

Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START)

After almost 10 years of difficult negotiations, the United States and the Soviet Union signed the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) in Washington, D.C., on July 31, 1991. The START treaty required the United States and the Soviet Union to substantially reduce the number of strategic ballistic missiles and heavy bombers and their attributed nuclear warheads. The breakup of the Soviet Union delayed START's entry into force nearly three-and-a-half years until Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine, which had inherited strategic nuclear weapons from the Soviet Union, ratified START and joined the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as non-nuclear states.

The treaty is over 900 pages and is very complex. In addition to the elimination of missiles, their launchers and bombers, START establishes prohibitions on locations, training, testing and modernization. It also includes an intrusive verification regime consisting of a detailed data exchange, extensive notifications, 12 types of on-site inspections, and continuous monitoring activities designed to help verify that signatories are complying with their treaty obligations.

On Dec. 5, 2001, both the United States and the Russian Federation reported their accomplishments of the mandated reductions. The reductions were accomplished in three phases within the seven years prescribed by the treaty. Each side has reduced to less than 1,600 deployed ballistic missiles and heavy bombers, 6,000 warheads on those missiles and bombers, and no more than 4,900 warheads on the ballistic missiles. Launchers associated with those missiles were also eliminated. Belarus and Kazakhstan now have no strategic nuclear arms, and Ukraine is in the process of actively eliminating their remaining missiles and launchers. The strategic arsenals of the United States and former Soviet Union have been reduced by 30-40 percent.

Implementation Progress

On May 29, 1990, President George Bush directed the On-Site Inspection Agency (OSIA), now consolidated into the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), to plan and prepare for on-site inspections under several new arms control treaties, including START. While the treaty was being ratified, OSIA recruited, trained and certified 12 10-person START inspection teams. As part of their training, these teams conducted more than 170 mock inspections to prepare U.S. facilities for START inspections. The OSIA teams also conducted 16 ICBM, SLBM and heavy bomber exhibitions in the Soviet Union and served as escorts for four Soviet exhibitions in the United States from September 1991 to March 1992.

On May 29, 1990, President George Bush directed the On-Site Inspection Agency (OSIA), now consolidated into the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), to plan and prepare for on-site inspections under several new arms control treaties, including START. While the treaty was being ratified, OSIA recruited, trained and certified 12 10-person START inspection teams. As part of their training, these teams conducted more than 170 mock inspections to prepare U.S.

facilities for START inspections. The OSIA teams also conducted 16 ICBM, SLBM and heavy bomber exhibitions in the Soviet Union and served as escorts for four Soviet exhibitions in the United States from September 1991 to March 1992.

The treaty entered into force Dec. 5, 1994, following the exchange of instruments of ratification in Vienna, Austria. At that time, the United States and the four former Soviet republics updated their data declarations on treaty-limited items to account for the strategic missiles and bombers they had already deactivated. During the subsequent baseline data inspections, the parties confirmed the accuracy of the numbers and types of items at 72 former Soviet and 35 U.S. facilities from March through June 1995. Upon completion of the update, OSIA had conducted 116 inspections including six other inspection-related missions in Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine. Escorts were also provided for 62 inspections including two other inspection-related missions in the United States. Since that time, the inspection teams of the former Soviet Union have conducted an average of 25 annual inspections of U.S. sites while the U.S. has conducted an average of 35 annual inspections of former Soviet sites.

In January 1995, the United States began continuous portal monitoring activities at missile assembly plants in Votkinsk, Russia, and Pavlograd, Ukraine. The existing U.S. portal monitoring operations which had been monitoring the Votkinsk plant under the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty since 1988, assumed START-only monitoring responsibilities at that plant after the INF inspection regime ended on June 1, 2001. However, the U.S. monitoring activities at Pavlograd were short-lived as the United States and Ukraine agreed to cease such activities on May 31, 1995. Instead, periodic suspect site inspections are now used to confirm that SS-24 missile production has not resumed. The former Soviet states did not exercise their right to conduct continuous portal monitoring at the Thiokol Corporation facility in Promontory, Utah.

Agency Role

Each year, DTRA deploys inspection and monitoring teams to selected sites for verification of compliance with the START Treaty provisions. Each inspection team will usually consist of 10 members: a team chief, a deputy team chief, two linguists, a weapons specialist, and additional experts. Portal Monitoring activities at Votkinsk are conducted 24 hours a day by DTRA and contract support personnel operate and maintain portal monitoring equipment, and provide interpreter/translator services and logistics support. The treaty contains explicit procedures for the conduct of these inspection and monitoring activities, as well as a complicated notification process for both sides.

DTRA also provides escort teams for reciprocal visits to U.S. START-related facilities by FSU inspectors. The purpose of the escort team is to ensure the FSU inspectors are allowed to exercise all treaty rights while inspecting U.S. sites for verification of compliance.

Defense Threat Reduction Agency

DTRA safeguards America and its allies from weapons of mass destruction (chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and high yield explosives) by providing capabilities to reduce, eliminate, and counter the threat, and mitigate its effects. This Department of Defense combat support agency is located at Fort Belvoir, Va., and operates field offices worldwide.

January 2008