

refine its data for making a decision on the Centre's location.⁷ NATO's Defense Planning Committee is expected to recommend a location for the base at its next meeting in November 1989, or at the following meeting in May 1990.⁸

The effects of low-level flying exercises on the environment and the lives of native peoples in the Goose Bay area have prompted considerable concern. During fall 1988, more than 200 Innu Indians were arrested while engaging in peaceful demonstrations protesting the low-level flights.⁹ Fuelling their objections to the overflights has been their claim to a large area of Labrador based on history and tradition, as no treaty has ever been signed with the Federal Government regarding the territory.

This claim was bolstered on 17 April 1988 when a Labrador judge dismissed public mischief charges against four Innu arrested during a protest at the Goose Bay base, on grounds that their behaviour indicated a "genuine belief" that the air base land belonged to them. The judge observed that "(t)hrough their knowledge of ancestry and kinship, (the defendants) ha(d) shown that none of their people ever gave away rights to the land, to Canada."¹⁰ The government of Newfoundland has launched an appeal of the decision, to be heard in St. John's on 3 October 1989.¹¹ The controversy has been compounded by the fact that the base constitutes the heart of the Goose Bay area's economy, currently employing about 1000 civilian and military personnel, with increases expected throughout 1989.¹²

At present, a Federal Environmental Review Committee is conducting a study of the impact of low-level flights and the proposed NATO base, but fears have been expressed that it will not be completed until after NATO's decision. Currently, military training at Goose Bay involves about 7000 low-level flights annually.¹³ Given a favorable NATO decision on the base, the frequency of such flights would increase to about 40,000 per year.¹⁴

⁷ Department of National Defence, *Defence 1988*, January 1989, pp. 52-53.

⁸ "NATO Base Environment Study Faces Time Crunch." *Ottawa Citizen*, 31 July 1989, p. A4.

⁹ Terry Gavin, "Natives Battle NATO." *Vancouver Sun*, 16 November 1988, p. C6.

¹⁰ Michelle Lalonde, "Innu Vow to Step Up Court Fights, Protests Against Military Flying." *Globe and Mail*, 17 April 1989, p. A7.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² "Dispute Between Natives and Military Over Jets Defies Solution." *Montreal Gazette*, 13 October 1988, p. B1.

¹³ "NATO Base Environment Study Faces Time Crunch." *Ottawa Citizen*, 31 July 1989, p. A4.

¹⁴ "Labrador's Innu and the Jets of NATO." *Globe and Mail*, 25 April 1989, p. A9.