


STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL DEFENCE AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

COMITÉ PERMANENT DE LA DÉFENSE NATIONALE ET DES ANCIENS COMBATTANTS

EVIDENCE

[Recorded by Electronic Apparatus]

Thursday, March 23, 2000

• 0901 

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Pat O'Brien (London—Fanshawe, Lib.)): I would like to call to order this meeting of the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs. Colleagues will know that this is going to be an RMA and NMD day. We meet twice, you'll recall—again this afternoon with ministers Eggleton and Axworthy.

This morning we have Mr. Paul Heinbecker with us from Foreign Affairs. We were kidding before the meeting, but I don't think it's a secret that there are possible different perspectives on this proposed NMD system. I think it's very important we examine all points of view and the pros and cons of this if we're to offer any kind of advice to the Minister of National Defence down the road a little bit.

Just to set the stage, in case colleagues missed it, the proposed missile test for April has been recently postponed by a month, until May. That will be the next test by the Americans.

So with that brief introduction, I would like to welcome Mr. Heinbecker here this morning. Perhaps you could introduce your colleagues. We're happy to hear your remarks today.

Mr. Paul Heinbecker (Assistant Deputy Minister, Global and Security Policy, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm accompanied by Paul Meyer, who is the director general for international security in the foreign affairs department. In the rows behind me there are other officials from Foreign Affairs and DND.

I hope what I'm going to present to you is actually a balanced view of this issue, although I will draw out some of the downsides of it.

[Translation]


Thank you for inviting me to participate in these hearings today. As a senior official from the Department of Foreign Affairs, I would like to share with you some perceptions which I hope you may find useful.

I will not be speaking on behalf of the Government of Canada or indeed on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. First of all, we must remember that the National Missile Defence program is an American program, the United States has not yet decided to deploy it, and the US Government has not officially invited the Canadian Government to participate in it.

The NMD program raises very large issues for Canada, and our endorsement of it, or not, would have very far-reaching consequences. An eventual NMD decision would be taken by the government in light

of a wide range of factors.

Before discussing some of those factors, it would perhaps be helpful for me to provide some details on NMD for those of you who have not had time to study this question.

• 0905 

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Heinbecker. I thought there was a point of order.

Now that I've stopped you, we're happy to hear whatever you want to say. We have had a pretty good briefing, as you probably are aware, from Canadian General George Macdonald, DCINC of NORAD. Some of us had the opportunity to go there and visit, and he was here and gave the committee a very extensive briefing on how the system would work. I wasn't sure if you were aware of that, and since I'd misinterpreted my colleague's hand, I thought I'd throw that in.

But back to you, sir. We're happy to hear your submission.

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: I've read General Macdonald's testimony.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: I'm not going to cover the same ground, at least not from the same perspective.

The Chair: Right.

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: The proponents' argument is that the acquisition by potential rogue states of intercontinental ballistic missiles, ICBMs, with biological, chemical, or nuclear payloads poses a growing threat to U.S. homeland security; that U.S. foreign policy is being undermined as a consequence; and that this is a new strategic factor. They also argue that a defensive capability would provide the United States with an alternative to nuclear retaliation in the event of an inadvertent or even intentional launch on the United States.

Two recent developments underscore their thinking. The first is the bipartisan Rumsfeld report, which concluded that the U.S. could face an ICBM threat from a rogue state in as little as five years from the date of a decision by that state to acquire a capability. Indeed, according to Rumsfeld, the warning times that the U.S. could expect of new threatening ballistic missile developments and deployments were being reduced to the point that the U.S. could expect little or no warning of operational deployments.

The second factor is of course the testing in the summer of 1998 by the North Koreans of the Taepo Dong 1 missile, and the fact that they are apparently working on the Taepo Dong 2, with a greater range.

A rogue state with an ICBM could hamstring American foreign policy options by effectively holding American cities hostage. In fact U.S. arms control adviser and ABM negotiator John Holum said recently at Stanford University that the U.S. did not believe states like North Korea or Iran were likely to use their missiles as operational weapons of war, but rather as weapons of coercive diplomacy to limit U.S. freedom to act in a crisis.

In signing the National Missile Defense Act, President Clinton established four criteria that would govern a decision. These were whether the threat is materializing; whether the technology is ready; whether the system is affordable—and this is the one I'm going to talk about mostly today—whether the implications for national security, including arms control and disarmament regimes, relations with Russia, and the impact of the decision on allies, are also affordable.


Each of these considerations is important, and I think I should make the point that the deployment decision has not yet been made and, strictly as a matter of fact, might not be made by this or even succeeding administrations. It's worth reminding ourselves that this is the third time national missile defence has come to the fore in Washington—first in the late sixties under President Johnson and Secretary McNamara, and then in the eighties under President Reagan.

Many of the arguments, especially the con arguments, are the same now as they were then. Moreover, while Governor Bush is on record as being strongly in favour of national missile defence, Vice-President Gore's position is considerably more qualified. Deployment is therefore not inevitable.

[*Translation*]

Where would an NMD system be located? Current US planning is for the initial deployment of 100 ground-based interceptor rockets at a single site in Alaska. Theoretically all of the USA, including Hawaii, could be protected from that spot.

The US apparently needs to upgrade and use radar equipment located in two other countries to track incoming missiles and to guide the interceptor. According to our information, neither of these two countries has as yet assented to the use of its territory. As currently envisioned, none of the NMD components, launchers or radars would be based on Canadian territory.

• 0910 

The US does not currently need Canadian territory to implement the program. A further phase is envisioned by Washington, with greater capability and an additional site for further interceptors, possibly on the East Coast, possibly in North Dakota. There has been talk in Washington by proponents of MND of subsequent phases.

[*English*]

I think I should correct a point you made in your introduction, and that is that the decision that was made this week moves the deployment readiness review date to the end of July. The test will be at the end of June—

The Chair: I would ask anyone with cell phones, including myself, to please make sure they're off when you're here in this meeting. Thank you.

Sorry, Mr. Heinbecker. That's the new technology, I guess. It's not just NMD that could be debatable; cell phones could be debatable.

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: When we were negotiating the UN resolution on Kosovo at the G-8 meeting in Bonn, every single delegation had cell phones in front of them and they were on. Security was completely out the window. Phones were ringing constantly.

In any case, the next test has been rescheduled for the end of June, which pushes the deployment readiness review to the end of July and no decision by a president before late summer. It's important to remember that none of the developmental tests that are being conducted are being conducted in what might be called operational conditions. U.S. authorities would like to have at least two successful tests for a decision to deploy.

There have been calls recently for the U.S. administration to delay the deployment decision, primarily for technological reasons. A Pentagon panel recommended in November 1999 that additional tests be conducted before a decision is taken to deploy. On both sides of the aisle in the U.S. Senate... For example, Senator Leahy of Vermont and Senator Hagel of Nebraska have raised the possibility of


deferring the decision.

NMD raises large issues. First and foremost, no national missile defence is permitted under the terms of the ABM Treaty signed by the Soviet Union and the United States, hence the discussions that are underway. I've read some of the testimony and I had the impression that people may not have understood the significance of the Russian ABM system around Moscow, so I think I'd better say what that's about.

Under the ABM Treaty, as amended in 1974, each side is allowed to protect either its capital city or one intercontinental ballistic missile field, not both, and not the national territory. The Soviet Union chose Moscow and the United States chose a missile field near Grand Forks. The Soviet Union installed its system. The United States was going to install it but abandoned those plans. There are serious doubts about the efficacy of the Soviet system around Moscow.

The goal of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty is to ensure that deterrence works. Deterrence is based on mutual vulnerability. The premise is that since each side can destroy the other, even after suffering a devastating first strike, neither side will risk initiating an attack on the other.

Motivating the negotiation of the ABM Treaty at the time, back in the late 1960s and early 1970s, was the fear that if one side had an effective missile defence system, then it could carry out a first strike on the other with less fear of retaliation, because its defence system could then stop whatever was left of the other side's nuclear forces. It was further feared that a national missile defence system would touch off a spiral of offensive weapons development as each side sought to give itself the capability to overcome the other side's defences.

• 0915 

Such a race was rightly regarded as both expensive and dangerous. It was and remains more cost-effective at the margin to build offensive systems than defensive systems. The two sides agreed therefore that mutual vulnerability has provided the basis of strategic stability between the United States and Russia.

