

research into ballistic missile defence. In 1975, the US dismantled the BMD system it had deployed at a missile base in Grand Forks, North Dakota.

The Soviet Union has kept its BMD deployment around Moscow. As the ICBM counterforce capability (the ability to accurately strike enemy missile silos) improved, the question of defending against ballistic missiles surfaced again, since 'hard point' defence of missile silos would be easier to achieve than population defence. From the outset, therefore, the new Reagan Administration gave more attention to BMD than had previous administrations.

In March 1983, President Reagan announced that the United States would pursue the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) to provide a defence that would make nuclear weapons "impotent and obsolete". The ABM Treaty, therefore, entered a new and uncertain phase, since the final goal of SDI contradicts the very basis of the ABM Treaty. Although President Reagan has stated that SDI research will be conducted within the limits of the ABM Treaty, the Administration has put forward two interpretations of the terms of the Treaty: a "strict" interpretation of the Treaty which might quickly conflict with the SDI programme, and a "broad" interpretation which would allow the US much more leeway in the research programme while remaining within the Treaty. This has again sparked a debate within the United States over the benefits of the ABM Treaty and its intended limitations. In particular, there is concern that the "broad" interpretation is a first step towards complete abrogation of the Treaty.

One of the reasons cited in support of the SDI is Soviet BMD development and its alleged violation of the Treaty. In particular, the United States has expressed concern about Soviet construction of a new phased array radar. The ABM Treaty allows the construction of such radars only on the periphery of the country and only if they are oriented outwards. The US maintains that the new Soviet radar under construction at Krasnoyarsk does