

fact that cruise missile-carrying vessels pose a potent threat in their own right, any such stand-off zones should probably apply to all types of submarines, not just SSBNs. Such a prohibition extending to attack submarines would have the ancillary benefit, from the point of view of safeguarding the survivability of the sea-based deterrent, of making the initial acquisition of trail of SSBNs as they leave their home ports more difficult. Such a measure would certainly interfere with the current military practices of both sides, which include close-in patrols by attack submarines to collect intelligence and shadow SSBNs, and so quite sharp opposition to it can be anticipated. Yet if the threat of “decapitation” and the survivability of the air- and sea-based legs of the strategic triad is to be taken seriously, some degree of real restraint on current military practices may well be warranted. Furthermore, the practice of covert submarine intrusions into an adversary’s coastal waters in itself aggravates tensions and risks untoward incidents which, theoretically, could lead to war, while unauthorized submerged transit within another state’s internal or territorial waters has long been considered impermissible under the law of the sea.

The verifiability of such “keep-out” or “stand-off” zones is apparently in some dispute among the specialists. Blair speaks of the “extreme difficulty of verification” of a ban on close-in deployment of vessels carrying nuclear cruise missiles,¹⁵³ but the difficulty here — at least as far as submarines are concerned — would appear to lie in identifying whether a particular vessel is in fact carrying such missiles. This would not be a problem if, as suggested above, unauthorized submarines of all types were to be excluded from the “stand-off zone.”

Another specialist in strategic command and control, Paul Bracken, states flatly that an agreement such as that proposed by Leonid Brezhnev in 1982 for “pulling back nuclear submarines from coastal areas . . . would be verifiable.”¹⁵⁴ Desmond Ball et al. similarly note the “widespread confidence among senior U.S. Navy

153. Blair, *op. cit.* note 132, p. 301.

154. Bracken, *op. cit.* note 134, p. 245.