

Daily Press Briefing  
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QUESTION: On the list of things that other people have spoken about today, and that you may not want to, I would like to just ask you one brief question about the International Criminal Court decision sent to the UN today. And that is, when this treaty was signed under the previous administration, it was signed by the Ambassador-at-large for War Crimes. Why was the letter saying you are no longer legally bound by it signed by Under Secretary Bolton?

MR. BOUCHER: As a sign of the great importance that we attach to the issue. I don't know if there's that much difference. I'll try to find out if there was a particular --

QUESTION: Well, presumably you would -- I realize you don't want to use the word "unsigned," but if you're getting --

MR. BOUCHER: I'm not going to, because that's not what we did.

QUESTION: Right, I know. But the job is still -- the job that deals, or would have dealt with this court, is still in the hands of the same -- of the person with the same title as who signed it in the last administration. I'm just wondering why --

MR. BOUCHER: I'll see if there's any specific explanation. Obviously Under Secretary Bolton is a responsible authority of the State Department in this matter.

QUESTION: I'm not saying there's anything wrong with it. I'm just asking --

MR. BOUCHER: He has, I think, some authority over this area, and therefore it would be entirely appropriate if he did. Who knows whether the question is why did Bolton sign this time or why didn't his counterpart sign it last time? But I'll see if there's a rationale to this or if it was just done this way because that's the way we decided to do it.

QUESTION: Speaking of Mr. Bolton, he gave a speech today in which, among many other things, he said that while the administration supports the NPT, the BWC and the CWC, he thinks that those treaties and other agreements are not an effective tool of preventing certain states from abiding by all those treaties and agreements. Is that an indication that the importance of those three and other agreements in the area of arms control has a lesson somehow --

MR. BOUCHER: No, quite the contrary, and I think you'll see this if you look in Under Secretary Bolton's speech. And if you remember, the remarks that he has made at various meetings on the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention have all been to the point to say these treaties need to be made effective tools; they have to be properly enforced. Countries should not be allowed to sign the treaty and then not abide by their terms.

So the point is these are important instruments to us, and we want to make them effective.

QUESTION: Any ideas how to do that? Any new ideas, because there have been some --

MR. BOUCHER: One of the ways was changing the leadership of the Chemical Weapons Organization in The Hague that we think is a step in that direction. So with each of them it's a different thing. But there needs to be attention drawn to the fact that some countries are signing and not following these treaties and conventions, and we need to do that and we need to work with allies to make sure that they do in the future.

QUESTION: So they should be as honest as you are being with the International Criminal Court, and they should withdraw? Is that what you're suggesting?

MR. BOUCHER: No, they should bring their behavior --

QUESTION: Pretend to be obligated to something if they're not going to --

MR. BOUCHER: Matt, that's an unfair analogy, because you know right from the start, when President Clinton made the statement on the signing of this International Criminal Court, he made quite clear from the start that he did not intend to send it to the Senate for ratification and therefore obligate the United States completely in that regard. The parties who have signed these other deals, these other treaties and conventions, pretended to obligate themselves in that regard, and the solution to it is not to have people withdraw, but to have people respect the treaties that they have signed and indicated they would implement.

QUESTION: Okay. But, I mean, the point of my question wasn't to put any focus on you guys for coming out of the ICC, but rather you have these countries that are obligated, that have legal obligations under other treaties, these weapons treaties, and yet you're saying that they shouldn't withdraw from them; they should just simply respect what the treaty has to say. Correct?

MR. BOUCHER: Because they said they would.

QUESTION: Right.

MR. BOUCHER: When we signed the --

QUESTION: So you're --

MR. BOUCHER: I'm not going to get into the history of it. Read the statement that President Clinton issued when we signed the International Criminal Court document. We never indicated that we intended to participate fully in its provisions.