealistic that NATO would attack Russia without U.S. participation, and against the USA Russia can rely on its powerful nuclear deterrent based on the strategic nuclear forces.

One of the possible responses to missile defense in Europe being discussed at the official level is the deployment of a division of new OTR Iskander missiles in the Kaliningrad Special Military District and two or three in the North Caucasus Military District. Unlike the Iskander-E export version, a ballistic missile with a range of 280 km, Russia plans to bring into service the Iskander-M cruise missile version. This missile system, tested in May 2007 at a range of 500 km, can have its range increased to up to 1,000 km at little cost, but its deployment would require Russia to withdraw from the INF Treaty. One Russian military commander, Col-General Vladimir Zaritsky, said, “If a political decision is made to withdraw from this treaty, we will enhance the system’s military characteristics, including its flight range”¹². These missiles would then be able to strike missile defense targets in Poland, the Czech Republic, and perhaps Georgia, and not just with nuclear warheads but also probably with the particularly attractive option of conventional precision-guided warheads¹³. Europe’s anti-missile and air defenses are not able to intercept cruise missiles.

All of this seems to make military sense at first glance. But if the issue is examined not in the context of operational justifications for a new high-technology weapon system, but within a logical strategic framework of considerations, the sense of such a response to missile defense plans is quite dubious.

Certainly, it would make sense to carry out a strike against missile defense sites in Europe to stop them from intercepting Russian ICBMs launched against the USA and its allies in a retaliatory (second) strike or first strike (which Russia’s present military doctrine envisions as well). These ICBMs are armed with nuclear warheads. In other words, this is a nuclear war scenario. In particular, in case of retaliatory action, Russia’s ICBMs would be launched after a strike by U.S. (NATO) nuclear forces against Russian territory. The question is: what is the sense in this hypothetical situation of trying to destroy missile defense installations using precision-guided conventional weapons? It would be a lot simpler, cheaper, and more reliable to do so using the strategic nuclear forces or existing theater nuclear weapons mentioned above. In this case, it looks as though it is not the weapons system being proposed to carry out particular military missions, but the contrary—missions are being thought up in order to provide the justification for developing a particular weapons system in which the defense industry and defense ministry have powerful interests, and also possibly to provide the arguments for withdrawing from the INF Treaty for other reasons, including purely political motives.

For these reasons, withdrawal from the INF Treaty, which would allow Russia to develop intermediate-range missiles, does not fit very well with the potential threat of American missile defense in Europe.

But even if the planned missile defense system would have only a negligible effect on Russia’s nuclear deterrent forces, it cannot be ignored. After all, to use the USA’s own terminology, the missile defense program is ‘open-ended’. In other words, the

¹² Myasnikov V. “Polny nazad”. *Nezavisimoye voyennoye obozreniye*. 2007. — Nov. 23

¹³ Kotenok Y. *Op. cit.*

USA and its allies give no guarantees that they will stop at one base with 10 GBI interceptor missiles. Who can guarantee that there will not soon be 100 or 1,000 of them, deployed at other bases closer to the expected trajectories of Russian ICBMs and SLBMs, and that they will not be enhanced with systems to intercept missiles during the boost phase of the trajectory and developed by adding sea, air and space-based layers, including using means based on new physical principles (lasers and others)?

Of course, the timeframe here would be not four years but decades to come, but military-technical response measures also require time, and in the political respect it is better to voice one's firm and clear opposition to such programs right from the start. In this sense, Moscow has learned about the importance of timely and clear responses from NATO's eastward expansion, which began in 1997 as a one-off measure to bring in three new member states in Central Europe, but went on to cover twelve countries, with discussions underway on potential NATO membership for Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan.

But over this timeframe, the nature of the threat and how to respond to it are much broader issues. If it becomes necessary to threaten these BMD facilities, Topol-M ICBMs can be targeted against them, and Russia's Strategic Missile Forces command has made an official statement to this effect. Even flight tests of an ICBM at intermediate range would not constitute a formal violation of the INF Treaty's provisions, because the treaty defines a missile's range as "the maximum range to which it has been tested" (Article VII.4). In the future, if plans to build up the American missile defense system do go ahead, Russia could respond with a broad range of asymmetrical countermeasures, starting with increasing its strategic nuclear forces' capability to penetrate missile defense systems and ending with direct strikes systems against potential BMD ground-, air-, sea- and space-based layers.

5. Missile Defense or Intermediate-Range Missiles?

Another unofficial argument against a missile defense system in Europe is that American interceptor missiles with an effective radius of up to 4,000 km could also be used as offensive intermediate-range missiles, all the more so as the plan is to base them in silos. In this respect, Article VII.3 of the INF Treaty states clearly that if a ballistic missile "is of a type developed and tested solely to intercept and counter objects not located on the surface of the earth, it shall not be considered to be a missile to which the limitations of this Treaty apply". In other words, the GBI system does not violate the INF Treaty. As for being launched from silos, modern strategic interceptor missiles (including those of Moscow A-135 BMD in Russia) are silo-based, while already back in the 1970s and 1980s, offensive intermediate-range missiles were deployed on ground-based mobile launchers, and, if the treaty is denounced, would probably continue to be deployed in this way.

