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Indian Test Cools Hope For NPT

The Indian nuclear test has aroused deep concern in the International Atomic Energy Agency over the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the safeguards program which the agency enforces.

Agency Director General Ecklund has deplored the "bland" response to the Indian test by the treaty's depository parties - the US, UK, and USSR. He fears that failure to respond as "the situation warranted" puts the whole treaty in question. He feels the Indian test may at least inhibit, if not prevent, new accessions to the treaty. It may also raise doubts in those countries already parties to the treaty about its value.

If support for the treaty falters, Ecklund continued, so will the safeguards program, the real basis for the Agency's existence. The states that do not already have nuclear weapons attack the costs of the safeguards system and complain that it diverts limited funds from more vital assistance projects. The Indian test has added to their frustrations.

The inability of the states that are party to the treaty to agree on common procedures to govern nuclear exports is due largely to France, which has not signed the treaty. Paris refuses to give assurances to its partners in Euratom that materials which they export to France will not be re-exported under conditions that would violate the treaty. The other Euratom members have so far been unable to come up with a formula that would take account of Paris' position while preserving their own obligations. [Redacted]