

Cruise missile poses serious threat

Editor's note: this is the first article of a two part series marking Disarmament Week.

Saturday, October 22nd, has been declared International Day of Protest against the Cruise Missile. In recent months Canadians have been embroiled in a debate concerning the testing of the American Cruise Missile in this country. The problem began last April when U.S. officials asked Canada for permission to test unarmed cruise missiles at the Primrose Lake test range in north-eastern Alberta. The Pentagon argued that the region's vast stretches of snow covered wasteland made it similar to Siberia and thus a suitable proving ground for the missile's sophisticated terrain-reading equipment.

Many Canadians oppose the missile testing. A January 1983 Gallup poll showed 52% against and only 37% in favor. Operation Dismantle, one of Canada's largest antinuclear groups claims to have tripled its membership to 2000 in the past year. In March of this year the 2 million-member Canadian Labor Congress pledged to support the antinuclear movement.

Ed Broadbent, leader of the NDP says that on moral grounds alone, Canada "should not be party to tests aimed at improving the technological capacity for nuclear war." Lately, the antinuclear opposition has begun to extend its horizons beyond Canada as more facts emerge concerning the issue.

The cruise missile is capable of flying extremely close to the ground using its TERCOM (terrain contour matching) guidance system. (See illustration) "TERCOM is the device that steers Cruise missiles to their target with such deadly accuracy that they have almost 100 per cent 'kill capacity'...TERCOM also allows the missile to skim the ground so low that detection by radar is virtually impossible, while at the same time, hedge-hopping over and around any obstacles in its path." (R.C. Aldridge, former engineer with Loughheed)

Critics of the cruise missile look at its technical capabilities and see a highly provocative weapon that will destabilize the stand-off that presently exists between the USSR and the USA. Some of their arguments are summarized as follows:

-Because the missile can escape radar detection, Soviet planners will not know that they are under attack until the warheads are exploding on their missile silos.

-A high degree of accuracy and low

detectability are features that one would expect in a weapon that was designed to be used. The cruise is a weapon for war-fighting.

-Since the Soviets wouldn't be able to detect several hundred incoming cruise missiles until it was too late, the speed that the missile travels and the time it takes to reach its target are irrelevant; it is an offensive weapon.

-The accuracy of the cruise missile makes it capable of destroying Soviet land-based missiles, even those that are encased in hardened silos. It is therefore, a counterforce weapon.

Canada's role in the production and testing of the cruise missile is made possible due to the Canadian branch of Litton Systems, a major contractor for the US Department of Defense as parts for the electronic guidance system of the cruise are manufactured in Ontario. The Federal Government, needless to say, has played a major role in that it has signed an agreement to test the cruise here; insisting that testing the guidance system for the US Department of Defense is the least that Canada can do for our NATO allies.

Critics disagree. Canadians who are opposed to the testing, primarily on the grounds that it is a destabilizing, unverifiable delivery system, point out that ACLM is an American strategic weapon, solely under US command and control; it is not a NATO weapon.

An implication for arms control and one of the great challenges of future disarmament agreements will depend on reliable verification techniques. The cruise missile poses a serious threat to future verification agreements because it is small, mobile and therefore easily con-

cealed. If the cruise is allowed to be developed and deployed, it will jeopardize the whole future process of disarmament, as well as actually fuel an escalation of the arms race.

The cruise is part of a new generation of first-strike weaponry that the West is developing...the Pershing II, Trident II and MX missiles are of the same type; therefore, by refusing to cooperate in the testing and production of the cruise, we would be hindering the development of the integrated and sophisticated, but ultimately futile, first-strike capability.

George Kennan, former US ambassador to the USSR and early supporter of the nuclear deterrent build-up not talks anxiously about the "nuclear delusion" and says: "There is no issue at stake which could conceivably be worth a nuclear war."

Today one sees the beginning of change, of a shift in awareness...each of us, in his or her own way, can lend a strong voice to what Dr. Robert Jay Lifton refers to as "a call to life." The solution lies within our collective will to survive.

In closing, let us heed the words of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Javier Perez de Cuellar:

"Apocalypse is today not merely a biblical depiction, it has become a very real possibility. Never before in human experience have we been placed on the narrow edge between catastrophe and survival."

M. Kay MacPhee
Chair - Board of Directors of WORD

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