6. Military and Political Consequences of Potential Withdrawal from the INF Treaty

One consideration potentially motivating Russia's withdrawal from the INF Treaty and development of intermediate-range missiles could be a desire to symbolically 'punish' in a military-political sense the European countries that have agreed to have American missile defense installations on their soil or that could do so in the future.

But there is no doubt that the possible effect of such a step would be outweighed by a whole series of negative consequences for Russia's security and for international stability. Five main conclusions support this affirmation.

One. Whatever the Polish and Czech authorities' desire to upset Russia and earn points with the USA, the main initiator of the missile defense project in general and its deployment in Europe in particular is across the ocean—beyond the reach of any intermediate-range missiles Russia could build after withdrawing from the INF Treaty. These missiles would be able to reach targets in Europe and Asia. Punishing European countries for American policy, including Germany, France, Italy and others, with whom Russia has good relations and who are not joining the missile defense system, would be too 'asymmetrical' a response.

If Russia really wants to take this road, a far worthier response would be to withdraw from the 2002 Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions (SORT). This would be more logical in political and military terms. Despite an original agreement, the USA did not take the step towards reaching agreement on the treaty's counting rules, verification measures, and destruction procedures. The treaty will lose much of its strategic sense once the START-1 treaty, which provides for at least indirect monitoring of strategic nuclear reductions, expires in December 2009. And plans to build a missile defense system in Europe, as was already noted, are not in keeping with the spirit of the Joint Declaration signed simultaneously with the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty in 2002.

Two. Developing, testing, producing and deploying a new intermediate-range missile system would require a lot of money. In the case of the Iskander-M, the development costs have already been taken care of for the most part, it seems. But increasing the range, carrying out additional tests, producing the missile and deploying it in the armed forces, carrying out training and building the infrastructure for it will all be quite costly. Some defense industry firms and Defense Ministry agencies no doubt stand to benefit from this, but as Lomonosov stated in his formula, if there is an increase in one place, there is a decrease in another. In other words, where will the money to finance an intermediate-range missile program come from? Will the money come from the program to develop the strategic nuclear forces (production of Topol-M ICBMs at the slow pace of 6–7 missiles a year, construction of the Yury Dolgoruky 955-class submarines, already more than ten years behind schedule, and development of the Bulava-30 SLBM)? Or will it come from the funding of the general forces' technical modernization, for raising officers' living standards and making the transition to a professional army, and for housing construction or improving combat preparedness?

All of these expenditure items are not less but much more important. If it is possible to find additional funds for financing an intermediate-range missile program, would it not make more sense to spend them on, say, increasing production of the Topol-M from 6–7 a year to at least 10–20 a year? This would make all the more sense as the Topol-M can carry out all the functions of an intermediate-range missile, and at the same time is the best means of strengthening the strategic deterrent with regard to the USA and any other nuclear or missile power.

Three. Withdrawal from the INF Treaty and development of intermediate and short-range missiles would imply that Russia takes the military threat from the USA and

NATO very seriously and suspects them of having evil designs. But within the framework of this very logic, if Russia were indeed to deploy new intermediate-range missiles, the other side would most likely follow with measures in response. This could include revival of the Pershing-2 and ground-based cruise missile programs or development of new improved U.S. intermediate-range missiles and their deployment in Europe, which would probably make the new NATO members overjoyed.

American deployment of intermediate-range missiles was seen as a huge threat in the Soviet Union at the start of the 1980s, and for Russia today the consequences would be worse still. Today, the two sides have a different balance of nuclear and conventional forces, a different situation with military alliances, and different geo-strategic situations. The U.S. Pershing-2 missiles deployed back then were barely able to reach Moscow Oblast, but if deployed in the future in the new NATO member states (Poland, the Baltic States), similar missiles with a shortened flight time would cover the whole of Russia's territory to the Urals and even far beyond. This really would jeopardize Russia's nuclear deterrent capability (unlike the missile defense installations in Poland and the Czech Republic), forcing Russia to completely restructure its nuclear forces and command and warning systems at enormous cost.

Four. Withdrawal from the INF Treaty would once again unite NATO on an anti-Russian basis, including on issues such as expanding the alliance to new members in the post-Soviet area, increasing military spending, and coordinating the development of offensive and defensive weapons, including perhaps expanding the missile defense system to NATO's entire European territory.

Five. Washington's policy of dismantling the nuclear disarmament treaties over the last few years has earned it fierce criticism from most UN members, especially the parties to the NPT. If Russia withdrew from the INF Treaty it would inevitably become the scapegoat taking all the flack, and the USA would end up being pardoned for its sins. Furthermore, this step would only further undermine the NPT, because it would be seen as a direct violation of the nuclear weapons states' nuclear disarmament obligations stipulated in Article VI of the treaty. Further proliferation of nuclear weapons would undermine Russia's national security because it is located a lot closer to the unstable regions than is the USA and its European allies.

It was probably for some of the above reasons that the Pentagon's reaction to Russia's suggestions that it could withdraw from the INF Treaty was outwardly indifferent. But one can imagine that on the inside, the former American government would welcome such a step very much. One can only hope that next U.S. administration and the Russian leadership will succeed in finding comprehensive and constructive solutions to the above issues and preserve the INF Treaty, enhancing it with a series of important new agreements.