

# Missile Defense System Wins Senate Approval

*Move Would Violate ABM Treaty, Administration Contends*

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The Republican-controlled Senate voted yesterday to build a nationwide network of antiballistic missile defenses over the next eight years, rejecting arguments by the Clinton administration and Democratic lawmakers that it would violate the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and trigger a new arms race.

Voting 51 to 48, largely along party lines, the Senate defeated a move by Sen. Byron L. Dorgan (D-N.D.) to eliminate \$300 million that the Armed Services Committee added to the Clinton administration's \$371 million request to continue planning for a home-front defense against missile attack.

The extra money was included in the de-

fense authorization bill for fiscal 1996 to speed development of a multiple-site missile defense system aimed at protecting American cities from an increasing number of countries that are gaining access to nuclear weapons. The committee said the system should be deployed by 2003.

Then the Senate rejected, 51 to 49, an effort by Sens. Carl M. Levin (Mich.), Sam Nunn (Ga.) and other Democrats to drop provisions they regarded as violations of the 23-year-old ABM Treaty, which limited anti-missile defenses by the United States and the then-Soviet Union to one site per country.

An effort was underway last night by Nunn and Sen. William S. Cohen (R-Maine) to make it clear the Senate does not intend to abrogate

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# GOP-Controlled Senate Votes to Build System of Antiballistic Missile Defenses

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the treaty in this legislation but wants the administration to negotiate changes to allow multisite defenses.

The Senate's action virtually assures Congress will approve money for the missile defense plan. The House has approved \$463 million for the project and, like the Senate, it rejected language stipulating that the program was not intended to abrogate the ABM Treaty.

Critics said the bill violated the treaty by calling for multiple sites and complained that the measure sought improperly to unilaterally reinterpret its provisions to ban defenses against short-range missiles. "This is a trashing of the ABM Treaty. . . . It is a provocative move to commit ourselves now to deploy an illegal missile defense system," Levin said.

They also said a unilateral scrapping of the treaty would antagonize Russia and jeopardize its compliance with existing treaties. It would be a "gratuitous poke in the eye of the Russians," who would retaliate by retargeting their missiles back on the United States, Nunn argued.

The administration has threatened a veto of the legislation, arguing that it would "put the U.S. on a path to abrogate the ABM Treaty," in the words of Secretary of State Warren Christopher. Defense Secretary William J. Perry also said it could jeopardize Russian implementation of START I and START II

treaties to reduce the nuclear arsenals of the U.S. and the former Soviet bloc.

The bill's supporters denied that it violates the treaty but acknowledged that it lays the groundwork for a broader treaty interpretation—negotiated or otherwise—that would allow deployment of multiple-site defenses when they are ready. The committee called for a "comprehensive review of the continuing value and validity of the ABM Treaty," to be completed by the end of next year.

The bill "recognize[s] that an effective multiple-site defense of the United States is inconsistent with the treaty as things stand today," said Majority Leader Robert J. Dole (R-Kan.).

Republicans argued that the main reason for the treaty—the so-called policy of mutual assured destruction (MAD), which sought to deter nuclear aggression by leaving both sides vulnerable to retaliation—disappeared with the Soviet Union. "The MAD era is over, thank God," said Senate Majority Whip Trent Lott (R-Miss.).

Sen. John W. Warner (R-Va.), who wrote the bill's ABM language, said it was needed because the administration has not worked out an agreement with the Russians to clarify what kinds of missile defenses are allowed under the pact.

In pushing to limit funding for the home-front missile defense system, Dorgan said the program could cost as much as \$40 billion and contend-

ed that Republicans were inviting more deficit spending for "something this country doesn't need and can't afford."

He accused Republicans of hypocrisy in calling for cuts in hunger programs, education and Medicare in the name of deficit reduction and then proposing to spend billions more for military hardware. The main threat now comes from nuclear-armed terrorists who are more likely "put [a device] in the trunk of a rusty car and park it at a New York City dock" than they are to launch it from a long-range missile, he added.

He ridiculed the system as a glorified jobs program that senators see as a boon to their local economies. "To call this pork is to give hogs a bad name," he said. "This is unsaturated lard."

In response, Republicans argued that at least two dozen countries possess or may be developing nuclear, chemical or biological weapons, posing what Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.) described as a "real and growing" threat.

With countries such as North Korea developing long-range missiles that could be operational within five years, the United States is in imminent danger because of the time required to put a defense system in place, said Lott. The system itself would dissuade other countries from developing offensive weapons and serve as a protective shield if they do so, he said.