

Russia OKs Use of Nukes in Response to Non-Nuclear Attacks

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Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a new government policy for nuclear deterrence on Tuesday that allows the use of nuclear weapons in response to conventional arms attacks.

Russia says its nuclear weapons are developed in order to deter potential attacks and can be used to combat a strike targeting the nation's critical government and military infrastructure, according to government policy.

The [decree](#) Putin signed on Tuesday replaces a 10-year-old document that expired this year. It outlines the types of threats that could trigger Russia's use of atomic weapons —including an attack with conventional, non-nuclear weapons that “threatens the existence” of the country.

The new policy says that if the government obtains “reliable information” about the launch of ballistic missiles targeting Russia or its allies, a nuclear response is permissible.

In addition, the document specifies that atomic weapons can be used under the condition of “enemy impact on critically important government or military facilities of the Russian Federation, the incapacitation of which could result in the failure of retaliatory action of nuclear forces.”

The New START agreement – a nuclear arms reduction treaty between the U.S. and Russia – was signed by former Presidents Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev in 2010. It is the last remaining U.S.-Russia arms control deal after the Trump administration [withdrew](#) from the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces treaty last week.

The Obama-era treaty, which limits each country to no more than 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads and 700 deployed missiles and bombers, is set to expire next February.

The Trump administration reportedly plans to resume [arms-control talks](#) with Russia, including on the New START treaty, but the U.S. wants China to be involved in any new pact. Moscow, however, has said Beijing taking part in a nuclear treaty with Washington is not feasible, according to an Associated Press report.

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Featured image: In this photo taken from undated footage, an intercontinental ballistic missile lifts off from a truck-mounted launcher somewhere in Russia. (Russian Defense Ministry Press Service)

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