

Government Orders

aboriginal people have achieved land claim settlements. Work is still proceeding on several outstanding claims.

For those who have not yet settled their claims and for those who have, protection and enhancement of the traditional economy and lifestyle is an overriding concern. While most aboriginal people have settled in communities, their culture and economies take them out on the land at various times throughout the year. Traditional hunting and trapping grounds can be miles away from so-called home communities.

When the cruise missiles fly up the Mackenzie Valley to the Beaufort Sea, they are not flying over unused and unoccupied territory. They are flying over lands that are and have been used and loved by generations of people who live up there.

Northerners also see a future for themselves that builds closer ties with their circumpolar neighbours. While it may be natural for southern Canadians to look south, it is more natural for northerners to look north and around.

The people of the NWT have much in common with other circumpolar peoples. Beside climate, we share many social and economic concerns. We see opportunities to learn from each other and to contribute to each other's development.

The peoples of the north are peaceful people. We do not feel comfortable with our land being used as testing grounds for weapons of war.

We worry about the consequences of accidents and the damage that could be done to our communities, the wildlife and the environment. At this time the threat of an accident from the testing of an American cruise missile is far more real to the NWT residents than that of the threat of an attack from the old Soviet Union and accidents have happened. Let me point them out.

In 1990 a Canadian CF-18 crashed outside of Inuvik while tracking a cruise missile that had been released from an B-52 bomber.

In 1986 two cruise missiles went down during tests. One crashed near Primrose, Alberta and the second one went down in the Beaufort Sea.

Last February, when Canada renewed the cruise missile testing agreement with the United States without consulting the government of the Northwest Territories or northern aboriginal organizations, the leader of the NWT government wrote to the Minister of National Defence. She expressed her disappointment and concern that the views of the people most directly affected by this testing were not even considered.

Other members of the legislative assembly also made their views known. Some very eloquent words on this matter were spoken by the Dene member for Nahendeh, Mr. Jim Antoine. I want to share his views with this House and the Canadian

people. I am excerpting from his statement in the legislative assembly in Yellowknife on February 23 of last year:

These missiles fly through Dene airspace in my constituency. I have talked to people who are in the bush on their trap lines and they have seen these missiles fly above the trees. They are followed by B-52 bombers.

I am opposed to cruise missile testing and I am also opposed to war. I saw the coverage on television which showed how cruise missiles were used in the war in Iraq. I saw how destructive these cruise missiles could be. I had troubled feelings in my heart. I felt like the Northwest Territories had contributed to that destruction by allowing those missiles to be tested in the air over our traditional lands.

Northerners continue to have troubled feelings in their hearts over the role of the military in our territory. While military expenditures have improved transportation and communication infrastructures and have generated employment, training and business opportunities for northerners, these benefits have not been as great as northerners had hoped. For many northerners the negative social and environmental impact of cruise missile testing, low-level training flights and related military activities outweigh the benefits. For years a number of northern organizations, non-aboriginal and aboriginal, have been working toward demilitarization of the Arctic. The Inuit Circumpolar Conference has been a pioneer in this effort.

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In 1990 the Government of the Northwest Territories released a discussion paper on military activity in the north which proposed the establishment of a circumpolar zone of peace and security. While the Department of National Defence did not respond favourably to the concept at that time, I would ask that this proposal for a circumpolar zone of peace and security be looked at again. Cruise missile testing of course would have no place in such a regime.

In any case northerners do not simply see the need for continued cruise missile testing over their territory. As the NWT government leader recently stated:

In our view, the cruise missile testing component of military activity in the Northwest Territories can no longer be justified given the significant changes which have occurred in the international arena during the past few years.

I agree. Northerners recognize that although the cold war is over other security concerns have arisen. However they question whether the standard military responses are the appropriate or only responses we can make. In many cases an economic helping hand may accomplish more for our long-term security interests than military shows of force.

I suggest that northerners who have a unique perspective on peace and security can make valuable contributions to the upcoming review of national defence policy. Northern views should be fully represented and considered in this review.

By increasing and improving communications and co-operation with our circumpolar neighbours, northerners are building bridges across the Arctic Ocean. Northerners are forging new friendships and renewing and strengthening old ones. For those