What's happening now? As both sides agree, an NMD system would be inconsistent with the ABM Treaty. The U.S. has engaged the Russians in talks about amending the treaty. The Americans are attempting to persuade the Russians both that the threat from rogue states is real and must be countered and that the size and character of the NMD system that the U.S. would deploy against that threat would not undermine Russian deterrence.

The Russians accept that proliferation of missile capability and weapons of mass destruction does create a new situation. Indeed, although they admit this less readily, the export of Russian technology has contributed materially to that proliferation. Still, the Russians maintain that they are closer to the rogue states than the U.S. is and therefore potentially in greater danger than the United States is.

Seen from the Russian perspective, they are expected to accept the expansion of NATO. They are expected to reduce their nuclear weapons under the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaties, START and START II, to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and to acquiesce in the transformation of the ABM Treaty. This would permit the U.S. a defence against nuclear weapons, but not Russia, because in practice they couldn't afford it. It will be a tough sell.

The Russians apparently believe that a U.S. national missile defence system would eventually undermine their nuclear deterrent forces, the more so with the degradation those forces are experiencing for lack of funding and with the reductions foreseen in the START II and III treaties. They also argue that other methods can and should be used to counter any rogue state threat. That's the nub of the diplomatic issue between them.

Canada is not a party to the ABM Treaty, but we do consider it a cornerstone of the international arms control and disarmament regime. I believe Canada would be open to seeing the treaty changed if both parties can agree and if strategic stability can be maintained and a new arms race avoided. It would obviously concern us if the treaty were unilaterally abrogated, because we fear it could set in train a series of consequences that could prove dangerous.

There are several considerations that would figure in any eventual Canadian decision whether to join an NMD program. These are, among other things, whether an NMD system would make Canada more or less secure; whether and how much such a decision, especially a negative decision, could be expected to affect Canadian economic relations with the United States; how such a decision, positive or negative, would affect Canadian foreign policy; how much NMD participation would cost. It is expected that the development of the U.S. program will cost about \$11.5 billion over the next five years and that deployment would cost more, something like \$28 billion over a life cycle of 20 years. So it's an expensive program.

A further question to weigh is how and how much a negative Canadian decision would affect Canadian defence relations with the United States. Defence relations would be impacted by a negative decision. Some Canadians argue, for example—and I think General Macdonald was one—that were we not to subscribe to NMD, NORAD would at least atrophy and possibly disappear. Such an outcome does not strike us as preordained.

Certainly were Canada not to participate and if the NMD mission were awarded to U.S. space command, changes would be required in the way NORAD works, but NORAD would likely retain those existing missions where Canadian participation was not an issue. A good argument can be made that were the United States to unilaterally abrogate the ABM Treaty and should the Russia-U.S. relationship turn hostile again as a consequence, long-range Russian aviation equipped with cruise missiles could again be a factor and NORAD and Canadian airspace could grow again in significance.

• 0920 

The U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense, John Hamry, recently observed that irrespective of the decision Canada makes on NMD—and he made it clear he would welcome Canadian endorsement—it would still be important for the U.S. to have this ongoing partnership through NORAD.

The government would also need to consider an NMD decision in the context of other bilateral security issues. Terrorism, crime, drug trafficking, cyber-defence, and the protection of critical infrastructure are all changing the American mindset and have implications for us. Taken together—however Canada responds to NMD—they add up to a significant challenge in Canada-U.S. security relations.

Last but not least, the government would obviously not make an NMD decision without weighing both the pros and cons of the NMD system. To what extent should we share the Rumsfeld report's assessment of the threat? Should we equate security with invulnerability, as the Americans increasingly do?

The Rumsfeld report is based not on probabilities but on possibilities. We are studying it and consulting with the Americans on both the technical and political issues that the report and the NMD issue raise. It may be of interest to know that the NATO alliance is currently not united on either the seriousness of the threat portrayed in the Rumsfeld report, or the appropriateness of NMD as a response.

Deterrence, diplomacy, and pre-emption remain options in dealing with rogue states. Diplomacy between the United States and North Korea is well underway, as it is between others and North Korea, including now Canada. The goal is to persuade North Korea to set aside its own nuclear programs and curtail ICBM tests. North Korea has not become much easier to read, but in any case no further North Korean ICBM tests have taken place since 1998.

As for other threats mentioned in the Rumsfeld report, changes in governments do happen, even in Iran, as the first hopeful signs indicate.


Another key question is whether NMD would be an appropriate military response if we concluded that the rogue state threat was emerging. A good number of Americans, including former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense Joe Nye, now at Harvard, have said that a ballistic missile attack is the least likely means by which a rogue state would attack the United States. There would be no doubt where the missile came from, and not much doubt about the consequences for the perpetrator.

Perhaps more important, cruise missiles: 70 countries have cruise missiles now, mostly on ships; unmanned aircraft launched from freighters; tramp steamers sailing into major ports, for example the port of New York; the proverbial suitcase bomb or car trunk bomb; and even made-in-the-U.S.A. weapons of mass destruction, as we've seen in the case in Japan, seem more plausible near-term threats. There is currently little effective defence against any of these threats beyond intelligence queuing, i.e., warning by intelligence means. The NMD program would offer little or nothing in this area.

I should add that does not, in the minds of the proponents of NMD, mean the United States should not defend itself against ICBMs if it can defend itself against them.

Would NMD work as planned? Whether it would do so outside of developmental test conditions is a vital question. My own personal view is that it would be unwise to bet against the technology eventually working, especially where the money for it is no object and the sense of national vulnerability is so deeply felt. Others, notably U.S. Senator Biden, have questioned whether it would work in practice, and whether it would not lead to a dependence on a defence capability that might not function.

A further question is whether NMD would be cost-effective. That would depend on how the costs were calculated. In straight dollar terms, it strikes me that NMD would be quite affordable for the United States, although that would obviously be for them to judge. Were the Americans eventually to seek a more robust, layered system to defend against large-scale missile attack, the financial costs would become daunting, even for the United States.

• 0925 

In political terms, NMD costs could be very high for the United States and others, including Canada. If Russia and the United States cannot reach agreement on amending the ABM Treaty, and if the United States unilaterally abrogates the treaty, there could be significant consequences.

The ABM Treaty has been the key to the strategic arms limitation talks and, more recently, to the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, or START. It has permitted the "build-down" of missiles we have witnessed in recent years.

START I saw a reduction to 6,000 deployed strategic warheads on each side. START II calls for a reduction to 3,500 on each side. The United States has ratified START II, and the Russians have not ratified START II but have stated their intention to do so in the spring following their presidential election. As and when they are so ratified, Russia and the U.S. would move on to START III and reduce strategic weapons on both sides further, possibly to as low as 1,000 to 1,500 each, but more likely to 2,000 to 2,500 each. For the first time also, Russian tactical nuclear weapons, of which they have a very large number, would also be on the negotiating table.

These treaties all depend on an assumption of stability in terms of the strategic balance. All could be renounced by Russia if the ABM Treaty were abrogated.

Were they to be so renounced, the projected nuclear weapons reductions would likely not be made and the Russians could actually increase the number of their weapons somewhat by, among other things,

putting three warheads on their new Topol-M missiles, rather than the one warhead that is permitted under START II.

There could quite possibly be a knock-on effect for other arms control and related treaties, including, crucially, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and the envisaged negotiations of the fissile material cut-off treaty.

Whether strategic stability would endure in these conditions is not certain, but it seems unlikely, because if one country achieved invulnerability, others would feel exposed and attempt to compensate. The Russians apparently worry that NMD would ultimately undermine their own strategic deterrent and provide the basis for a U.S. breakout, making the U.S. invulnerable.

This seems like a far-fetched scenario to Canadians, but it is based on judgments of capability and not intent, which is the same norm the United States has used for many years to judge the Russian threat, and the one we apply to North Korea as well.

The Russians are not apparently concerned so much with current U.S. national missile technology as with the latitude a significantly revised treaty would give the United States to develop more advanced technology in the future.


I should remind you that the U.S., for its part, says a limited NMD system is all they have in mind, and it would be unable to defend against a large-scale Russian attack.

The NMD system would have a significant impact on China's current strategic nuclear forces. Chinese missiles are apparently de-alerted and de-mated, and the Chinese doctrine is "no first use". Whether that stance would continue in a world of NMD is not clear.

