

Government Orders

Cruise missiles launched from bomber aircraft are considered strategic if their range exceeds 600 kilometres. The missile tested in Canada has a range superior to 600 kilometres. Accordingly, the Canadian government cannot, under the terms of international arms control and strategic weapons verification treaties, dissociate itself from the strategic nuclear mission of the air version of the cruise missile.

The cruise missile satisfies different objectives in terms of U.S. strategy. The air and sea versions are at the very heart of the United States's strategy of deterrence based on the concept of the tripartite retaliatory force or triad.

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This offensive triad brings together land-, sea- and air-based strategic weapons. Canada's commitments to the strategic deterrent force are basically a part of co-operation between allies. To the extent that Canada bases its defence on agreement among allies, it must voluntarily co-operate in implementing this strategic deterrent force if required. This is part of the national defence policies of 1971 and 1987 and the defence policy statement of 1992.

Like my colleagues and my leader, I recall that under this approach, Canada was asked in 1983 to accept air-launched cruise missile tests on its territory, although this nuclear deterrence strategy was not officially based on NATO's strategy.

In its 1992 security policy statement, Canada revised its position on strategic issues, recognizing that the world was no longer bipolar. The new nuclear powers were considered inherently unstable and so it became difficult for Canada and its allies to get away from nuclear deterrence.

Cruise missiles made a key contribution to the offensive against Iraq. The non-nuclear air-launched cruise missile was used, showing the need for this missile in local conflicts, although it is not always perfectly accurate in hitting the target. The advantage of using such a weapon is that massive bombing is made unnecessary, thus saving many civilian lives. Strategic flexibility and tactics make the cruise a weapon better suited to the present strategic environment. This flexibility is why the development programs for these new missiles need to be extended. Canada, like our party, must be aware of the different uses to which these weapons can be put.

From what we know, the missile that the Americans want to test in 1994 would have new electro-optical guidance technologies.

International relations are extremely complex and cannot be analyzed from just one point of view. The issue of national defence is revealing in this regard. In 1993, Canada extended a formal commitment with the United States to facilitate the testing of certain types of weapons. Remember that the agreement runs for ten years, so this commitment will end in 2003.

Canada would find itself in a sensitive position with its partners if it broke its commitments, whatever their nature. Canada must act as a responsible state which respects its international commitments. These values are particularly important for the sovereigntist members of the Bloc Québécois.

It is essential to state clearly that the Bloc Québécois, while not agreeing with the continuation of the arms race, cannot totally distance itself either from the unstable international environment which has existed since the former Soviet Union broke up and from the potential dangers which unfortunately threaten our world. The Bloc Québécois's sovereigntist thrust must not mean a kind of isolationism, heedless of our responsibilities to our strategic allies. On this score, it is important to send a clear and unambiguous message to the rest of the world: Canada and Quebec must respect their international commitments, with the possibility of renegotiating them with their allies once these agreements expire, using the appropriate procedures when the time comes.

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Another argument for accepting cruise missile tests over Canadian territory is the devastating effect of massive bombardment on civilian populations. For example, in the gulf war, massive conventional bombing would have been extremely costly in civilian lives since most of the sites destroyed were located in inhabited Iraqi territory. Surgical strikes such as those carried out by cruise missiles have shown the effectiveness of such weapons, considerably limiting the loss of human life.

The tests which the American government wants to conduct do not involve new nuclear technologies either. Thus they do not escalate strategic nuclear forces. Furthermore, a ceiling has already been set for the total number of missiles deployed under the START I and START II treaties. The cruise missile tests on Canadian soil are only to improve the guidance system. They cannot and must not be considered destabilizing under international arms control or disarmament agreements.

Finally, one question arises: should cruise missile tests be related to the issue of converting military industry and to the lower military spending advocated by the Bloc Québécois? I say no, they should not. First, very few military companies in Quebec and Canada are involved with this type of weapon. The economic, industrial and technological impact is minimal since a ceiling has been set for the number of units to be built. Therefore no increase in the budget of the Canadian Department of National Defence is involved.

Thus, it would be wrong for the Liberal government to make a connection with the lower military spending advocated by the Bloc Québécois.

It is important for Canada and Quebec to strengthen these strategic commitments; therefore the Bloc Québécois is in