

Belarus: Strategic Weapons Overview

Created 12 August 1996 by John W.R. Lepingwell.

The SS-25 (Russian name "Topol," designation RS-12M) is a solid-fuel, single-warhead, road-mobile ICBM designed by the Nadiradze design bureau (Moscow Institute of Thermal Technology) and manufactured at the Votkinsk missile factory in Russia. When the USSR collapsed in late 1991 there were three Strategic Rocket Forces divisions deploying SS-25s at three sites in Belarus.

The SS-25s removed from Belarus are being redeployed in Russia at existing ICBM bases, where new launch pads are being built for the SS-25s and their mobile launchers. Transfer of the missiles is possible because they are under Russian jurisdiction, and deployment of single-warhead mobile missiles is allowed under the START treaties. The SS-25 and an improved variant, the [Topol-M \(SS-X-27\)](#), are to become the mainstay of Russia's strategic forces over the next decade.

Since the SS-25 is mobile, it is launched from a transporter parked on a launching pad (concrete revetments) rather than from a silo. Under the terms of the START-I treaty these launching pads must be destroyed, a requirement that has caused some misgivings in Belarus because of allegedly harmful environmental consequences. Funding for launch site destruction has been provided by the [Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction \(CTR\) Program](#) as well as by the German government.

In 1998-99 speculation concerning the possible re-deployment of Russian nuclear weapons to Belarus was fanned by negotiations over the Russia-Belarus Union Treaty and by Russian and Belarusian denunciation of NATO's bombing campaign in Kosovo. For more information on this issue, please see the [Attitudes Towards Nuclear Weapons](#) file.