

2. ARMS CONTROL TREATY COMPLIANCE: SALT II

Background

The SALT II Treaty limiting strategic nuclear forces was signed by US President Carter and Soviet General Secretary Brezhnev in Vienna, on 10 June 1979. Although the agreement was never ratified by the US Senate, both the United States and the Soviet Union have continued to abide by its terms.

The SALT II Treaty officially expired on 31 December 1985. In 1985 President Reagan made two reports to Congress¹ outlining Soviet violations of arms control treaties. In 1987 a report was sent to Congress in March.² While most of the violations concerned the SALT II and Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaties, possible violations of the Threshold Test Ban Treaty, the Limited Test Ban Treaty and the Biological and Toxic Weapons Convention were also listed. With respect to the SALT II Treaty, the United States is primarily concerned with a new mobile Soviet intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), the SS-25. The US states that this is an illegal second new missile and that the Soviet Union has excessively coded the telemetry on the missile's test flights. The Soviet Union contends that the SS-25 is a modernization, within the limits of the Treaty, of an older missile, the SS-13.

On 10 June 1985 President Reagan announced that the United States would dismantle an older ballistic missile submarine when a new Trident submarine was deployed in September 1985. This kept the US within SALT limits. However, Reagan warned that future compliance decisions would be taken on a 'case-by-case' basis and that the United States reserved the right to exceed treaty limits in the future as a 'proportionate response' to Soviet treaty violations. Defence Secretary Weinberger submitted a classified report on possible responses to Soviet violations in January 1986.

¹ President's Report to Congress on Soviet Noncompliance With Arms Control Agreements, 1 Feb. 1985 and 23 Dec. 1985.

² President's Report to Congress on Soviet Noncompliance with Arms Control Agreements, Mar. 1987.