

Kosachyov Sees START Ratification This Month

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Russian lawmakers will likely ratify the New START arms treaty with the United States by the end of the month, State Duma Deputy Konstantin Kosachyov said.

The Duma gave preliminary approval to the treaty before the New Year's holidays but decided to delay a final vote to give the Russian side time to study the resolution passed by the U.S. Senate when it ratified the pact last month.

Kosachyov, who heads the Duma's International Affairs Committee, said Friday that Russia was now ready to ratify New START and has written its own amendments to the ratification document "to balance the work that has been done by the Senate."

He said the Duma's legislation would state how Russia's interpretation of the treaty differed from that of the Senate, but he stressed that the text of the treaty itself would remain unchanged.

"We don't accept certain interpretations from the American side, they will definitely not accept certain interpretations from the Russian side and then we will have to live with the existing treaty," Kosachyov said in an interview.

The U.S. legislation accompanying the treaty addressed Republican concerns that it would restrict U.S. plans to develop a missile defense system. Republicans also had sought increased funding for the U.S. nuclear arsenal.

Kosachyov said the Duma would take two additional steps in ratifying the treaty: approve one statement addressed to "our American colleagues and partners" and another addressed to the leadership of Russia about the current state of the Russian nuclear arsenal and plans for its future development. He gave no specifics.

The Duma will likely consider the ratification bill in a second reading on Jan. 14, he said, while the third and final reading would likely wait until after the Federation Council returns Jan. 26. Both houses need to ratify the treaty. Both are under Kremlin control.

"We need to have more success stories in our bilateral relations and this is why I am very much in favor of ratifying the New START treaty as soon as possible," Kosachyov said.

New START would limit each country to 1,550 strategic warheads, down from the current ceiling of 2,200. It also would re-establish a system for monitoring and verification that ended in late 2009 with the expiration of the previous arms control agreement.

The treaty, which Presidents Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev signed in April, is a centerpiece of Obama's efforts to "reset" ties with Russia.

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