

Statements by Ministers

I do not believe that Canadians want there to be any possibility of Canada's military establishment being drawn into the U.S. maritime strategy in dealing with the Soviet nuclear capabilities. That is one of the most important reasons why the Liberal Party wants to remain committed strongly to the defence of North America, to the defence of the western alliance, but we must remember that our long-term global defence security is best enhanced by the pursuit of international peace and international security.

Mr. Derek Blackburn (Brant): Mr. Speaker, I too am happy to rise today to respond to the Minister's speech on the Government's White Paper on defence. I want to congratulate the Minister for finally delivering the Conservative Government's White Paper. It has been promised for three years by three Ministers. However, after hearing his statement, I must ask what has really changed, apart from the proposed purchase of the nuclear submarines.

This country waited through 16 years of Liberal neglect for this White Paper. During that time, the Liberals let our equipment degenerate. The Navy virtually rusted away. When the Tories took office they promised to address this problem. But they have not dealt candidly with the obvious problems on which all Canadians agree, that our Armed Forces are under equipped, will remain under equipped, and we believe over committed.

Instead of getting on with the job of modernizing our Armed Forces and giving them a realistic job, the Minister has leapt into a grand scheme for multi-billion dollar nuclear submarines. That does not address the commitment capability gap. Neither has the Minister recognized that the potential threat to Canada has changed substantially since the last White Paper. Canada's defence policy must change to deal with the new strategic environment.

Canada has become a very strategic piece of real estate. We are sandwiched between two superpowers who see the world engaged in a struggle between their two ideologies. Canada could become a theatre of superpower conflict.

Canadians have to face the reality that this superpower struggle forces on us. We are threatened by a nuclear war that would certainly involve Canadian territory, Canadian waters, and Canadian air space. Canada's goal is straightforward. We must use our strategic geography to prevent nuclear war. Canada's Armed Forces should first, protect Canadian territory and sovereignty, second, contribute to world peace and disarmament, and third, remain totally non-nuclear.

If we look at the contemporary situation and keep these principles in mind, a new role for the Armed Forces emerges. For example, Canada is potentially threatened by ICBMs based on Soviet territory and in Soviet submarines. They must be reduced by arms negotiations. Canada can support those negotiations in two ways. First, we must urge both superpowers to make deep cuts in their arsenals, and second, Canada should take no part in Star Wars.

The development of ballistic missile defences undermines the ABM Treaty and undermines the confidence we need to negotiate new missile reductions, especially in cruise missiles. I wish to remind the Minister that the ABM Treaty is the only international document extant that puts a cap on further development of nuclear weapons and nuclear weapons systems.

As Canada works for the reduction of nuclear missiles, we must make sure that other types of weapons do not proliferate. Again, there are two actions Canada should take. We should not test the American cruise missile or help develop any other nuclear weapon. Second, we should make certain that the Soviets could not launch a first strike with their cruise missiles across Canadian territory.

Canada can and should provide surveillance, warning, and interception of bombers in the northern half of North America, excluding Alaska. Fifty-two radar sites are being constructed across the North to provide detection and early warning of Soviet bombers armed with cruise missiles. The stations on Canadian territory should be staffed and controlled exclusively by Canadians, and Canada should have its own AWACS under Canadian command and control.

Canada also has enough CF-18s to provide a visible, credible deterrent to a bomber attack on North America. The CF-18 should be phased back to Canada and sent to air strips in the Arctic if the danger of an attack increases. Moreover, these forward-operating locations should also be selected, constructed, maintained and paid for exclusively by Canadians.

Instead of developing a sovereign defence for Canada, the Government has chosen to get more deeply involved in the American strategy through the Air Defence Initiative. This could tie Canada to Star Wars.

The build-up of the Soviet northern fleet also potentially threatens Canada with nuclear war. If the Soviet Navy cuts the supply lines to Europe, a conflict on that continent would quickly escalate to nuclear war. We must enhance that protection of those sea lines of communication to our friends in Europe. We would never abandon our friends in Europe.

The American response to this potential threat also threatens Canada. The U.S. Navy wants to engage the Soviets in their home waters. Their submarines may try to pass through the Canadian Arctic, undermining our claim to sovereignty. As the Minister knows, this is often referred to as horizontal escalation. It is the new maritime defence strategy of carrying the potential for nuclear war into the other side's territory.

Canada needs a balanced naval fleet to counter these threats. Our aging destroyers should be replaced with new patrol frigates. They must not fall victim to the Minister's mindless lust for nuclear submarines. Canada should also replace the Sea King helicopter so that the frigates can detect submarines. I and my colleagues in the Liberal Party are afraid that these nuclear subs could become part of that forward advanced U.S. fleet participating in what is called horizontal escalation, taking defence into offence in Soviet