

Russia and US end collaboration on nuclear disarmament

Clara Weiss
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Russia and the United States ended their collaboration in the disposal of nuclear waste in mid-December, according to a report in the *Boston Globe* on Monday. After the US, Russia is the second largest nuclear power in the world. Together Washington and Moscow own 90 percent of global nuclear weapons.

Within the framework of nuclear disarmament treaties, which came into force in the early 1990s, the US and Russia had agreed that American specialists would assist with the securing and destruction of nuclear weapons and materials so that they were not sold or passed on to terrorists.

According to the *Globe* report, the US has spent \$2 billion to date on the so-called cooperative threat reduction programme, and had planned a further \$100 million for this year. “Since the cooperative agreement began, US experts have helped destroy hundreds of weapons and nuclear-powered submarines, pay workers’ salaries, install security measures at myriad facilities containing weapons material across Russia and the former Soviet Union, and conduct training programmes for their personnel,” the newspaper wrote.

At a three-day meeting in Moscow in mid-December, the Russians declared that they rejected all further cooperation with the US in the securing and destruction of nuclear weapons. Prior to the *Globe* report, there had been no official statement about this ending of cooperation.

The newspaper reported that several dozen leading figures had participated on both sides, including officials from the US Energy Department, the Pentagon and the State Department, as well as several Russian military experts and government representatives.

From 1 January, the expansion of security equipment was halted at some of Russia’s seven closed nuclear sites, where large quantities of highly enriched uranium

and plutonium are located. The joint securing of 18 civilian nuclear depots, as well as two sites that transform highly enriched uranium into a harmless substance, has been stopped. The construction of hi-tech surveillance systems at 13 nuclear depots and the installation of radiation detectors at Russian ports, airports and border crossings are also at risk.

The ending of cooperation did not come as a surprise. In November, the chairman of the Russian federal agency for nuclear energy, Sergei Kiriyenko, told US government representatives that Russia was not planning any new joint contracts in 2015 for nuclear disarmament.

US government officials expressed their disappointment to the *Boston Globe* about the ending of cooperation. In reality, the Russian move was predictable and effectively provoked by last year’s aggressive policies on the part of the US and European Union (EU).

The ending of cooperation is above all the result of the provocative actions of US and German imperialism in Ukraine. Washington and Berlin supported a putsch last February that brought a regime to power that not only intends to join NATO, but also has raised the prospect of Ukraine’s nuclear rearmament.

Until the Budapest Agreement of 1994, the world’s third largest nuclear stockpile was in Ukraine. In the Budapest memorandum, the Ukraine government promised to relinquish all nuclear weapons. In exchange, the US, Russia, Britain, France, China and Germany guaranteed the borders of Ukraine at the time.

The announcement of the ending of cooperation in nuclear disarmament reflects extreme military tensions. In the face of a civil war in Ukraine and NATO’s rearming against Russia, the Kremlin is signalling that it no longer trusts American specialists with the

checking and destruction of nuclear weapons.

The nuclear disarmament New START treaty, which came into force at the beginning of 2011, will still apply. According to the Stockholm-based peace research institute SIPRI, however, the US and Russia disarmed much more slowly between 2013 and 2014 than they had done between 2012 and 2013.

According to the report, the US had reduced its total number of warheads by 400 to 7,300. Of these, 1,900 are ready to be deployed. In Russia, the total fell by 500 to 8,000, of which 1,600 are ready for deployment. According to New START, each country is expected to reduce its strategic nuclear weapons to 1,550. SIPRI expert Phillip Schell told German news channel NTV, "It is relatively clear that this has nothing to do with a genuine process of disarmament."

Shortly before the final ratification of the treaty in 2011, cables released by WikiLeaks exposed plans for war by NATO against Russia.

Both Russia and the US are once again rearming their nuclear arsenals, although the US invests by far the largest sums of money in its nuclear weapons programme. As the *New York Times* reported in November 2014, the Obama administration plans to begin the investment of what will eventually amount to \$1.1 trillion in nuclear weapons over the coming three decades. \$350 billion is to be used up in the coming 10 years alone.

In addition, the US published a military blueprint at the end of 2014, outlining US preparations for military interventions around the globe, as well as for a third world war.

In contrast to the United States, Russia is not an imperialist country. It functions chiefly as a supplier of energy to the world market and as a sales market for global concerns. The total value of all Russian shares was put at \$531 billion in November, above all due to western sanctions. This is less than one US company alone, Apple, with a share value of \$620 billion.

But precisely because of Russia's economic and political weakness, the Kremlin sees nuclear weapons as the only possibility of strengthening its position in negotiations with the imperialist powers and preparing for a potential war with NATO member states.

In this context, the cancelling of the agreement on disarming Russian nuclear weapons is a further sign of the growing danger of a war between the two nuclear

powers, the US and Russia.



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