Both Russia and China believe, as a minimum, their own geostrategic positions would suffer vis-à-vis that of the United States. Although neither, especially the Russians, can afford an arms race, it is quite possible that new offensive arms programs could be triggered by NMD, and Russia or China—possibly both and possibly in cooperation with each other—could build more offensive weapons. A potential alliance of Russian technology and Chinese prosperity would be cause for considerable concern.

Whatever the Chinese did in response would potentially raise questions as well for Japan, India, and then Pakistan.

It is evident that the issues a unilateral abrogation of the ABM Treaty would raise are significant and far-reaching. Further, as Henry Kissinger pointed out in a recent *Los Angeles Times* article, you don't have to have a doctorate in political science to know that the middle of an election campaign is not the best time to make a decision that's so fraught with major consequences.

• 0930 

Talks between the United States and Russia continue. There may well be a summit meeting this spring or during the G-8 meetings in Japan. U.S. negotiators are trying to persuade Russia that the best way to save the ABM Treaty is to amend it and that the ABM Treaty can and should be changed in ways that will safeguard and indeed enhance each other's security.

The Americans are apparently also offering cooperation in a number of fields, from joint intelligence assessment to assistance in restoring the Russian ballistic missile early warning network.

The Russians are trying to persuade the Americans that U.S. and Russian security can better be assured by other means. The Russians are apparently making counterproposals in the hope of persuading the Americans that there are viable alternatives to national missile defence, or at least that the decision

should be deferred.

Neither side is talking in terms of deadlock and both sides have told us they remain hopeful that the other side will ultimately be persuaded. We are following, and will continue to follow, these discussions very closely.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Heinbecker.

Before we go to questions from colleagues, I'll just recall for all of us on the committee, and perhaps for you yourself, that in January a number of us had an opportunity, as I said, to go to Colorado Springs. It became clear that there was a very high level of concern among the Canadian Forces, from General Macdonald on down, at Cheyenne Mountain, and that they were beginning to be marginalized. There was beginning to be a perception, or misperception—I don't know which word to use—by their American counterparts that there was no interest in this in Canada.

We then met with our Minister of National Defence, Mr. Eggleton, and explained to him what we felt were very serious and valid concerns of our Canadian Forces, that at least this topic needed to be discussed in Ottawa. Although we didn't need his blessing, frankly, as you know, we certainly wanted to have his support behind our committee undertaking these hearings.

That is really how this topic came to be the subject of hearings. As I understand it, following our lead, if you will, foreign affairs has now had at least one or two hearings on the same topic.

I think it's very important that we at least air the issue and hear all the views, including the views you've expressed today. We're attempting to probe the issue with these hearings. Frankly, I think it was high time, as a country, we did begin to do that.

With that recollection of how we got into this process, we'll start now with Mr. Hanger.

Not just to Mr. Hanger but to all of us, this particular topic has the potential for very long questions and very long answers. It's up to you, colleagues, but there are seven minutes for both, and I'm going to ask you to be careful on that. I'm sure a lot of colleagues, including me when I get a chance, will want to ask questions of Mr. Heinbecker.

With that caution, then, I'll start with Mr. Hanger for seven minutes.

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, sir, for appearing before our committee.

On February 29, General Macdonald appeared before this committee and stated that if the United States decides to go ahead with a national missile defence, and Canada does not support placing this defence system under NORAD, then this would effectively represent the initial stage of the end of NORAD. Now, that's his viewpoint, stated very clearly before this committee.


Do you agree with that statement?

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: I certainly respect his view, but as I think I said in the text of my remarks, no, we don't agree that this is necessarily going to follow.

I did say as well that in a world where there was an NMD system and a unilaterally abrogated ABM Treaty, and if, as a consequence—and it would be predictable, I think, although not certain—the Russian-American relationship turned hostile, then the air defence mission and some of the other

missions of NORAD would become more important.

I know there's some discussion of what the Americans think. As always, there are a lot of Americans and a lot of views.

• 0935 

It is clear that Deputy Secretary of Defense Hamre would welcome Canadian participation in the system. He's said it publicly. He said it to Canadian journalists in a fairly unusual press conference he held in Washington. But he also said, in that same interview, that NORAD would remain important and Canada-U.S. cooperation through NORAD would remain important.

You're going to have the two ministers this afternoon here to whom you can ask that question as well, but they will be here on the issue of extending NORAD, which is certainly U.S. government policy.

Mr. Art Hanger: It's interesting to note, though, when questioned further about that particular point, just how the NORAD arrangement would continue with Canadian involvement. No one can really describe exactly how that arrangement's going to be made.

Comments, even from the chairman of this committee, as noted when he took a trip down there... Because of those specific...and I wouldn't call them "tensions", but there are requirements now to cut certain Canadian personnel out of strategic meetings, etc. It seems to be a growing viewpoint that it would be a very difficult time to make legitimate arrangements for Canadian personnel to participate, which effectively sidelines or marginalizes any Canadian. From what I understand, NORAD would be almost ineffective, in time, or non-existent.

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: That, of course, is what the debate turns over. I've been down to Colorado Springs also, and I've talked to the Canadian military down there and to the American general in charge. There's no question that if space command were awarded the NMD mission there would have to be adjustments in the way NORAD functions. But that doesn't mean, as we've been saying, that the existing missions would not have to still be fulfilled.

That's why, I would submit, both sides think it's worth extending this treaty at this time. Those missions are valid and important, and it's a good idea to get NORAD extended before we get deep into the political season in the United States.

Mr. Art Hanger: If Canada opted out, do you think this would actually suit Canada's national interests?

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: My answer is that if I knew for sure this NMD system was a good idea, I would advocate now that we participate in it. If I knew for sure the NMD system was a bad idea, I would advocate now that we not participate in it.

I think the difficulty is that in the current circumstances, we can't be sure which one of the two it actually is until we see how the Russians and the Americans are able to work this out—*if* they're able to work it out.

As I said in my remarks, I've talked recently to people on both sides who are very close to the negotiations, and neither of them is talking in terms of deadlock. They both are making proposals to each other. What they're trying to do is not compatible. The Americans want to open up the treaty through a protocol that would allow their limited system. The Russians are saying, well, let's do other things that will enhance your security and that will make it not necessary to amend the ABM Treaty in the way you're talking about.

I don't know how this is going to work out. Part of the reason I can't know is that the election is coming

in Russia in a few days now. Until they have a government that really is looking at this issue—and at the moment they're much more preoccupied with the election campaign than they are with this issue—one can't know.

I know the Americans, when they spoke to Putin—I think Mrs. Albright saw him—expressed some guarded optimism, as did British Prime Minister Blair. Whether that translates into reaching an agreement in this area, I don't know.

• 0940 

That would still leave, by the way, a problem with the Chinese and with others, even if the Americans and the Russians were able to work it out. Like the Russians, the Chinese consider that this system is actually aimed at them rather than at rogue states.

Mr. Art Hanger: Thank you.

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Hanger.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Laurin, please go ahead. You have five minutes.

Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ): Deputy Minister, I wanted to speak to you about tests which were to take place in April but have been put forward to May or June. Would these tests of the new antiballistic system not contravene the ABM Treaty? Deploying the system would certainly do so, but would the fact of carrying out trials not also contravene the treaty?

Mr. Paul Meyer (Director General, International Security Bureau, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada): Under the treaty it is actually possible to carry out tests. But the tests have to be carried out at a specific site and it has been done at the facilities which the Americans currently use for these tests. Thus it is possible to carry out tests under the treaty, but certain conditions must be respected, and the nature of the tests must also meet the requirements.


Mr. René Laurin: There must have been an assessment of the possible reactions to the unilateral deployment of such a system. If the United States do not deploy the system, there would surely be no reaction from Russia, but it might encourage other countries which we fear: rogue states, as they are called. And if the United States decides to act unilaterally, Russia will surely react. Can you tell us what sort of assessment the United States have carried out? Do they feel it is more serious to have a reaction from the Russians than from some rogue states?

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: I do not know if the question arises in this manner, but the Americans definitely have ties with the Russians which work. They are almost sure of persuading the Russians to change the treaty one of these days. I do not think that the absence of an NMD system would be an encouragement for rogue countries. There are other ways of discouraging them: there could be a massive reaction on the part of the United States, for example; there is diplomacy, and the Americans have undertaken discussions with North Korea; there is also the right of pre-emption. If the United States are really convinced that the North Koreans are going to do something, they have the power to stop them.

