

POLICY OPTIONS

6. As the SEAFAC facility is entirely within U.S. territory, and as Canada supports the purpose of the facility, which will enhance the security of our two countries, the policy options revolved around the assurance that Canadian sovereignty, safety, and environmental considerations were met. Canadian and U.S. officials held lengthy discussions on these issues, with a view to facilitating operations at SEAFAC while taking into consideration Canada's concerns. Therefore, the direct environmental effects of the transits have been viewed in this context.

ACTIVITIES IMPLICATED BY THE POLICY

7. The question of transits through Dixon Entrance, while also involving U.S. NPVs, is, in some respects, different than the issue of port visits. Transits do not involve activities related to docking, armaments practice, or manoeuvring in shallow, narrow waterways, nor any activities close to the Canadian shoreline. Submerged transits would take place through approximately 50-60 nautical miles of Canadian internal waters, in deep, wide channels.

8. At the meeting of the Permanent Joint Board on Defence in August 1990, the U.S. side indicated that no more than fifteen submarines would traverse the Dixon Entrance annually, and would traverse it submerged. They would attempt to avoid transits during the peak runs of king and coho salmon (20 May to 10 June and 10-30 August). Advanced navigational gear would be used.

9. The types of submarines transiting could include both SSNs and SSBNs. Data on the operating safety of some models have entered the public domain as a result of court cases in the United States.

10. It should be noted that for security reasons the U.S. does not release certain confidential technical information about the design, manufacture and operation of their nuclear submarines. Their absence, however, does not make a review under the procedures laid out for the environmental assessment of policies and programmes impossible.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

11. The area of the Dixon Entrance, at the northern end of the Queen Charlotte Islands, is rich in marine biota, and natural beauty. A commercial fishery for salmon, ground-fish, halibut, sable-fish, crabs and shellfish is important to the region. The waters are renowned as a resort for marine mammals: a number of