

The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty Preservation Act of 2017

Introduced: February 16, 2017

Sponsors:

- Senate version: Senators Tom Cotton (R-Arkansas), Ron Johnson (R-Wisconsin) and Marco Rubio (R-Florida)
- House version: Congressmen Ted Poe (R-Texas) and Mike Rogers (R-Alabama)

Summary of the Proposed Legislation

In response to [Russia's alleged deployment](#) of a ground-launched cruise missile in violation of the [Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces \(INF\) Treaty](#), Republican lawmakers introduced the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty Preservation Act of 2017 in the House ([House Resolution 1182](#)) and Senate ([Senate Resolution 430](#)). The proposed legislation includes a number of provisions intended to pressure Russia into compliance with the INF treaty, including:

- Establishing a program of record for a dual-capable road-mobile ground launched cruise missile system within INF ranges, with the goal of testing the system within one year
- Seeking additional missile defense assets in the European theater
- Facilitating the acquisition and transfer of missile systems within INF ranges to allied countries
- Limiting funds for the extension of the [New Strategic Armament Reduction Treaty](#) (New START) beyond its expiration in 2021
- Limiting funds for the [Open Skies Treaty](#)
- Conducting a policy review to determine whether Russia's RS-26 ballistic missile is countable under New START and in violation of the INF Treaty.

Problems

Although the proposed legislation is called the INF Treaty Preservation Act, it is more likely to undermine the INF treaty than preserve it.

- Developing and potentially testing a cruise missile within INF Treaty ranges would place the United States out of compliance with the agreement. This response would more likely jump-start an arms race than bring Russia into compliance.
- The NATO ballistic missile defense system currently being implemented in Europe (the European Phased Adaptive Approach or EPAA) has already caused tensions between NATO and Russia, as well as within the alliance. Seeking additional missile defense assets in the European theater is likely to exacerbate the problem without increasing American or allied security.
- Limiting funds for the extension of the New START treaty beyond 2021 would remove caps on Russia's strategic launchers and deployed nuclear warheads, as well as important transparency measures that significantly improve our understanding of Russia's nuclear arsenal.
- Limiting funds for the Open Skies Treaty would further reduce trust and transparency between the two countries, and negatively impact American intelligence capabilities.
- The bill reduces critical nuclear non-proliferation activities by \$500 million dollars to offset the costs of its proposed programs.

- While not a strict violation of the INF treaty, facilitating the acquisition and transfer of missile systems within INF ranges to allies would violate the spirit of the agreement, and could incentivize Russia to continue its violations. U.S. allies may also be reluctant to acquire such missile systems.
- Boosting cruise missile defenses, as requested by the bill, would be challenging and costly, and the U.S. does not yet have a viable system that could defend against cruise missiles like Russia's SSC-8, the missile alleged to be in violation of the INF Treaty.