So there is diplomacy, there are reprisals and there is preemption.

Mr. René Laurin: Then I do not understand why the United States have made such an assessment of the Korean threat. During discussions we often hear that there is a threat from North Korea and a threat from China. If the United States can protect themselves against Korea were that country to develop ballistic weapons, why are they using this argument to justify the deployment of anti-ballistic missile

systems?

• 0945 

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: As I see it, the Americans are increasingly defining their security in terms of invulnerability, rather than being satisfied with the level of security which they have had up to now. The Americans feel that if it is possible to be invulnerable, then it is preferable to be so.

Mr. René Laurin: You spoke of far-reaching consequences for Canada whether we endorse the program or not. We also know that at the moment, the United States have not invited us to take part.

Would the consequences be more serious for Canada if it participates, or if it abstains? How do you see the situation?

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: That is for the government to determine. It is difficult to tell at the moment, since it is quite possible there will be an agreement between the United States and Russia.

Mr. René Laurin: Mr. Heinbecker, do you feel the consequences would be political or economic in nature?

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: To my way of thinking, the consequences would be political rather than economic. There might also be economic consequences but I think they are more likely to be political ones.

The Chairman: Please be very brief.

Mr. René Laurin: My next question is not very brief so I will wait until the next turn.

The Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Laurin.

[*English*]

For clarification, before I go to Mr. Proud, if we recall from the briefing we had, the concern of the Americans is that they can't protect themselves at this point from an incoming missile from a rogue state, and the prediction is that within five years the North Koreans would have the ability to reach North America with a missile. So I think it's important we're clear that they don't have the means now to stop an incoming missile.

Mr. Proud, for seven minutes, please.


Mr. George Proud (Hillsborough, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First, I'd like to get some clarification. With the United States saying this NMD is a limited defence system, why would this cause Russia and China to have so much anxiety about it? Why are they so opposed to something like this? If this is all it is, as they say it is, a limited defence system, what ramifications would it have against them?

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: I think the issue is that they don't believe it's going to stay a limited system. They worry that if you change the ABM Treaty to permit a defence, that's the beginning of a process that will lead to more and more effective defences. That would mean, particularly in Russia, where, as I said, they are supposed to reduce their weapons under the START I and START II agreements, and reduce them further under the foreseen START III agreement, and as they're losing the capability just because they don't have the finances to maintain their systems as they should, they would find

themselves in a position where the United States would have a massive first-strike capability and a significant defence capability. They would therefore be in a position where they could not threaten the United States but it could threaten them. So I think that's the argument the Russians would make.

As for the Chinese, it's even more complicated. The Chinese also are worried about the situation in Taiwan and the possibility that the United States would provide a theatre missile defence—we haven't talked about that, but that's another area—for Taiwan. It also complicates relations with Japan, because Japan and the United States are cooperating in technology development for theatre missile defence, and the Chinese have a much smaller nuclear deterrent force than the Russians have. As far as I can tell from what they say, the Chinese actually think the current national missile defence system would be enough to nullify the Chinese deterrent. So there's a problem there.

• 0950 

It's a defensive system, but combined with an offence, it makes it different strategically.

On the point you were making, Mr. Chairman, the United States does not now have a national missile defence system. But it does have, as I said, the capacity to dissuade other people either through diplomacy or through the existence of a massive deterrent, massive retaliation, or actual pre-emption.

Mr. George Proud: You mentioned in your remarks about the NATO countries that some of them have been concerned about this, as are other people. How do the European countries feel about the missile threat directed at them? Are they concerned about it? Do they have any kind of system in mind that they're going to set up to take care of this?

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: I said NATO is not united. I could have been more fully accurate if I had said the Europeans have serious doubts about this system for several reasons. One is that they don't share the Rumsfeld report's assessment of the gravity of the situation. Maybe they can one day be persuaded about that, but at the moment I think that's a fair comment.

Secondly, as I was saying, whether a national missile defence system is the appropriate response to that threat, even if it's a real threat, is also doubted in Europe, just because an ICBM seems like a very unlikely way to threaten the United States when you can do it more cheaply and more effectively through any number of other ways.

That is why the Americans are making the foreign policy argument. They're saying to the Europeans, it doesn't make us a better ally if we feel vulnerable. The Europeans have been making the argument that there should be a kind of equal vulnerability and that security should be indivisible in the alliance, and if the United States is invulnerable and Europe is not, then that will change that outlook.

The Americans argue that they would not be a better ally if they were vulnerable than if they were not vulnerable. On the contrary, they would argue that they would be a better ally if they were sure they were not going to suffer from defending the Europeans.


That argument is not really accepted by the Europeans, and they are also saying if the Americans create this system and if the Russians respond in a way that they fear they might, then Europe's vulnerability goes up, not down, and then Europe itself would have to think about creating a national missile defence system. That would drain a lot of money away from defence in Europe at a time when they're trying to create a European defence capability, and they would have to spend a large amount of money on missile defence.

Fundamentally, I think it's fair to say the Europeans are not yet persuaded either about the threat or about the appropriate means to respond to that threat.

The Chair: George, you have one minute.

Mr. George Proud: We've had people before the committee say NMD is not presently technically possible; it's not ready to do the job. If this is so, why would the United States be pursuing it? What are your thoughts on that?

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: I'm not competent to talk about the technology, but I can say this. The Americans launched the star wars initiative back in the mid-1980s. It was highly ambitious, and in the end it turned out to be too ambitious and didn't work. Nevertheless, what they're working on now is a more limited version of that. They're putting a lot of resources into it. Technology has moved on in the 15 years in the meantime. They probably believe they can actually get the system to the point where it's going to work. I'm sure there are people in the ballistic missile defence office in Washington who are confident of that. So it's a matter of developing the technology to the point where it's reliable enough.

• 0955 

If this is to prevent the North Koreans or other people from having a coercive effect on U.S. diplomacy, whether the NMD system has to reach a very high test of capability is a good question. Although the rogue states may know that you have a defensive system, they don't know how well it works, so that would, I think, remove the argument that somebody would hold Los Angeles captive if the United States wanted to interfere in what they were going to do.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Proud and Mr. Heinbecker.

Now we'll go to Mr. Earle for seven minutes, please.

Mr. Gordon Earle (Halifax West, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Personally, I'd like to thank Mr. Heinbecker and Mr. Meyer for coming here today and enlightening us on what's a very complicated but yet a very important topic.

The thing that concerns me a bit is that to date it has been kind of difficult to get a handle on what the official government position might be with regard either to supporting or not supporting this particular system. Maybe we'll get more information on that this afternoon.

Thus far, what we seem to have is two different departmental views, or at least this is what I've gathered from the witnesses who have appeared. We have a view by National Defence people that seems to be leaning in the direction of giving the U.S. the kind of support they want on this issue. Then we have Foreign Affairs, which, from what I've read and heard today, seems to be leaning in the direction of not supporting this NMD project. This is an issue that's important and involves both departments. Do you have a committee of officials from Foreign Affairs and International Trade and from National Defence working together and sitting down periodically to discuss this particular topic?

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: I'm not sure I would accept the characterization of the two departments' positions. I would say that we're standing on the same ground, and they're leaning forward and we're leaning a bit backward. But—

Mr. Gordon Earle: Even with that, do you have a committee with persons from both departments?

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: The other thing I would say is that we work very closely together. I don't think there has ever been a time when relations between DND and the foreign affairs department have been any closer on security issues. I would have to say that we don't have a formal committee, but we work together on an almost daily basis with, for example, assistant deputy minister Calder and director general Bon, who have appeared before the committee. We know what they think, and they know what we

think. We've met together when Americans have come to brief us, and we'll be meeting together in a few days with some more Americans who are coming to brief us.

So it's a pretty cooperative relationship. We have to look, obviously, at the international perspective and the arms control perspective in particular, and they have to look at the defence perspective in particular, but we both have the security of Canada in mind with those two perspectives.

Mr. Gordon Earle: I understand the common goal. I was wondering about the work relationship.

That answer may foreshadow the answer to my next two questions, which are basically along the same lines. Because of the international importance of this—and you touched upon Russia and China and some of the other countries that have concerns—is there any kind of international committee involving representatives from your department and the respective departments of other countries working together specifically on this issue, rather than just the normal diplomatic things that take place from day to day? Is there a committee working on this internationally?

