

*Government Orders*

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate those who have been appointed to be your substitute in the Chair. I can assure you all of my full support and co-operation as well as that of the other members from my party.

Allow me to also take this opportunity to pay my respects to the constituents of the federal riding of Verchères who, by putting their trust in me on October 25, have given me the privilege of representing them in this House.

I have been a fervent sovereigntist since I was 15—and as we saw earlier, sovereigntist is used by the hon. member for Beaver River as a synonym for “enemy within”. In those days, I never imagined that some day I would be representing my fellow citizens in the House of Commons, the symbol par excellence of the Canadian federal system. But I have the pleasure of belonging to a political party, namely the Bloc Québécois, whose raison d’être happens to be to advance the cause of Quebec sovereignty in this House.

Of course, Quebec has not achieved the status of sovereign state yet. It is still part of this vast country we call Canada. And if I start my speech on cruise missile testing by emphasizing this concept of sovereignty so dear to my heart, it is simply because in certain spheres the testing issue is viewed as an attack on the sovereignty of Canada.

There are people who claim that renewing the Canada–U.S.A. umbrella agreement and periodic authorization regarding cruise missile testing within Canadian territorial boundaries is akin to an unacceptable surrender to the imperatives of the foreign and defence policy of our neighbours to the south, an infringement upon the political sovereignty of Canada.

**An hon. member:** Exactly.

**Mr. Bergeron:** But since any sovereign state must be able to protect its borders, we must recognize that Canada’s political and territorial sovereignty depends to a large extent on its participation in the collective security system provided under NATO and NORAD.

• (1655)

We must recognize that Canada does not have the resources required to defend its huge territory by itself.

Canada has been a member of NATO since 1949 and of NORAD since 1958. Cruise missile tests are not strategically tied to NORAD since this organization’s mandate, namely the surveillance of North America, is essentially defensive in nature. The use of the cruise missile must be seen in that context mainly as a counter-offensive measure. However, cruise missile tests improve detection and interception techniques that fall under NORAD’s mandate.

Since Canada does not stockpile strategic arms and bases its defence policy on the collective security system put in place under NATO, it must volunteer to co-operate with its allies in putting in place a strategic deterrent force if necessary.

Under this approach, Canada was asked in 1983 to approve cruise missile tests on its territory despite the fact that this nuclear deterrence strategy was not directed linked to NATO’s strategy. This was aimed at maintaining a strategic balance between the two superpowers in a then bipolar world.

The international situation has changed since the dismantling of the Warsaw pact and the Eastern Bloc. Nevertheless, the nuclear threat has remained and become even more complex with the arrival of new nuclear powers. I am thinking of Ukraine and Kazakhstan, for example. In its 1992 defence policy, Canada recognized that the geopolitical environment had changed considerably and that the global balance of power was no longer based on a bipolar structure. We have witnessed the gradual emergence of new nuclear powers, which are often very politically unstable. Under such circumstances, it was risky for Canada and its allies to question the collective security system their defence policy had been built on since the days of the cold war. The cruise missile is a weapon perfectly suited to the new strategic context and illustrates our current collective security system.

The tests requested by the U.S. administration are not designed to encourage the escalation of new nuclear technologies. The START I and START II treaties already limit the number of deployed missiles. This ceiling cannot be exceeded either in terms of the number of missiles deployed or in terms of striking force, that is the size of nuclear heads.

It must be pointed out that this type of missile can be used for conventional-type missions, which is certainly not without importance. Even though nuclear weapons were not used in the Persian Gulf, that conflict demonstrated the effectiveness of very localized attacks on well-defined targets. We saw cruise missiles used to destroy armed command posts, conventional or chemical weapons storage sites and even conventional, chemical and nuclear, or should I say potentially nuclear, weapons manufacturing plants. Had it not been for these missiles, massive bombing strikes would undoubtedly have been undertaken to destroy these targets. Heavy conventional bombing strikes would have exacted a very high toll in human lives since the majority of the sites destroyed were located in densely populated areas. Because this type of weapon was used, the heavy bombardment which could have resulted in a great many civilian casualties was not necessary.

Although some cruise missiles launched during the Persian gulf war did in fact miss their targets, there is no question that they proved to be an effective weapon. But the fact remains that certain flaws inherent in the design of the cruise missile resulted