

### THE TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS: ISSUES

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#### 1. Two Basic Questions

The committee examined the transitional arrangements in terms of their ability to perform the tasks of North American air defence, that is to say early warning against hostile bombers and their missiles, warning of ballistic missile launchings, tracking of space objects, threat assessment, and some damage limitation.

##### *The Utility of Anti-Bomber Defences*

One fundamental question which arose was the following: is it wise to invest heavily in anti-bomber defences when there is no defence against ICBMs and SLBMs? There was considerable discussion during the hearings about the prospects of the opponent ever using bombers and cruise missiles when it has other, much surer strategic forces and must fear retaliation if it ever does attack.

On this question, Lieutenant General (retired) K.E. Lewis, former Deputy Commander of NORAD, drew attention to the fact that detection capabilities against ICBMs and SLBMs are at present much better than against the bomber.

Today we have the situation whereby the major threat, . . . that from the ICBMs and SLBMs, can be watched over much better than the atmospheric threat, the bomber threat. The systems that NORAD now has in place permit very reliable and early indications of missile launch and the direction of launch but in the last couple of decades we have allowed our atmospheric defences to deteriorate to the point where we believe that we might provide an option to potential enemy planners to, in fact, use that out-dated weapon.<sup>1</sup>

John Anderson pointed out that:

If we had no warning against bombers, then they could choose, at their will, to attack us with bombers as well as with missiles or instead of missiles. The bomber is still a means of delivering quite a large weapon quite accurately. It has certain virtues that a missile does not have. When you fire a missile, it is gone; with a bomber you can call it back because it is . . . manned."<sup>2</sup>

General Lewis also argued that if the Soviet Union ever availed itself of the opportunity to launch such an attack with virtually no warning, it would aim at

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<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings of the Special Committee of the Senate on National Defence*, 1 February 1984, p. 1:21.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, 15 March 1984, p. 5:16.