

The interpretation of the ABM Treaty has therefore become an issue of considerable debate, centering on how ABM systems based on new technologies are dealt with by the Treaty. The key to the debate lies in Article V of the Treaty. Article V states that:

Each Party undertakes not to develop, test, or deploy ABM systems or components which are sea-based, air-based, space-based, or mobile land-based.

Proponents of the broad interpretation maintain that the systems and components referred to in Article V are defined by Article II. The use of the phrase "currently consisting of" as part of the definition of a system in Article II means that only systems based on 1972 technology (current at the time the Treaty was signed) are banned. This means that systems based on new technology in the basing modes listed are not affected.

The narrow interpretation holds that Article V clearly bans all sea-based, space-based or mobile land-based systems and components, whether they are based on 1972 technology or not. The phrase "currently consisting of" was used in Article II only to demonstrate the functional nature of the definition, not to exclude future technologies.

The Soviet Union has stated that it believes the narrow interpretation to be the only valid interpretation of the Treaty and until 1985 this was the only interpretation held by the United States.

Current Canadian Position

The Government of Canada has stated that it is in favour of the narrow interpretation of the ABM Treaty. In June 1986, the Special Joint Committee Report, Independence and Internationalism recommended that the Government reaffirm support for a strict interpretation of the ABM Treaty,