

destabilize deterrence based on the concept of mutual assured destruction. This concept, which had become the basis of nuclear deterrence, assumes the impossibility of an adequate defence against nuclear weapons.

The ABM Treaty prohibits both sides from deploying a nation-wide ABM defence and limits each to two ABM deployment areas, later amended on 3 July 1974 to one area. The intent of the Treaty is outlined in Article I (2):

Each Party undertakes not to deploy ABM systems for a defence of the territory of its country and not to provide a base for such a defence, and not to deploy ABM systems for defence of an individual region except as provided for in Article III [establishing two specific deployment areas] of this Treaty.

Extensive verification measures are provided for in the Treaty, which also established the Standing Consultative Commission (SCC) to deal with questions of interpretation and compliance. The United States Senate ratified the Treaty by a vote of 88 to 2.

During the 1970s both the United States and the Soviet Union continued research into ballistic missile defence. In 1976, the US dismantled the ABM system it had deployed at a missile base in Grand Forks, North Dakota. The Soviet Union has kept its ABM deployment around Moscow.

In his March 1983 announcement, President Reagan stated that the United States would pursue a new programme, SDI, aimed at providing a defence which would make nuclear weapons "impotent and obsolete". Although he initially stated that SDI was only a research programme and would be conducted within the limits of the ABM Treaty, the Administration has put forward, and moved towards acceptance of, a "new" interpretation of the