

Trump to pull U.S. out of Open Skies treaty, leaves New START in limbo

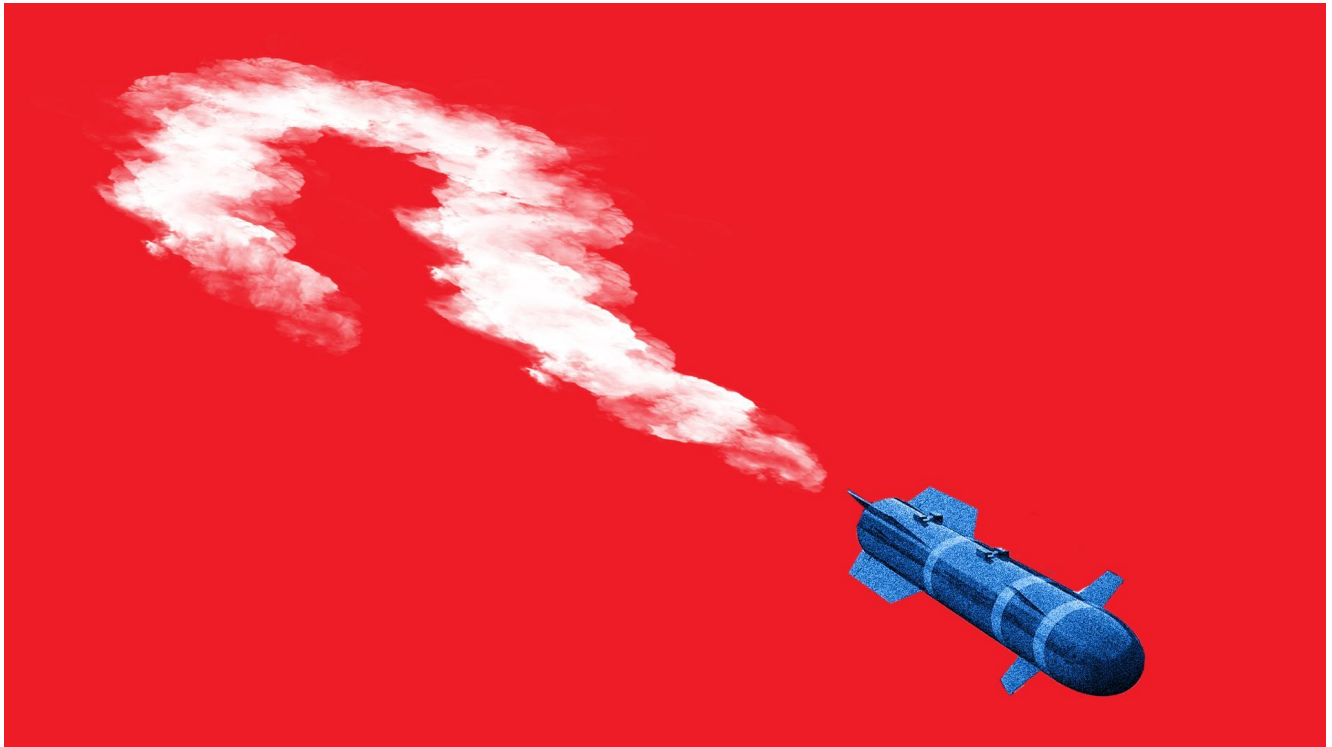


Illustration: Rebecca Zisser / Axios

The U.S. is moving to withdraw from Open Skies, a 1992 treaty that allows NATO countries and Russia to surveil one another from the air to prevent the risk of military conflict.

Why it matters: This is the third major international defense agreement President Trump has abandoned, following the Iran nuclear deal and the Intermediate Nuclear Forces treaty. The fate of another highly consequential treaty, New START, remains in the balance.

How it happened: “Trump administration officials and some conservative lawmakers have long argued that the Russians have used the Open Skies accord to gather intelligence on U.S. sites while restricting access for Western overflights of Russian territory,” per WSJ.

What to watch: New START, the last treaty constraining the U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals, is due to expire in February.

- Marshall Billingslea, Trump's arms control envoy, announced talks with Russia today aimed at bringing China into a new trilateral agreement.
 - But he expressed skepticism that Russia could be trusted to comply with *any* treaty, and he would not discuss the idea of extending New START before the Feb. 5 deadline without Chinese participation.
 - "We know how to win these races and we know how to spend the adversary into oblivion. If we have to, we will, but we sure would like to avoid it," Billingslea said in a discussion hosted by the Hudson Institute.
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Source:

<https://www.axios.com/new-start-treaty-trump-billingslea-arms-control-545981be-3edb-47df-8751-9b70848f5422.html>

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