

Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe

The 1992 Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) [limited](#) key armaments from the Atlantic Ocean to the Ural Mountains between NATO and the Warsaw Treaty Organization. These constraints were intended to impede each bloc's ability to launch surprise attacks or large-scale offensives. Discussions [began](#) in the 1970s between the two organizations as the Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions talks, which took place alongside the SALT meetings. These negotiations stopped and started and continued in the late 1980s within the CFE format until the convention was signed in 1990 and ratified in 1992. The Warsaw Pact by this time had disintegrated and its treaty obligations were consequently passed to the Soviet Union and Pact's successor states. Material ceilings [ensured](#) that each Group of States Parties had no more than:

- 20,000 tanks
- 20,000 artillery pieces
- 36,000 armored combat vehicles
- 6,800 combat aircraft
- 2,000 attack helicopters

Further limitations also regulated each bloc's deployed and active equipment and established regional armament ceilings. Verification measures included on-site inspections, challenge inspections, and on-site monitoring of weapons destruction. Satellites monitored forces within the applicable treaty range. The agreement also established a joint consultative group that resolved treaty ambiguities, interpretation issues, technical questions and verification disputes.

The treaty also had follow-up agreements that imposed further reductions. The 1992 "Concluding Act of the Negotiation on Personnel Strength of Conventional Armed Forces in Europe" mutually [constrained](#) manpower and limited U.S. forces to 250,000 troops in the Treaty area. The 1996 "Flank Agreement" [removed](#) one Ukrainian and several Russian regional districts from the flank zone, thus diminishing the effective arms ceilings in these areas. The 1998 "Agreement on Adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe" [attempted](#) to revise the original CFE treaty to take into account an emerging security environment where the Warsaw Pact no longer existed and Germany was no longer divided. Russia demanded and received flexibility to position far more equipment in the Caucasus region than the treaty initially allowed and various other concessions but in return had to agree to NATO demands that it end its illegal military presence in Moldova and Georgia. NATO members declared they would not ratify the adapted treaty until Russia followed through on this commitment, which never happened.

The CFE treaty came to an end after Russian withdrawal in 2007. The Kremlin argued that it took all the necessary measures to withdraw its forces from Eastern European countries and that allied hesitancy to ratify the Adaptation Treaty was unfounded. Moscow also took issue with the fact that the Baltic states, now NATO allies, were covered neither by the original agreement after leaving the Soviet Union, nor the adapted version. Russia also raised the false argument that NATO's enlargement could someday put allied equipment holdings above agreed-upon limits; however, such limits never applied to NATO but to the treaty's Western Group, which never included the newer NATO members. Russia also believed the treaty's inspection regime to be overly intrusive and sought to foil western inspections when possible until its withdrawal put an end to them.

