

THE SENATE OF CANADA  
The Hon. Douglas Roche, O.C.

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CANADA

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**Open Letter to Prime Minister Jean Chretien (to be published)**

The Rt. Hon. Jean Chretien, P.C., M.P.  
Prime Minister of Canada  
Room 309-S, Centre Block  
House of Commons  
O t t a w a  
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Dear Prime Minister,

You have done the right thing in delaying Canada's decision about whether or not to participate in the U.S. ballistic missile defence program.

I urge you to maintain a wary stance. Do not be taken in by fraudulent claims that this is about the defence of North America. It is not. It is about U.S. military control of space. It is about space wars of the future. It is about how the Bush Administration is turning its back on the emerging international legal system and trying to dominate the world with a 21<sup>st</sup> century military system that leaves other countries far behind.

Canada must not go down this road.

It may seem presumptuous of me to offer advice to a prime minister. But it is precisely my respect for your high office plus my background as Canada's former Ambassador for Disarmament and Chairman of the United Nations Disarmament Committee that impel me to speak out before it is too late.

I have just returned from 10 days of meetings in Geneva on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty; it was evident to me how shocked many, if not most, nations are at the belligerence of the U.S. Administration toward efforts to build up international law for peace and security today. Although Iraq is a prime example of U.S. stridency, the issues surrounding the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction go far beyond that subject. Nations are understandably resentful at the U.S. for abandoning the ABM Treaty, rejecting the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and developing a new "bunker buster" nuclear weapon.

The attempted domination of world events today by the U.S. and its diminishment of the United Nations has become the central subject. It is in this light that Canada must view the U.S. missile defence system.

Prime Minister, there are some who would misinform you that the ground-based interceptors the U.S. is now building in Alaska are not the “Star Wars” of President Ronald Reagan. In fact, the U.S. is now putting money into research for weapons in space, and the early stages of the missile defence system are inextricably linked to space weapons. A mix of ground and space sensors and weapons is planned.

A succession of U.S. government statements makes clear that the U.S. intends to control space. For example, the U.S. Space Command’s “Vision for 2020” states that the U.S. plans to dominate space with weapons “to protect U.S. interests and investment.” When a forthcoming space weapons capability is added to the present U.S. doctrine of pre-emptive attack, it is easy to see why nations around the world are seething at a country now employing naked power.

It is disingenuous for some in Canada to argue that this is “just an extended defence system” and that, even though we participate in it in some way, that will not alter Canadian opposition to weapons in space. Once Canada enters into the missile defence system, no matter how modest our participation, there will be no turning back from deeper involvement. 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 dominance.

Entry into missile defence equals the end of Canadian policy opposing weapons in space. That is the stark fact the government must face.

Why, then, should Canada give its assent to missile defence? I can appreciate the pressures being put on you to do so. You are told that the Americans are going to go ahead anyway, and our defence is continentally tied to the U.S. To keep NORAD viable, we must join in with its development in this new field. Canada will lose out on contracts. Having “offended” the U.S. by not participating in the Iraq war, we must now reaffirm out friendship. Like it or not, Canada’s future is with the U.S.

If these arguments of expediency are accepted, then Canada will be sacrificing its prime value of building peace and security through the development of international law. Canada could make a tremendous contribution by leading the way in the development of a global treaty banning all weapons in space. China and Russia have collaborated on a Working Paper for a future legal agreement on space. Why leave this critical matter just to them? Why cannot Canada take the lead with a new “Ottawa Process” leading to a ban on weapons in space?

I urge you to remember that present U.S. aggressiveness on missile defence is being driven by the White House, not the scientific community. The military-industrial complex has virtual control of the Administration. This may well change when the American people, so traumatized by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, recover their balance.

Do not, therefore, throw away Canada's potential to uphold and extend Canadian values by signing on to a spurious U.S. military plan that may erode as conditions change.

By all means, let the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade keep holding informal discussions with their counterparts in Washington. Just do not enter into formal negotiations. Keep kicking this can down the road.

With best wishes, I remain,

Yours sincerely,

Douglas Roche, O.C.  
Senator