

## PROF. KROENIG: SUSPENSION OF INF A "CORRECT RESPONSE" TO RUSSIAN INF TREATY BREACH

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**Jakub Palowski: What is your general assessment of the US decision to announce the suspension of obligations in the INF Treaty? Is it necessary, or does it constitute an exaggerated response?**

**Prof. Matthew Kroenig:** It is the correct response. The INF Treaty constrained only two countries, the United States and Russia. And Russia was cheating. It does not make sense for the United States to be the only country in the world constrained by these limits. Moreover, these intermediate-range missile capabilities could be very helpful for the United States in Asia to ensure a favorable balance of power over China.

**What is the significance of the fact that the US decision was announced just after NATO quite strongly urged Russia to act within the INF Treaty, pointing to the treaty breach by Moscow by deploying 9M729 cruise missile?**

Russia has been cheating on the agreement for over a decade. The United States and NATO have protested Russia's INF violations since 2014. We have tried to get them to return to compliance. Moscow had no interest. It clearly sees these missiles as in their interest.

**What can be subsequent steps taken by the US after the participation in Treaty is suspended?**

The United States has already begun research and development into ground-launched intermediate range systems. It could also look at modifying existing systems, such as bringing existing sea-launched cruise missiles on shore.

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**In particular, what would be - in your opinion - a suitable military response to the Russian INF Treaty breach? Does it include deploying new land-based cruise missile in Europe?**

The United States and its allies have the capabilities they need to deter and defend against Russian INF systems. The United States has a range of sea and air launched capabilities. And allies, including Norway, are considering long-range strike.

In addition, the new Missile Defense Review released a few days ago, for the first time, declares that US regional missile defenses in Europe will be used to defend against Russia. I don't believe there is a need to deploy land-based cruise missiles in Europe in the near future.



A Russian Ground-Launched Cruise Missile. Photo: mil.ru.

**The US decision to conditionally suspend obligations in the INF Treaty has been met with criticism, including by the members of the US non-proliferation community, but also Democratic policymakers. As Democrats take the House early next year, will it be possible to develop countermeasures to the Russian INF Treaty breach? And will the Administration maintain the possibility of developing new INF-compliant delivery systems included in the Nuclear Posture Review 2018, including new low-yield Trident Warhead?**

The Trump administration and many defense experts, including me, believe the new low-yield capabilities called for in the NPR are necessary. Democrats in the House of Representatives, including incoming Armed Services Committee Chairman Adam Smith, says that nuclear weapons are the biggest point of disagreement between Democrats and Republicans on foreign policy and that he plans to cut funding for nuclear modernization. We are gearing up for a political fight on this issue in 2019.

**Some countries in Europe, including France and Germany, are skeptical towards the US announcement on the withdrawal from INF Treaty. To what extent may they hinder the countermeasures that the US can take after the obligations are suspended? And to what extent may the INF issue affect NATO cohesion?**

Skeptical, yes. But they also recognized that Russia has been cheating for some time and that we needed to respond. They were not surprised by the US decision to withdraw. I don't believe it will have a noticeable effect on NATO cohesion. If, at some point in the future, there was discussion about re-deploying ground-launched missiles to Europe, then I could imagine more tension.

**What are the steps Russia may take after US suspension of INF Treaty obligations is effective?**

We are already seeing Russia come back with proposals, for example, to allow inspections of their missiles. They are trying to put the ball back in our court and make Washington look like the intransigent partner. I would not be surprised if they offered to negotiate a quantitative cap on INF range systems, such as no more than 100 or 200 missiles per side.



Prof. Matthew Kroenig/matthewkroenig.com.

**Do you see any role for Poland in countering the Russian INF Treaty breach? If yes, what is the role?**

Yes. Poland is among the most important countries for NATO and the defense of the West. It has an important role in all aspects of defense strategy for Russia. Poland Patriot missile defenses contribute to a defense against Russian short and intermediate range missiles and Poland's JASSM missiles provide a conventional response option to any Russian strike.

**And last but not least, going a little back to the US. After midterm elections, Democrats will take the House. To what extent may it change the US defense policy, especially when**

**it comes to the budget and Army modernization? We hear different topline for the DoD: \$700 billion, \$733 billion, \$750 billion, now (FY 2019) it is \$716 bn. How would you comment on that?**

This will be a big fight. Democrats in the House will be looking to cut. Their first target will be nuclear weapons as mentioned above.

**Poland is aiming to receive additional US conventional forces, preferably in the form of permanent deployment. Is it right solution and what should the deployment look like?**

For some time, I have argued that a more permanent US presence on NATO's Eastern flank would help to contribute to deterrence of Russia and assurance of allies. It also seems that the current US president likes the idea of a "Fort Trump" in Poland. My colleagues at the Atlantic Council have made some detailed recommendations about the nature of the deployment, including upgrading the existing US Mission Command Element in Poznan to a US Division HQ. You can see more in the below study:

<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images//publications/Permanent-Deterrence-Enhancements-to-the-US-Military-Presence-in-North-Central-Europe.pdf>

**Thank you for the conversation.**

Jakub Palowski

*Jacek Raubo contributed to that interview.*

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*Dr. Kroenig is the author or editor of six books, including the forthcoming, *The Logic of American Nuclear Strategy* (Oxford University Press, 2018). His dozens of articles have appeared in leading peer-reviewed academic journals, foreign policy journals, and major newspapers, including: *American Political Science Review*, *Foreign Affairs*, *Foreign Policy*, *International Organization*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Washington Post*.*

Full biography of Matthew Kroenig is available at:

<http://www.matthewkroenig.com/>