



[Home](#) » [Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security](#) » [Bureau of Arms Control, Verification and Compliance \(AVC\)](#) » [Bureau of Arms Control, Verification and Compliance Releases](#) » [Bureau of Arms Control, Verification and Compliance Press Releases and Fact Sheets](#) » [Bureau of Arms Control, Verification and Compliance Press Releases and Fact Sheets \(2011\)](#) » [National Security Benefits of the CTBT](#)

National Security Benefits of the CTBT

Fact Sheet

BUREAU OF ARMS CONTROL, VERIFICATION AND COMPLIANCE

September 26, 2011

Key Point: A legally binding global ban on nuclear explosive testing benefits U.S. national security.

Since 1992, the United States has observed a unilateral moratorium on nuclear explosive testing. This moratorium is based on our national security assessment that the United States does not need to conduct nuclear explosive tests in order to ensure the safety, security and effectiveness of the nuclear forces we maintain to deter nuclear attacks on the United States, our allies and partners. Moreover, reinforcing the international norm against nuclear explosive testing is very much in the U.S. security interest.

Based on the experience the United States has gained from 15 years of monitoring our nuclear weapons stockpile under the Stockpile Stewardship Program, in addition to our commitments to maintain and refurbish, as necessary, our nuclear weapons and to modernize our aging nuclear weapons infrastructure, we do not believe that the United States will need to conduct nuclear explosive tests ever again. Our national laboratory directors have confirmed that we know more about nuclear weapons through the stockpile stewardship program than we knew when we explosively tested nuclear weapons during the Cold War. We can now do more than just identify problems, we can predict and remedy them before they affect the safety and security of the arsenal.

Entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban (CTBT) would create a legally binding prohibition on nuclear explosive tests for all of its parties. The CTBT will benefit United States national security by:

- Hindering states that do not have nuclear weapons expertise and experience from advancing their nuclear weapons capabilities, while not affecting the ability of the United States to maintain its own nuclear deterrent force. States interested in pursuing a nuclear weapons program or advancing or expanding the capabilities of an existing nuclear weapons program would have to either risk deploying weapons without confidence that they will work as designed, or incurring international condemnation and reprisals by conducting nuclear explosive tests in violation of the Treaty;
- Impeding states with more established nuclear weapon capabilities from confirming the performance of advanced nuclear weapon designs that they have not tested successfully in the past; and

- Constraining regional arms races in the years and decades to come. These constraints will be particularly important in Asia, where states are building up and modernizing nuclear forces.

U.S. ratification of the CTBT will also help enhance our leadership role in nonproliferation and strengthen our hand in pursuing tough actions against suspected proliferators by enhancing international perceptions of the United States' commitment to global nuclear constraints.

Once the Treaty enters into force, the United States will monitor compliance with the CTBT using our national technical means of verification, complemented by the **International Monitoring System** (IMS), and will have the right to call for on-site inspections in countries we believe have conducted a nuclear explosion. The cooperative verification measures conducted under the CTBT will give the Treaty's Parties a common basis for engaging in consultations and seeking clarifications of activities suspected to be in violation of the treaty. This will benefit the United States both by deterring potential cheaters and by increasing the risk that countries conducting a nuclear explosive test will be caught and held accountable for their actions by the international community.

In the case of unforeseen, extraordinary events pertaining to the CTBT that jeopardize our supreme national interests, the United States is able to invoke a provision of the Treaty that would permit us to withdraw from it to ensure our national security.

The Treaty will benefit U.S. national security. The United States will be much better off with the CTBT in force than without it.

[Back to Top](#)

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