

Excerpt of Senate Debates September 24, 2003

United States Ballistic Missile Defence System

Motion Recommending the Government Not to Participate—Debate
Adjourned

Hon. Douglas Roche, pursuant to notice of September 17, 2003, moved:

That the Senate of Canada recommend that the Government of Canada refuse to participate in the U.S.- sponsored Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system, because:

- 1. It will undermine Canada's longstanding policy on the non-weaponization of space by giving implicit, if not explicit, support to U.S. policies to develop and deploy weapons in space;**
- 2. It will further integrate Canadian and American military forces and policy without meaningful Canadian input into the substance of those policies;**
- 3. It will make the world, including Canada, not more secure but less secure.**

He said: Honourable senators, first, I should like to thank the Honourable Senators Robichaud and Kinsella for facilitating the possibility of making this speech tonight.

I want to advance three principal reasons why Canada should not participate in the U.S.-planned missile defence system.

First, ballistic missile defence, or BMD, will lead to weapons in space. Proponents of Canadian participation in BMD maintain that we will only be joining a ground-based interceptor system and that Canada will still hold to its longstanding policy opposing weapons in space. This is wrong.

The Missile Defense Agency has been very clear that the missile defence system will evolve over time. The system is to involve a layered defence, capable of intercepting missiles in boost phase shortly after launch, in mid-course in space, and in terminal phase as they near the target.

As a recent study by the American Physical Society pointed out, a terrestrial-based missile defence system will be incapable of intercepting missiles in boost phase launched from states such as North Korea and Iran, which will have at best a limited capacity to target the United States over the next several years. To account for this deficiency, the U.S. will have to deploy weapons in space.

It should not come as a surprise, then, that the Missile Defense Agency until recently planned to begin development of a space-based test bed in 2004, for deployment in 2008, in order to test space-based weapons. A recent announcement that the space-based laser development is being suspended must be taken in the context of the evolutionary nature of the system. The reason for the suspension is not one of principle, but of technology. As soon as the Missile Defense Agency can make a case for the feasibility of such development, funding approval from the Bush administration will not be far behind.

The administration's determination to be the first to weaponize space is also evident in numerous other initiatives sponsored by the Pentagon. In pursuit of the capability to strike any target on earth within minutes, the Pentagon intends not only to dominate near-earth space orbits, but also to maintain the capacity to deny their use to others. In place of a space-based laser, the army is currently seeking funding from Congress to develop terrestrial-based anti-satellite lasers. Clearly, the U.S. Department of Defense intends to prosecute future wars using weapons that are situated in, or directed at, outer space.

Ballistic missile defence is an integral part of this wider policy of placing weapons in space. The Canadian Nobel laureate Dr. John Polanyi has called BMD a conveyor belt to the weaponization of space. Canada cannot cut BMD up into little pieces and pick and choose in which it will be involved. The system is an integrated one, and has to be in order to function effectively.

Canada's traditional stand against weapons in space is rooted in our commercial and security interests. The Canadian economy is increasingly reliant on satellites for everything from communications and weather to surveillance and navigation. Placing weapons in space will put these important commercial assets at risk of becoming the collateral damage of a war in space.

At a time when the Canadian Department of National Defence is considering a draft Space Strategy 2020, which suggests Canada seek anti-satellite capabilities that stop just short of placing weapons in space, it is important for the Government of Canada to reaffirm Canada's policy. The government needs to recognize that BMD is not just an extended defence system but is one that will lead to weapons in space. As the system develops, it will be impossible to separate out, in any meaningful way, ground- and space-based elements. It will be one package leading to U.S. space-based dominance. Canadian participation in missile defence, no matter how modest, will constitute an endorsement of U.S. intentions to weaponize space, ending Canada's policy opposing weapons in space. That is the stark fact the government must face.

Second, honourable senators, it is a delusion to think that Canada can determine the direction of BMD. Some have argued that Canada should push for command and control of BMD to be put under NORAD, a binational command in which we have a significant role. This would enhance Canadian sovereignty, they say, because it would give us a "seat at the table" when decisions are made concerning the development and use of the system.

This idea is a fanciful and dangerous delusion. A brief survey of U.S. foreign and defence policy-making under the Bush administration shows a determination to proceed with policies irrespective of the positions of the U.S. allies, or the international community at large, even when such policies are in clear violation of international law. U.S. defence policy-makers clearly reject the idea that U.S. actions should be constrained by the system of collective security institutionalized in the United Nations.

In Iraq, the U.S. failed to obtain UN Security Council approval for its actions, as required under the UN charter. The reason is clear: Iraq did not pose an imminent threat to international security, nor even to the U.S. itself. Instead of respecting the authority of the UN, the U.S. disregarded opposition in the Security Council and attacked nevertheless.

Recently, the Bush administration has come back to the UN seeking a resolution that will endorse the American occupation and hasten military and financial contributions from hesitant U.S. allies. Yet even now, faced with the enormous costs of proceeding unilaterally, the U.S. is reluctant to cede significant authority to the UN.

