
'Domino effect': Open Skies Treaty risks falling apart completely after US departure, top Russian diplomat warns

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The Open Skies Treaty will collapse if NATO member states cave in to US pressure and ditch the agreement, a senior Russian diplomat has warned. There's little hope that the US will reverse its own decision to leave, he added.

The US withdrawal could trigger a "*domino effect*," collapsing one of the key confidence building post-Cold War military protocols entirely, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov said.

Naturally, we don't want someone among the US allies to give in to their pressure and follow their lead, but such a risk exists.

Signed in 1992, the Open Skies Treaty allows signatories to conduct a limited number of short-notice unarmed reconnaissance flights over each other's territory. US President Donald Trump announced in May that the country will leave the agreement unless Moscow agrees to US proposals to modify the existing arrangements. He also accused Russia of violating the deal, which is something Moscow denies.

The parties are due to discuss the issue during a video conference call on Monday. Ryabkov, however, remains skeptical that the US has any will to reverse their push for abandoning the treaty.

"Washington has made the decision," the diplomat noted. "Suggestions that Russia can supposedly 'reverse' this decision are a ruse, a repetition of previous disgraceful attempts to pin the responsibility for one's own actions in violation of the treaty on someone else."

Hailing the treaty as "*one of the pillars of European security*," Ryabkov said that Russia is currently assessing the

options of its further participation in the agreement after the withdrawal of the US.

Several of the US' NATO allies, including France and Italy, condemned Trump's move to leave the agreement, praising the treaty as *"a crucial element of the confidence-building framework"* in Europe and across the Atlantic.

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Last year, the US left the landmark 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty with Russia, which banned land-based missiles with a range of up to 5,500 km (3,420 miles) in each country. The move was heavily criticized by Russia and the EU. Trump said that a similar pact in the future should include China, but Beijing refused to participate in negotiations on the matter.