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: I'll ask my colleague to answer that.

Mr. Paul Meyer: There's the NATO North Atlantic Council, and I would say that it has recently had a number of discussions on this issue. There has been a movement since the beginning of this year to have a subordinate committee at NATO begin to discuss on a more regular basis issues relating to NMD. That's the only multilateral organization I know of that's formally seized of this issue, although, as you can appreciate, it often comes up in other forums, such as the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, which has a larger membership.

• 1000 

Mr. Gordon Earle: My final question is along the same lines. Given the importance of this whole issue to the public at large—and, I would say, the world at large, because if we follow it through to its ultimate conclusion, if people end up unhappy about it, we could have a state of war—given that situation, and given the fact that quite often when we have important issues for the public we try to engage, as we would say, the stakeholders, is there any kind of working committee or other effort being made to work with the NGOs, the various groups that are involved with peace concerns, and any of the public at large? Are there any ongoing discussions with the public at large to get some input before final decisions are made on this issue?

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: I'll ask Paul to speak to it in a moment. Internationally I'm not sure, but nationally we certainly are meeting with NGOs and academics, and I know for certain that DND is doing the same thing.

Paul, do you have any information? Internationally I'm not sure, but I don't think so.

Mr. Paul Meyer: Not on the international level, but on a national basis DND has sponsored a series of four seminars this year. The next one takes place next month in Fredericton, which has as its topic Canada-U.S. defence issues. National missile defence figures prominently in those, and that involves invitations to academics and NGO representatives. Last month our own department sponsored a dedicated meeting with NGO and academic representatives on nuclear issues at large, but there was a panel talking about the ABM Treaty and national missile defences.

Mr. Gordon Earle: You mentioned that your department and National Defence are sponsoring things, but you said earlier that you're kind of leaning in opposite directions. Are you getting together on the results of those various discussions?

Mr. Paul Meyer: I should add that of course DND representatives were included in our consultations, and DFAIT representatives in DND consultations. Those DND ones, which I would say are the larger ones, are still in progress, but I understand that they will be preparing a record at the end. I know that we have prepared a summary record of our own consultations, which actually is available on a website in the department.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Earle.

Just by way of information and clarification, of course in initiating these hearings we're welcoming input from the public. You can see that already we've had several witnesses who are leaning in different directions but on the same ground, as Mr. Heinbecker so eloquently described it. A number of NGOs and other Canadians have asked to come to this committee and speak to this issue, and we're certainly going to provide every opportunity to hear as many people as we can.

I think the timeline is that we'd like to give some kind of advice to the Minister of National Defence before this Parliament recesses for the summer.

The point seems to come up in every hearing we have on this topic that the government has not taken a position. We are seized with this issue here—and Foreign Affairs, to the extent that they determine, has been seized with, and will be seized with, the issue—in order to help formulate a position or positions, different advice to different ministers perhaps, which will then go to cabinet, which then has the responsibility of developing the Canadian position. So we shouldn't be surprised that there isn't yet a definitive Canadian position. Otherwise, we wouldn't need these meetings. That will be for the cabinet to determine. I think that time is more imminent than perhaps we realize, and we're trying to make that clear with these hearings.

Those comments are made just to help clarify the process on this.

That concludes the first round of questions. We're going to start a second round with Mr. Hanger. I have a few questions I'd like to ask, so I'm going to ask my colleague Mr. O'Reilly to take the chair. I'm going to start the second round of five-minute questions with Mr. Hanger.

• 1005 

Mr. Art Hanger: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Regarding this issue of national security—and international stability is ever more realized, I believe, by the public in this country—I think the public in Canada really isn't totally aware of what this national defence system really means. There's never been a really sound debate on the issue. But I would suggest if they came to understand it more, they would basically agree with the need to support our allies.

Whenever there's a problem in the world, it seems the Americans are called upon to help solve it, and generally they're the first there. The Gulf War was one example. Their Patriot missile systems took out the Scuds of the Iraqis as they were flying toward Israel. They put those resources there at great cost to themselves, and the allies sort of tagged along.

Now we're talking about a defensive system that the Americans want to deploy to protect their own country as they see a threat emerging on their horizon. It seems that everyone else sort of drags their feet and puts up every barrier possible to dissuade them from doing such a thing. I find that passing strange.

But looking at it from Canada's point, doesn't Canada really have a vested interest in this missile defence, even though we're not a signatory to the ABM Treaty? The Canadian and American interests are linked very directly, economically and security-wise. Who is to say that a rogue state, given the rate

at which they're developing their technology, may not decide to send an armed weapon, a weapon of mass destruction, aimed at an American city, and with their technology not being as accurate as it should or could be, it hits a Canadian city? I think, just looking at it from those perspectives, we should be supporting this initiative of the Americans.


But be that as it may, what can Canada, in its position, do to further support our allies and help resolve these issues with, say, the Russians? Is Canada playing any role in that at all?

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: I'd like to answer that question directly, then I'll give you some background as well.

We are talking to the Russians and to the Americans. The position we have not yet taken is one of advocate on behalf of either. This goes back to my remarks earlier, what is in the best security interest of Canada? Obviously it's a security interest of Canada that the United States be secure. You're right, a rogue state with a not-very-accurate missile might end up hitting Canada rather than the United States. But even if it hit the United States, it would still be a catastrophe for Canada. So I wouldn't contest that issue very much.

The real issue there is that since the inception of the NPT agreement in the mid-sixties, Canada has painstakingly helped build up a treaty system that involves the non-proliferation treaty—the ABM Treaty is part of that. We now have a test ban treaty. There's a negotiation that will start, one hopes, one of these days on cutting off the production of fissile materials so no more nuclear weapons material can be produced. There is a whole treaty structure that is intended to bring a measure of security. If, to defend yourself against the possibility of a rogue state missile, this international structure is undermined...

And I think it could be undermined. Bear in mind what's been happening: the Indians and the Pakistanis have tested, and neither the Americans nor the Russians have ratified the CTBT treaty yet. I think this system is not quite as robust as it was, say, five years ago.

• 1010 

The question we have to ask ourselves is, in which sense is Canada more secure? If the international treaty system collapses, it would have two effects: more proliferation in a horizontal sense—in other words, there would be less restraint on other countries to get nuclear weapons—and more proliferation in a vertical sense, in that those countries that have them would give themselves more. That is a quite possible outcome. It's sort of the past that we've evolved from, but we could go back to that.

So the question is, in which way is Canada's security more likely to be protected? That's the debate we're having right now. Have the times changed so much that the rogue missile threat is now the predominant thing you have to worry about, or do we still have to worry about those very large stocks of nuclear weapons that exist around the world, and the possibility that the people who have them will add to them? Then you get into the sort of old Cold War calculus again.

So I don't think it's possible to take the view that Canadian security at this moment can easily be seen as being best safeguarded by joining the NMD system. This is a question we really have to weigh. There are serious pros and cons, and they're apples and oranges cons. I'm sorry for the lengthy...

The Acting Chair (Mr. John O'Reilly, (Haliburton—Victoria—Brock, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Heinbecker. You're just a little bit out of time.

[Translation]

Mr. Bertrand.

Mr. Robert Bertrand (Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Heinbecker, first of all I have to say that your presentation was so interesting it literally knocked me off my seat. It is probably just a question of clarification.

I found your opening remarks very interesting. When you were talking about the treaty which was signed in 1972, I believe, the ABM Treaty, you mentioned that at the time, both parties had the right to choose sites they wished to protect. Russia decided to protect Moscow and the United States decided to protect a missile sight, though finally they did not do so.

Why did the Americans not install a system?

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: I think that the short answer is that the Americans were not convinced that the system would work properly.

Mr. Robert Bertrand: But this clause was part of the treaty.

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: I'm sorry.

Mr. Robert Bertrand: The clause stating that the Americans could install a system was included in the treaty that both parties signed in 1972.

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: Yes, that is correct.

Mr. Robert Bertrand: I am not a lawyer, but could the Americans not say that they are exercising the right conferred upon them by the treaty negotiated in 1972 if they install this system? Is that technically possible?

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: They now have the right to install a missile system around Washington or around a missile site in North Dakota. They have the right to do so, but they have decided it is not worth the trouble. The Russians, on the other hand, have decided to protect Moscow. The important thing is that neither one is a national system. They may not set up a national missile system under the terms of the treaty.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. John O'Reilly): Thank you, Mr. Bertrand.

