

# U.S. Warns It Could ‘Take Out’ New Russian Missiles



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg addresses a press conference ahead of a NATO defence ministerial meeting at NATO headquarters in Brussels on October 2, 2018.

EMMANUEL DUNAND—AFP/Getty Images

The U.S. warned that it could resort to strikes against a new class of Russian missile unless Moscow complies with its international commitments to arms reduction.

NATO defense ministers meeting at Alliance headquarters in Brussels from Wednesday will discuss their concerns that Russia is building a medium-range ballistic missile in violation of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, U.S. Ambassador Kay Bailey Hutchison said.

Russia has over “several years” refused to accept U.S. evidence of breaches, so “we need to look for other ways to bring Russia to the table on the issues,” Hutchison told reporters on Tuesday. “The countermeasures would be to take out the missiles that are in development by Russia in violation of the treaty.”

The U.S. ambassador made an “absolutely irresponsible statement,” the Interfax news service cited an unidentified Russian Foreign Ministry official as saying. “It shows that in the present administration there are people in very important positions who don’t understand where they are and what is required of them.”

## ‘Crucial’ Treaty

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization issued a statement in December underscoring the so-called INF Treaty’s “crucial” role in ensuring security for 30 years by “removing an entire class of U.S. and Russian weapons” — ground-launched intermediate-range missiles — and calling on Russia to address “serious concerns” about a missile system identified by NATO members.

“Now this treaty is in danger because of Russian actions,” NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg told a parallel briefing in Brussels on Tuesday. He cited

development of a new ground-launched cruise missile known as 9M729, whose existence Russia only recently acknowledged “after years of denials.”

Stoltenberg called on Russia to urgently address concerns that the new system may be in violation of the INF treaty in a substantial and transparent manner, saying that “Russia has not provided any credible answers on this new missile.”

Hutchison said that “numerous occasions” had been recorded of Russian breaches, and called on Moscow to stop the violations. Russia is “on notice,” she said.

If Russia continues down the path to where they are capable of delivering, “at that point we would then be looking at a capability to take out a missile that could hit any of our countries in Europe and hit America in Alaska,” Hutchison said.

The U.S. is “not moving in that direction right now,” she said. Rather, the message to Russia is that “we know they have violated the treaty and we are beginning the research capabilities that are allowed by the treaty to deter a medium-range ballistic missile.”

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Source: <http://time.com/5413462/us-russia-take-out-missiles/>

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