

"International Canada" is a paid supplement to *International Perspectives* sponsored by External Affairs Canada. Each supplement covers two months and provides a comprehensive summary of Canadian government statements and of political discussion on Canada's position in international affairs. It also records Canadian adherence to international agreements and participation in international programs. The text is prepared by *International Perspectives*.

Bilateral Relations

USA

Arctic Sovereignty

A US decision to have a United States Coast Guard icebreaker, the *Polar Sea*, navigate the Northwest Passage from Greenland to the Pacific raised a storm of controversy in Canada during June and July over a possible infringement of Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic. The proposed trip was regarded by critics as a US move to test the Canadian government's strength and commitment to Canada's oft-repeated claim that the waters of the Arctic archipelago were internal waters and not an international strait. (While the US administration had acknowledged the islands as being under Canadian jurisdiction, it continued to regard the passage itself as international waters.) The legal point of the US refusal to seek Canadian approval or permission for the voyage was raised by the opposition and Canadian nationalist and environmental groups.

In a scrum June 17, External Affairs Minister Joe Clark stated that Canada had "consulted" with the US over the *Polar Sea* transit, and that the issue did not raise the question of sovereignty. He did, however, note the continuing disagreement between the US and Canada over Arctic territorial claims, adding that "some actions" might be taken to forward the Canadian "interpretation" on sovereignty (External Affairs transcript, June 17). Responding in the Commons June 20 to criticism from Liberal external affairs critic Jean Chrétien, Mr. Clark added that while the ship's passage would neither "compromise" Canadian sovereignty nor "affect the quite legitimate differences of views" between the two countries, the *Polar Sea* would "have Canadians on board to guide [it] through waters which we consider to be ours." The US and Canada, noted Mr. Clark, had "agreed to disagree."

Calls for a strong government protest, rather than an acceptance of the trip as a foregone conclusion, continued through July. A statement released by Inuit Tapirisat of Canada stressed the possibility of future environmental damage in the north, should the route become a feasible international shipping strait. The statement noted that should Canada "fail to defend its sovereignty" in Arctic waters, the issue of protecting the environment would have to be "resolved outside of Canada at the international level" (*Globe and Mail*, July 10). Failure to meet the US challenge

would be an "abdication of responsibility and betrayal" (*The Citizen*, July 25). A spokesman for the Canadian Arctic Resources Committee stated that Canada was "jeopardizing its position by not acting firmly and doing everything it [could] to secure its case" (*The Citizen*, July 26).

Two Canadian Coast Guard captains were dispatched as "invited observers" to accompany the *Polar Sea*. However, the US had stated clearly that the two were accepted as a "friendly gesture" to Canada, but would not have any authority to offer instructions or guidance (Government of Canada news release, July 31, *Globe and Mail*, August 1). Canada expressed its "deep regret" over the longstanding US unwillingness to accept the waters as falling under Canadian jurisdiction in a statement issued by the departments of External Affairs, Transport and Northern Affairs. While "authorizing" the ship's passage, the statement noted that assurances of suitable precautions had been received from the US to ensure the protection of the ecologically fragile Arctic environment. Reiterating Canadian sovereignty claims, it also stressed that the voyage was "purely operational" and intended to reduce sailing time. It was noted that the *Polar Sea* would be accompanied and monitored by Canadian Armed Forces Aurora aircraft, the entire voyage proceeding with Canadian "support and participation."

Criticism was also expressed that Canadian acceptance of the *Polar Sea* transit could set a precedent which would be interpreted by the International Court at the Hague (should the Northwest Passage issue reach that juridical body) as indicating Canadian acquiescence to an infringement (*Globe and Mail*, August 2). The absence of strong diplomatic protests on Canada's part could operate to the detriment and prejudice of the Canadian case. (The US State Department had emphasized that the voyage would proceed "without prejudice to either country's position with regard to the status of the Arctic waters.")

Strategic Defence Initiative

Prior to an official decision on Canadian participation in the US Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI or Star Wars), the government announced that the private and academic