The U.S. is taking a similarly unilateral approach to nuclear disarmament in insisting that other states abide by the non-proliferation treaty by abstaining from acquiring or proliferating nuclear weapons, while the U.S. violates its own obligation, which it had reaffirmed as recently as 2000, to negotiate the destruction of its nuclear stockpiles. Instead, the Pentagon is opting to develop new nuclear weapons and to advance strategies for using nuclear weapons in war fighting. From these examples, it is clear that, when the Bush administration calls for international cooperation, what it really means is subjugation — the subjugation of the interests of other states to the will of the United States.

So, when the Pentagon invites Canada to participate in BMD, we should not be under any illusion about our role in the system. Regardless of where command and control of BMD is located, whether in the binational NORAD program or in the U.S. commands of NORTHCOM or STRATCOM, it is U.S. policy that will determine how the system is developed and deployed. If Canadians in NORAD object to the weaponization of space, or to other aspects of BMD policy, the U.S. will simply move that section of BMD to a command under its exclusive jurisdiction.

The U.S. has clearly shown that when it comes to what it considers its national security interests, it will not be constrained by the opinions of its friends and allies nor, even as it showed in Iraq, by the dictates of international law. It is an outright fantasy to believe that the Bush administration will defer to Canadian concerns regarding its flagship national security policy of BMD. Instead, Canadian participation in BMD will inevitably embrace and endorse the American policy agenda for missile defence, with no prospect for meaningful input into that agenda.

Third, honourable senators, BMD means less security for Canada. The system to be deployed in 2004 is, according to the Pentagon, aimed at protecting against an accidental missile firing by a nuclear weapons state, or an intentional missile launch by a so-called rogue state with only a limited number of missiles. If, as the American Physical Society claims, that system will be ineffective against even such a limited attack, then it will have to be supplemented with further developments, including the deployment of weapons in space, to function as planned.

Since the BMD system will never be 100 per cent effective, it will depend on a functioning arms control regime to limit the capacity of potential aggressors to overwhelm the system. In fact, it will depend on the arms control regime, while at the same time undermining the very foundations of that regime — the principle that nations agree to mutual disarmament in order to create a more peaceful environment for all.

It is understandably difficult to convince such states as North Korea to end their nuclear programs for good, while the U.S. is ready, willing and able to attack any nation, not in self-defence as provided for under Article 51 of the UN Charter, but whenever it deems a regime change to be sufficiently in its national interest.

BMD is an integral part of the U.S. defence policy, which includes the doctrine of pre-emption set out in the national security strategy and the development and use of nuclear weapons in warfare proposed by the Nuclear Posture Review. The missile defence system is intended to protect the U.S. homeland, but it will also shield U.S. forces deployed overseas. This is not merely a defensive system, but one that will actively contribute to U.S. offensive operations, including pre-emptive invasions such the recent U.S. actions in Iraq.

Instead of trying to shoot down missiles before they land with a limited rate of success, it would be more appropriate and effective to work to ensure that missiles are never launched in the first place. The only way to achieve this is through international cooperation, a longstanding focus of Canadian foreign policy. To succeed, cooperation requires parties on all sides to negotiate in genuine good faith, instead of proceeding unilaterally with programs that threaten and further antagonize potential adversaries.

Honourable senators, it is abundantly clear that the U.S. administration is rushing to deploy the opening phases of a missile defence system by the fall of 2004 in order to make a political statement to the American people prior to the 2004 presidential election. The present U.S. aggressiveness on missile defence is being driven by the White House, not by the scientific community. The military-industrial complex has virtual control of the present administration. This may well change when the American people, so traumatized by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, eventually recover their balance. Meanwhile, the reckless policies of the Bush administration are threatening the system of collective security painstakingly constructed over the last six decades.

I applaud the stand taken by Prime Minister Chrétien against the U.S.-led war on Iraq, which contravened the will and authority of the UN Security Council. However, our decision on BMD should not be a casualty of our willingness to stand up to the United States over Iraq. In respect of Iraq, we made our decision based on the values and interests of Canada and, as a result, have upheld our reputation as a good international citizen. In the discussions currently underway with the Americans on missile defence, we need to focus once again on the real values and interests of Canada: the maintenance of international security, the effective functioning of arms control regimes and the maintenance of a weapons-free space environment.

This is what a host of NGOs in Canada, including such important groups such as the Liu Institute, Project Ploughshares and the Group of 78, are now urging the government to pursue.

Honourable senators, Canada must not compromise its values by joining this imprudent U.S. military plan that scientists say will not work; that analysts say is destabilizing; and that ethicists say is distracting the world from investing in true human security. This is a critical moment for Canada to stand up for its values instead of abandoning them in deference to misguided and, perhaps, transitional American pursuits. Saying no to missile defence will strengthen Canada's ability to continue to push for a world ruled by international law, upheld through international cooperation.

On motion of Senator LaPierre, debate adjourned.