

The New York Times

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, AUGUST 3, 1986

Keep Your Missiles Off the Ocean Floor

To the Editor:

Having spent four years at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, programming the computers on board the submersible craft Alvin, I have followed with special pride and excitement the triumphant mission of my former colleagues to the liner Titanic, two and a half miles down. More than just entering the legendary ballrooms and cabins, their victory illuminates the greatest frontier still remaining on Earth.

To many who study the ocean, exploration signifies a chance at rebirth for the whole human race. And yet, as you reported (front page, July 16), the Navy wants to "find places on the bottom of the sea to station missiles." Perhaps now is a good time to review our treaty obligations.

In 1972, the United States, the Soviet Union and 98 other nations signed an agreement known as the Seabed Treaty, agreeing not to "emplant or emplace on the seabed and the ocean floor and in the subsoil thereof beyond the outer limit of a seabed zone . . . any nuclear weapon or any other types of weapons of mass destruction as well as structures, launching installations or any other facilities



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specifically designed for storing, testing or using such weapons."

Unlike the second strategic-arms-limitation treaty, the Seabed Treaty was ratified by the United States. To avoid needlessly stimulating an arms race on the ocean floor, the Navy should clarify its goals with regard to the treaty.

GEORGE STETTEN
Syracuse, July 20, 1986