

The 1985 voyage of the U.S. Coast Guard icebreaker Polar Sea was a shock to all Canadians - not because the transit occurred, but because we had so few means to assert our claim of control. Sovereign claims you can't defend gradually disappear. There was a need to act as well as talk. So we drew straight base lines around the Arctic Archipelago which define the outer limits of Canada's historic internal waters. That was an action which had been contemplated for decades, but never taken. That action was a signal to the world at large that those waters are Canadian, period.

Former governments had barred the International Court of Justice from hearing and judging disputes about our jurisdiction in the Archipelago. Refusing to let your case be heard suggests you are not very confident in your claim. We are confident about our claims to our Arctic, and so removed the reservations of a more timid time.

The Minister of National Defence, Perrin Beatty, has announced the Canadian forces are proceeding with plans for forward basing of CF-18s. Surveillance flights in the Arctic have been increased. Recent military exercises in the North featured one of the largest deployments ever of land forces in the high Arctic islands. The Government is now considering major options to strengthen northern defences in the context of the Defence White Paper. These include increased surveillance capacity and the possible acquisition of Arctic-capable submarines.

We are proceeding with plans to construct, here on the west coast, the world's largest icebreaker - a state-of-the-art Arctic class 8 vessel. Naturally that is important for jobs, and for the advancement of our shipbuilding capacity. But its greater significance is as a major contribution to our effective control of Archipelago waters.

We are methodically putting into place the kind of Arctic infrastructure required for effective occupation and control. That means moving ahead in areas such as hydrography, tide and current surveys, weather forecasting and ice reconnaissance, aids to navigation, regulations, Arctic Marine conservation, and studies leading to the establishment of national parks in the Arctic.

That is what sovereignty is about - developing the means to control what is ours - developing the reality that others who use our territory do so on our terms.