

Explanatory notes...

THE TREATIES AND THE NEED FOR AUDIT

The purpose of START II (second Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty between the U.S. and Russia) is to dismantle already existing nuclear weapons. START Treaty II sets a limit of 1,550 deployed strategic - or long-range - nuclear warheads. It also sets a limit of 700 operationally deployed strategic nuclear delivery systems such as long-range launchers and heavy bombers. The accord also provides for strong verification measures that ensure that each side complies with its treaty obligations.

The Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons was proposed in 1958 and came into force in 1970. The Cold War situation encouraged the spread of nuclear weapons. At that time the United Kingdom had joined the U.S. and U.S.S.R. as nuclear nations, France was on the brink, and China would soon follow; these five countries are the "recognized" nuclear powers. The Treaty was negotiated under the auspices of the United Nations and is enforceable as international law by the World Court. The U.S. ratified the treaty in 1968, and now all nations have signed it except India, Pakistan and Israel; North Korea signed it but has now withdrawn.

The treaty requires that the five nations with nuclear weapons agree not to transfer nuclear weapons or the control of them to any non-nuclear state or to assist any such state to manufacture or acquire or control them. It requires that non-nuclear countries agree not to receive, control, manufacture or acquire nuclear weapons. It also calls upon the nuclear weapons states to work toward the elimination of all nuclear weapons.

The Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1996 but has not yet entered into force. The treaty would ban all nuclear explosions in all environments, for military or civilian purposes. It would curb the ability of nuclear-armed countries to develop new nuclear bombs, and would make it more difficult for new countries to gain nuclear weapons capabilities.

As of November, 2009, the CTBT has been signed and ratified by 151 nations, including all NATO countries and other key US allies. The United States is one of the 31 states that has signed but not ratified. The treaty will enter into force 180 days after the 44 states listed in Annex 2 of the treaty have ratified it. Nine Annex 2 states have not ratified the treaty: China, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Israel and the US, who have signed the treaty; and India, North Korea and Pakistan who have not yet signed. The Obama administration is committed to working towards a US ratification of the CTBT, requiring a two-thirds vote of the Senate.

Lack of Pentagon Accountability: Reliable sources report that about a third of the federal budget is spent on defense. Congress has acknowledged that the financial practices of the Department of Defense are so inadequate that its activities cannot be audited. Due to scandalous revelations, the House has set a deadline of 2017 for validated financial statements on DOD purchases, but Senator Grassley's bill (S. 1287) which would require department-wide audits by 2019 remains in committee. There is no available accounting of the costs of our nuclear weapons programs.