

Treaty which would allow the US to carry out tests and development of systems previously considered prohibited by it.

This new interpretation, also known as the "broad" interpretation, would allow the testing and development of ABM systems based on new physical principles and would prohibit only their actual deployment. The Reagan Administration has stated that it believes this broad interpretation to be legally valid.

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 which 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, according to this interpretation, means that only systems based on 1972 technology (current at the time the Treaty was signed) are banned. This would mean that systems based on new technology in the basing modes listed were 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.