[English]

And congratulations on staying on your chair for the questions.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Bertrand: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.


[English]

The Acting Chair (Mr. John O'Reilly): As you may know, I've filed some complaints with the Board of Internal Economy about the junk that we use here, that it doesn't meet labour code, and that quite often this equipment we use in committees is pretty sad.

Can we go to Mr. Laurin, for five minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. René Laurin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

• 1015 

Deputy Minister, I would like to get back to Canada's role. Up to now, the United States have not asked Canada to take part in this project. I am wondering whether it is not at the request of Canada. I have the distinct impression that if the United States ask Canada to participate, we could only say yes, because the United States have too much power of persuasion over Canada for us to say no.

I feel that the only way Canada can avoid participating is if it is not asked to do so, and can then continue to wait. As you said earlier, it is a question of waiting to see whether it is good or bad if the treaty is or is not respected. Everything depends on how the parties react. Would it not be best for Canada to say nothing and wait things out in the hopes of remaining neutral? If Canada is going to remain neutral, would it not be best to say so right away? You will tell me that this is a question I should address to the Minister this afternoon because it is a political one. I am asking you however because after all you are deputy minister and you are involved in developing these policies. Do you believe that Canada can really espouse a policy of neutrality and play a role of negotiator between the two parties to help them to a better understanding?

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: I would like to comment a little on what you have said. It is true that the Americans have not asked us up to now, and I do not know exactly what their reasons are. There are probably some people in the United States who prefer to act alone without the participation of other countries; there are others who would certainly like us to help them.

There is also the question whether a refusal from Canada would send a message to the rest of the world. The Americans must be thinking about that as well. There is probably a combination of factors which explains why they have not asked us up to now.

Of course, the Americans themselves have not yet decided to go ahead with this program.

I do not know whether it would be possible for Canada to play a role of intermediary between the Russians and the Americans, particularly with regard to nuclear questions. We can speak to each side separately, we can encourage them, but I really do not think they would be very open to the idea of being guided by outsiders when it is a subject of such great importance to them. I think that is the way things are.

I have spoken to the Russians and I can say that they have a very sophisticated knowledge of American politics. And the Americans, such as Mr. Strobe Talbott, know the Russians very well. These people are involved in discussions, in negotiations, and we can encourage them to reach an agreement, but I do not think we can play the role of intermediary.

Mr. René Laurin: Deputy Minister, our committee invites experts like yourself so that we can make recommendations to the Minister. Do you feel this is a question which should be dealt with by the Department of Foreign Affairs rather than the Department of Defence?

• 1020 

This situation does not involve weapons, an attack, or the defence of Canada. It seems to me rather a question of politics and diplomacy.

What can the Committee on National Defence and Veterans' Affairs do to move things along?

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: What I can tell you is that the American negotiators are from the State Department and the Russian negotiators are from their Ministry of Foreign Affairs. But both sides have a team made up of military experts.

There is a great deal of foreign policy involved in this question; there is also a great deal of defence policy. Our concerns have to do with the security of Canada and how this can be assured. I think it would be appropriate for this committee to make recommendations if it wishes to do so.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. John O'Reilly): Thank you, Mr. Laurin.

[English]

You're out of time.

I think your question reminds us of the old high school dance. You don't want to ask someone to dance for fear they'll turn you down. So you go the diplomatic route and see if they'll accept. You get your friends to ask them before you ask them yourself. I don't know if that is the dilemma we're in here.

Mr. Robert Bertrand: Speak for yourself.

The Acting Chair (Mr. John O'Reilly): Anyway, we're five minutes to the rich. I'm the handsome Irishman and the other Irishman is the rich one. So we'll go to the rich Irishman now.

Mr. Pat O'Brien: Right. Thank you very much. I'm going to share that comment with your wife at another time. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

To my colleague Mr. Laurin, I just want to... I was pleased to hear your answer, Mr. Heinbecker, that this is properly before this committee. Let me remind my colleagues that it was this committee that saw the need to get this discussion going. Simply silence is not the appropriate response. Following our initiation of this topic, very appropriately within our purview, our colleagues on foreign affairs have now become seized with the issue. We don't develop a position through silence, or at least not the right one.

Mr. Heinbecker, I have four or five points. I'll try to present them very briefly one at a time. I know they're not simple questions, but I'd just ask you to be as brief as you can so I can get them in.

You mentioned that it's not preordained that if Canada were to say no to the missile system, NORAD would collapse. The fears of our Canadian Forces at Cheyenne Mountain about the marginalization they are already experiencing there because of our silence on this issue as a government... Is it not at least possible that this marginalization could continue on into a restructured NORAD? Is it not at least possible that could happen?

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: I don't have any doubt that there would be changes in the way NORAD would work. As for whether the marginalization our people feel would continue, I can't be sure of that, because it would depend on what happened in the international strategic environment.

Mr. Pat O'Brien: It's at least a possibility, isn't it?

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: Well, in the sense that everything is a possibility, that's a possibility.


Mr. Pat O'Brien: Thank you.

That question relates to our bilateral relations. You didn't speak of our wider bilateral relations, to my recollection. Is it not possible that if Canada were to say no to this system, that could have a deleterious effect on our wider bilateral relations?

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: I actually have it in the text, but I didn't use it in the interests of time, because I was already too long.

I'm giving you my personal judgment. I used to be in the embassy in Washington, and previous to that I was director for U.S. relations. So I have some background.

This is a very big relationship of huge reach. When one talks about the bilateral defence trade of about \$1 billion, you have to remember... I think it's about \$1 billion. Maybe it's \$1 billion of exports. That's about one-250th of the total. The relationship is immense. The integration economically is very far-reaching. I do not doubt that there are people in the United States who would resent it if we did not join the system.

• 1025 

On the other hand, we have been able to cope with all manner of ups and downs in the Canada-U.S. relationship over the years and I don't doubt that this would be another one. What I would say is that when you take the national missile defence, cyber-defence, terrorism, drug trafficking, cross-border crime, protection of critical infrastructure, all of those issues together, the sheer quantity of them changes the quality of the security relationships. But I think our relationship is so big that it will stand a lot of shocks.

Mr. Pat O'Brien: Thank you very much. I appreciate the answer. I fear, as a Canadian, it would have a deleterious effect potentially.

The Russian Professor Podvig, who appeared with Project Ploughshares, predicted that the Russians will make an accommodation on the ABM Treaty with the Americans. Can you give me a short answer as to whether you agree with that prediction on his part?

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: I don't think he knows.

Mr. Pat O'Brien: That's a very interesting answer. He didn't purport to have a crystal ball, but he was predicting that they would deal and that they may well regret it later. He was not sympathetic to this system and he was predicting they would deal.

You mentioned that the Europeans are not convinced that this missile system is a good idea. This week I spoke personally with elected British officials, non-elected British officials, and they indicated to me a fairly high level of interest in Britain in possible participation. They also indicated to me that they feel it is pretty likely the Americans will go ahead. Do you not think there is no monolithic European view? Isn't there a British view, etc.?

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: I've been talking with my British colleagues this week as well, and without revealing any of the confidences they gave to me, they take the view that they think this has such a head of steam up that it will happen, and the wise thing is to try to channel it into a direction that is less dangerous. If you ask them whether they think it should happen—and I don't know how I can put this any more indirectly—I don't think they're persuaded that NMD is a good idea.

In the alliance there is no monolithic view, but there is a huge majority of views on the side of doubt about the nature of the threat and doubt about NMD as a response.

The Acting Chair (Mr. John O'Reilly): I hate to cut you off, former Mr. Chair, but you're out of time.

We now go to Mr. Earle for five minutes. And if you want more questions, Mr. Chair, you'll have to take the chair back.

Mr. Gordon Earle: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Before I get into my question, I want to clarify for the record that I am fully aware of what the role of


this committee is with respect to trying to assist the government in arriving at an official position. I'm also aware that the government hasn't taken any official position yet but that there are certainly positions being taken. You can call them philosophical positions or whatever, and I quote:

The impulse to build walls, to retreat, to shut the world out...should be resisted. The answer lies instead in creating a multilateral approach to stop missile proliferation in the first place, and to make this a key part of a strengthened global non-proliferation regime.

Those words are attributed to the minister, the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy.

