

(ICBMs) to states hostile to the US jeopardizes its supreme interests is now under intense debate in the US.

On May 20, 1999, the US Congress passed the National Missile Defense Act of 1999 by overwhelming margins in both Houses. President Clinton signed the bill into law on July 22, 1999¹². The Act commits the United State to fielding a missile defense system “when technically feasible”. The move represents a dramatic escalation in the US quest for a missile defense. With missile defense technology “near an historic phase in its favor” after decades of failures, pressure to renegotiate or withdraw from the ABM Treaty will continue to mount.

Biological and Toxins Convention 1972¹³

This Convention prohibits the development, production, stockpiling and acquisition of biological warfare agents and weapons including toxins.

The Convention uses the expression “peaceful purposes” which means that the use of toxins and biological agents is limited exclusively to prophylactic purposes and to the promotion of the “development and application of scientific discoveries in the field of bacteriology (biology) for the prevention of disease or for other peaceful purposes [Article X (1)].

The development, production and stockpiling of toxins and biological agents for “hostile purposes” is prohibited; parties to the Convention undertake to destroy all their existing stocks of such agents (Article I and II).

Only limited provisions are included with regard to handling compliance problems. Parties undertake to consult and cooperate with one another to resolve problems dealing with implementation of the Convention (Article V). This may take place through appropriate international procedures within the framework of the UN. Complaints regarding violation of the Convention can be lodged with the Security Council of the UN (Article VI).

Agreement on Measures to Reduce the Risk of Outbreak of Nuclear War (1971)¹⁴, “Hot Line” Modernization Agreement¹⁵ Prevention of Nuclear War Agreement 1973¹⁶

In SALT I, the US and the USSR were particularly concerned about (1) the outbreak of nuclear war as a result of accident, unauthorized use of nuclear weapons, or miscalculation; (2) the failure of communications in crisis; and (3) the outbreak of nuclear war due to actions of third countries.

¹² National Missile Defense Act of 1999

¹³ Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction. (1976) no.11 United Kingdom Treaty Series, Cmd 6397. Opened for signature on 10 April 1972; entered into force on 26 March 1975.

¹⁴ Agreement on Measures to Reduce the Risk of Outbreak of Nuclear War, (1972) 807 U.N.T.S. 57. Signed on 30 September 1971; entered into force, 30 September 1971. Referred to as the Accident Measures Act.

¹⁵ Agreement on Measures to Improve the US-USSR Direct Communications Link, (1972) 806 U.N.T.S. 402. Signed on 30 September 1971; entered into force on 30 September 1971.

¹⁶ 24 Agreement Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Prevention of Nuclear War , U.S.T. 1478. Signed on 22 June 1973; entered into force on 22 June 1973.