

Peace File



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WHY DIDN'T THE US RATIFY THE COMPREHENSIVE TEST BAN TREATY

The United States does not have to rely on underground testing to keep its nuclear arsenal in a state of readiness. The 'Stockpile Stewardship Program' costing \$4.5 billion a year was set up to ensure that US nuclear weapons remain secure and reliable, by computer modelling and simulation. This method of laboratory testing is only available to the established nuclear powers.

Therefore to sign the CTBT would have put India and Pakistan, and any aspiring nuclear power, at a distinct disadvantage, while the United States would have retain some credibility in its fight against proliferation.

In an unprecedented move 32 US Nobel laureates in physics wrote a letter to every US senator saying that the CTBT should be ratified as it was central to future efforts to halt the spread of nuclear weapons. The letter pointed out that the new computer technology made it unnecessary to conduct underground nuclear tests to check the safety, reliability and performance of existing nuclear weapons.

With its unparalleled superiority in conventional weapons, the demise of the Soviet Union and the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact, the United States is finding it harder and harder to justify its retention of nuclear weapons. Nevertheless nuclear weapons are intended to remain the cornerstone of US defence policy for years to come and the refusal to sign the CTBT will encourage other countries to seek the same 'defence', giving the United States an excuse to justify keeping its own.

Nuclear warfighters in the US military-industrial complex want to test and build a new generation of smaller, more lethal nuclear weapons, and while underground nuclear tests to check the reliability of existing nuclear weapons are not necessary, it is necessary for the production and designing of new nuclear weapons.

During the years of 1959 to 1976, twelve treaties restricting nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction were negotiated between the Soviet Union and the United States. These treaties are now in danger of unravelling as the United States gets ready to deploy its new Anti-Ballistic Missile Defence System.