This is one philosophical position that's being taken. On the other side of the coin, we have words that are found in the testimony of some of the Department of National Defence officials, which lend towards supporting this system. I'll just make it clear that there are positions being taken, and I respond in that way in light of some of the remarks made by the former chair after my last questioning.

The question I want to get to relates to the fact that you mentioned during your remarks something to the effect of not being sure whether this is a good system or a bad system, and if you knew you could recommend for or against it. You spoke also about the Russian election and how that may have an outcome. I'm wondering, in light of the many remarks you made leaning against this system, do you not feel that the department is in a position to make some kind of recommendation to assist the government in formulating its official position?

• 1030 

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: What we're doing is assessing the pros and cons. I don't think I'm quite aware of what Mr. Axworthy said yesterday in his speech at Carleton, which I think is what you're quoting. I think if your question is, are we not in a position to provide advice to the government, I'd say that we probably think we're always in a position to provide advice to the government.

But we really do need to have more information and more facts before we're comfortable with knowing where this situation is going to come out. It really is true that the Russian election could make a difference. If they reach an accommodation, and if it didn't bring with it the danger of another arms race, then I think we would lean more forward. But until we're sure of what the consequences are, we are going to be cautious.

Mr. Gordon Earle: Thank you.

The Acting Chair (Mr. John O'Reilly): We now go to Mr. Proud for five minutes.

Mr. George Proud: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Heinbecker, the 1994 white paper on defence recognizes the relevance of the ballistic missile defence to Canada, but we have limited our participation. The white paper also states that the negotiations and the renewal of the NORAD agreement must preserve the benefits that result from a relationship with the United States, and that we must meet the evolving challenges to our continental security. What are some of the evolving challenges then to our continental security?

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: I'm not sure exactly. I wasn't here when that white paper was written. What I can say is that among the challenges that emerged, one of them might turn out to be a rogue missile threat. I think a more near-term challenge is a thing like cruise missiles, which are a contemporary technology. As I said, I think something like 70 countries possess cruise missiles. Other kinds of terrorist threats are challenges to our bilateral security. NORAD is working also on trying to interdict drug trafficking. So there are a lot of other challenges too.

The Acting Chair (Mr. John O'Reilly): Thank you.

Mr. Hanger, five minutes.

Mr. Art Hanger: Mr. Heinbecker, how important is the NORAD arrangement to Canada's ability to monitor and control its own territory?

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: It's very important in the sense that the space-based sensors and the land-based radars are important for surveying our territory, without doubt.

Mr. Art Hanger: How much more would we have to spend to accomplish this on our own, without NORAD?


Mr. Paul Heinbecker: I think you will find that we would have to spend a considerable amount more money than we have already spent, although we've already spent a considerable amount of money ourselves.

If I may say, I don't think the issue is that NORAD would collapse and that none of these systems would any longer be available to us. That is a consequence I don't see happening.

Mr. Art Hanger: Canada may not want it to happen, but the Americans may view it from a different point of view completely. I don't think we would have too much control over what they would decide if they felt that Canada was no longer in a position to cooperate, if you will, on a defensive system.

ABC news last night clearly pointed out that the Brits, and I think it was another European country, seemed very interested in this missile defence system. Do you know anything about that at all, that they would like to see it expanded or included in a region beyond just the North American continent?

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: This is the issue of coupling and decoupling I was talking about earlier. It came up the last time when there was the short-range...the SS-20 missile threat from the Soviet Union to Europe. The Europeans felt that their security was under such threat that the United States had no response and they were therefore becoming increasingly at the mercy of the Soviets. The response at that time was for the United States to respond with INF short- and medium-range missiles—the Pershings.

• 1035 

As for countries that are interested, the two countries that have to make a decision, yes or no, are Denmark and Britain, because the United States needs for the NMD system the radars that exist in Fylingdales and in Thule, Greenland. The British have not said—and I asked this question exclusively this week—to the United States that they are willing to proceed. The Danes, as I understand it, have said that they are willing to proceed only if an accommodation can be reached between the United States and Russia.

I'm not sure which other countries you were talking about. There is a concern that the Americans, by building a national missile defence system, would make themselves, as I said, more nearly invulnerable, and the Europeans would be relatively or maybe increasingly at risk.

A national missile defence system for the United States would not, as I understand the technology, cover Europe. There would have to be a separate system for Europe itself. In the European case, it might turn out to be a theatre missile system or some combination of national and theatre missile defence. But I think it's very early days for those kinds of discussions.

The Acting Chair (Mr. John O'Reilly): You have a minute.

Mr. Art Hanger: Going back to our need to have the NORAD arrangement exist in the most complete terms possible, we wouldn't want to threaten that arrangement in any way, I would think.


Mr. Paul Heinbecker: I think we'd have to weigh all of the considerations. In terms of our not wanting to threaten it, we wouldn't want to threaten it. On the other hand, we have to weigh all of our concerns and try to figure out and reconcile all of those and understand then what our interest is. And as I have been trying to present it, there's more than one route to Canadian security.

There is the international non-proliferation regime, the attempts at building up an entire system of arms control and disarmament, and there have been substantial reductions in nuclear weapons as a consequence of these treaties. As I was saying, we've gone from 7,000 nuclear warheads on each side between Russia and the United States to 3,500 under START II, and it could go all the way down to as little as 1,000 under START III. So one has to weigh what I said before are some apples and oranges to reach the balance.

Mr. Art Hanger: If one could always trust that treaties would be honoured, in an ideal world that may be the way to go. But I don't see that we're living in an ideal world, and there are states out there that really couldn't care less about treaties. Where does that leave Canada if our NORAD arrangement suddenly collapses?

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: We are part of the NATO alliance and I don't foresee a situation in which the NORAD treaty would suddenly collapse. Indeed, the American willingness to extend it I think is evidence that collapse is not imminent at all. I think it would be a mistake to take the view that the only thing you can rely on is your own military capability to defend yourself in a world as complicated as the one we live in. There is more than one route to security, and they're complementary.

No one is saying, and least of all I would not say, that we can somehow dismiss the significance of the military to Canadian security. But at the same time, the significance of diplomacy to Canadian security is also real, and so is this web of international agreements that we've built up. There are lots and lots of them, and they are effective. True, people can break out from them: the United States can, Canada can, people can. But by and large, we're building a system in which it's in people's interests to cooperate. For those few who don't cooperate, there are the other ways of responding.

• 1040 

The Acting Chair (Mr. John O'Reilly): Thank you very much, Mr. Heinbecker.

Thank you, Mr. Hanger. You're out of time.

I just want to remind the committee that there is another committee coming in. We do have a time constraint.

I now go to Mr. O'Brien for five minutes.

Mr. Pat O'Brien: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Heinbecker, I'd just like to refer to the comments of my colleague Mr. Earle on the process here. I don't understand the consternation that I seem to see from some of my colleagues. The Minister of National Defence is certainly developing a position, and this committee will in time do that. As you have characterized it, Foreign Affairs is leaning perhaps backwards on this ground, and maybe Defence is leaning forward, but on the same ground. I think that's an excellent characterization of it.

But is it not normal that ministers would put out positions on a preliminary basis that are not exactly the

same? Is the process not then that, eventually, whatever recommendations there are go to cabinet, which then develops a position for the Government of Canada? Is that not the normal process that is unfolding about this issue?

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: That's a career-limiting comment that you're asking me to make.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Pat O'Brien: I wouldn't want to do that. I'll answer my own question then, because it seems to me that's the normal process. It's not unusual to have ministers with differently nuanced positions on an issue. But in time, colleagues, this will go to cabinet, which will then develop the position for the Government of Canada. That will become *the* position of the Government of Canada, to which all ministers will adhere under cabinet solidarity, or they will do the honourable thing and resign. We're not at that process yet, so it's not unusual that we would see some different positions. Indeed, I think it's normal and healthy, and I just put that out as a statement more than a question.

I have two questions, if I could. Given a choice—and this may be a false choice, but I still think it's perhaps a realistic one—between the U.S. having this national missile defence system on its own or having such a missile system under NORAD control, which of those two options would you find preferable for Canada?

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: In the circumstances of a continuation of the ABM Treaty and an accommodation reached between Russia and the United States, it's obvious that it would be better if it were NORAD.


Mr. Pat O'Brien: It has been suggested to me this week by some of the officials I referred to earlier that it's not unthinkable or inconceivable—perhaps it's even a wise course eventually—that if the U.S. goes into this system, they could share this technology with countries like Russia, China and others in order to allay their fears. It's a defensive system, after all. Do you view that as a realistic option down the line?

