

4. CANADA AS A NUCLEAR WEAPON-FREE ZONE

Background

Nuclear weapon-free zones (NWFZ) were first discussed in the 1950s. They are seen as a way of limiting the deployment and proliferation of nuclear weapons. The first proposal for a NWFZ was put forward by Poland in 1957 at the United Nations General Assembly. Known as the Rapacki Plan (named after the Polish Foreign Minister) the proposal called for a nuclear-free zone covering Poland, Czechoslovakia, East Germany and West Germany. No nuclear weapons would be manufactured or stockpiled in this zone and the use of nuclear weapons against the area would be forbidden. The Plan proposed a broad system of air and ground surveillance, run jointly by the NATO and Warsaw Pact nations, to ensure compliance. The Plan failed to gain support from the Western Powers.

The Antarctic Treaty of 1959 established the first nuclear weapon-free zone in the uninhabited Antarctic region. The Treaty of Tlatelolco, which established Latin America as the only populated NWFZ in the world, was signed in 1967. Twenty five Latin American nations are party to this Treaty, under which they agree not to test, produce or acquire nuclear weapons or to allow other nations to deploy them on their territory. Protocol II of the Treaty was signed by all five nuclear weapons states and requires them to respect the nuclear-free status of Latin America, and to agree not to threaten to use weapons against the Treaty's members.

On 6 August 1985, at Rarotonga, the thirteen members of the South Pacific Forum signed a treaty which declared the major part of the South Pacific to be a nuclear weapon-free zone and banned the deployment, production or testing of such weapons in the area; whether nuclear weapons would be permitted on foreign planes or vessels was left to the discretion of the signatories. The Soviet Union and China signed the two protocols to this treaty forbidding nuclear testing, or the use of or threat of using,