

With the launching of another new Trident submarine in May 1986, the Reagan Administration re-evaluated the compliance situation and possible American responses. Reagan announced that the United States would dismantle two older Poseidon submarines, thus keeping the US technically within the limits of the SALT II Treaty. The President stated, however, that the submarines were being dismantled for economic reasons, (the submarines had reached the end of their useful life) and not because of SALT limits. He also indicated that because of continued Soviet violations of the Treaty, the United States would make future force structure decisions based on the nature of the Soviet threat and not on the basis of SALT limits.

In September 1986 the United States decided to overhaul rather than dismantle two Poseidon submarines coming to the end of their useful lives. As a result, the United States exceeded the SALT limits on 28 November 1986 with the deployment of a 131st cruise missile carrying B-52 bomber. This put the United States over the SALT limit of 1,320 MIRVed ballistic missiles and cruise missile carrying bombers. In response, the Soviet Union stated it would remain within SALT limits "for the time being".

Current Canadian Position

Responding to questioning in the House of Commons, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Joe Clark stated:

...we have made clear our views about the importance of respecting the SALT II limits from the very beginning of the rumours that there might be an intention on the part of the United States to breach those limits. Within the last week both myself personally to Secretary Shultz and the Prime Minister to President Reagan reaffirmed our position that it would be better for the world if the United States would respect the SALT II obligations.³

³ Commons Debates, 27 Nov. 1986, p. 1590.