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: There has been talk of sharing the technology, but I don't think that's on the table now. Given the sensitivity of the technology, I'm not sure it would ever really be on the table. But I don't think it could be excluded either.

Mr. Pat O'Brien: My last question, Mr. Chairman, is one that I posed to other witnesses here or one that other colleagues have posed. I haven't heard it posed yet today, so let me do that.

As General Macdonald and others argue, can it not be argued that if the United States and Canada, or maybe just the United States, embarked on this kind of missile defence system, it in fact would not increase tensions and insecurity but would decrease them? You've read the testimony and you know the argument, the argument being that it would give the United States another option in response. You've mentioned the options of response that the U.S. currently has, but if it just takes a missile hit from another nation, the only response now is a major retaliatory response. Would this not, as General Macdonald and others argue, give another option lesser than a major retaliatory response from the United States?

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: It would. I would have to say we lived through the entire Cold War without having that option, and we maintained stability and no nuclear strikes.

• 1045 

My own view is that in the dynamic, the problem is that it's not just a decision by the United States, with everybody saying it's fine, that's it, and it all remains quite static. A lot of things start to change in the circumstances where the United States makes that decision. It has consequences for Russia. It has

consequences for China. If Russia reacts, that has consequences for Europe and consequences for Japan. If China reacts, there are consequences for India. If India reacts, there are consequences for Pakistan. As they all react, there are consequences for the entire non-proliferation regime. If people are going to start to look to their own security, then they had better have something too.

If I may say so, we could get into a the sort of National Rifle Association approach to nuclear weapons control, where only the bad guys have them. You can't afford a situation in which only the bad guys have them, so we're trying to guard against that. What we're worried about is setting in train a scenario that would lead to quite a bit of instability.

Mr. Pat O'Brien: I certainly wouldn't subscribe to the National Rifle Association's approach to foreign affairs.

Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

The Acting Chair (Mr. John O'Reilly): Mr. Former Chairman, you're out of time.

I'll now go to Monsieur Laurin.

[Translation]

Mr. René Laurin: Mr. Heinbecker, I would like to ask you a question about NATO. Canada and the United States are members of NATO. The organization consists of two blocks, since the other members of NATO are European countries. The only North American representatives are Canada and the United States.

Given Canada's particular situation, its geographic proximity to the United States and its membership in NATO, might we not find ourselves in a dilemma if we had to take a position, since the European members of NATO have a different assessment of the risk than the United States?

What is Canada's interest in that case? Would Canada's dilemma not be to decide whether to side more with the European countries in NATO rather than the United States, its ally and neighbour, which has essentially guaranteed Canada's security for decades?

[English]


Mr. Paul Heinbecker: What's happening in Europe now is the creation of something called the European security and defence identity, ESDI. That is a part of the overall equation. The Europeans are trying to give themselves the capability to look increasingly after their own issues and not have to rely on the United States each time.

So on the one hand, that's growing up. And I have to say that as that grows up, our situation becomes less comfortable. Where we used to have meetings that were at the level of NATO, what we're finding is that increasingly there is going to be a European Union position and a United States position. We're not going to be with the United States and we're not going to be with the European Union, and that's going to be awkward for us. When you add the national missile defence issue into that as well, there's a risk that some of the strains become stronger between Europe and the United States. For Canada, that will be a difficult position to be in.

We've always been somewhere in between the two. We've always managed that, and I dare say that I think we will continue to manage it. But there is something qualitatively changing in NATO with the European initiative, and it will be potentially more difficult for us in the future to make our voices heard.

I would say that we're seeking particular consultative arrangements with the Europeans so that we can talk to them before they form their opinions and bring them to the NATO council already formed. But

these issues, national missile defence and the European security and defence policy, are going to put a considerable amount of pressure on the conduct of Canadian foreign policy.

• 1050 

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Laurin: Could that jeopardize Canada's participation in NATO, since NATO is basically about defence and national security, and we know very well that Canada's security is guaranteed more by the United States than by Europe? Given that situation, might it be to Canada's advantage to withdraw from NATO and instead sign defence and security agreements with the United States?

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: No, I believe that NATO will continue to exist. What we cannot prevent now...

Mr. René Laurin: Mr. Heinbecker, I am sorry, but my question is not whether NATO will continue to exist. My question is whether it will continue to be in Canada's interest to take part in NATO, rather than allying itself more closely with the United States. The United States has an interest in belonging to NATO because it wants to have a presence in Europe, but that is not the case for Canada. Canada's security lies more with the United States than with European countries.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: I think I disagree with the premise, and that is that Canadian security is assured by the United States but not by NATO.

If you take the view—as we have for quite a long time—that European security and North American security are intimately interlinked, you can't have insecurity in Europe and security here. In the old days, we used to say Canada was a fireproof house. That hasn't been the case since the advent of the missile age. Given the vast economic relations across the Atlantic and the fact that international stability is so much assured by the security of both Europe and North America, if you have two areas that are as stable as they are and as protected as they are, that is a very positive influence on all of the other international relationships.

I don't think we will come to a point at which we will not have an interest in European security and should simply align ourselves with the United States. I do think it's possible that we will get to a situation in which we will expect the Europeans to look after their own problems first, and that if that's not possible, then it would be necessary for the North American partners to help.

This gets rather technical, but I should add that the current view is that what the Europeans are trying to create is a crisis management system, a 60,000-man or -person army that can go into the field and stay there for a year to deal with issues that are not as serious as Kosovo, for example. It can deal with other kinds of issues, such as rescuing European nationals in a war on the African continent or something. That's what the Europeans are trying to do.


There are competing views inside the alliance, and these were the views at the Washington summit. One is that NATO should have right of first refusal on a conflict that arises in NATO's area of interest. Were that not to work, if NATO were to decide that it didn't want to do that, then the Europeans would be able to use NATO assets—for which they'd also pay—to deal with that kind of crisis.

Over the long term, one could imagine the character of NATO changing, but I don't see a situation in which we would simply line ourselves up with the United States and not be involved in European security. It would affect us, as it did in the First World War, the Second World War, and Yugoslavia.

The Chair: Sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt, but we're going to be short of time. Merci, Monsieur

Laurin.

There are no more questions here, colleagues... But I can give one last one to you, Mr. Earle.

• 1055 

Mr. Gordon Earle: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Recognizing and agreeing with what my honourable colleague said about how cabinet ministers resolve their differences, I still think the sad reality of life is that lots of times decisions are made rapidly and in response to conditions quite often thrust upon us. Then, after that, hindsight becomes the wisdom of the day.

You mentioned that we need information on this. I think time is important. We're talking about June or July for a decision by the U.S., and we're not that far away from then. I'm wondering if you could elaborate a bit upon the kind of information that's needed before you feel you're in a position to recommend for or against. Is there a plan A or plan B set of recommendations that might be looked at, depending upon the outcome of this quest for further information?

Mr. Paul Heinbecker: Some of the information we cannot get until the Americans and the Russians go further in their negotiations. One of the things we want to know is if they can work this out in a way that is acceptable to them and to others. That's a very important consideration.

As I said, we will be meeting with the Americans in the coming days. We want to know more about how NMD is to work, and we want to know more about their assessment of the threat. Those are the kinds of things we want to find out.

In addition to that, we don't need to have further information to understand that there could be unintended and significant other consequences on the international non-proliferation regime. We already understand that. The issue is whether or not what the Americans are proposing can be done in such a way as to safeguard that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Earle.

On your last comment on the fireproof house, for those who didn't hear it, didn't Khrushchev make the point very graphically to Lester B. Pearson that Canada no longer lived in a so-called fireproof house? He observed very belligerently that we had escaped damage in Canada during World War I and World War II; however, any World War III would be fought right over top of our expletive-deleted heads. That was his comment. He put any idea of a fireproof house to bed very quickly, I think, with that comment.

Mr. Meyer, Mr. Heinbecker, on behalf of my colleagues, I want to thank you very much for a very interesting exchange of views. I think it will advance our very necessary look at this very important topic, and we appreciate your sharing your expertise with us today.

Mr. O'Reilly, thank you for taking the chair for some of the meeting.

Thank you, colleagues. We'll see you at 3.30 p.m. for the meeting with the two ministers.

The meeting is adjourned. Thank you.