

Canada to Host Open Skies Conference

On September 24, 1989, the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney, welcomed Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze's endorsement of US President Bush's "Open Skies" proposal of last May and announced that Canada has offered to host a conference to negotiate an "Open Skies" agreement. The conference is expected to be held in Ottawa early next year. Invitations to attend will be issued to the foreign ministers of all other NATO and Warsaw Pact states. In conveying Canada's offer, the Prime Minister noted that a two-stage conference format would likely be adopted, with Canada hosting the first stage and a Warsaw Pact country the second.

"Open Skies" would allow individual countries of the two military alliances to undertake short-notice surveillance flights of one another's territories using unarmed aircraft. The idea was first proposed by US President Dwight Eisenhower at a summit with Britain, France and the USSR in Geneva in July 1955. It was greeted with enthusiasm by the French and British leaders, but dismissed by Soviet leader Khrushchev as "a bald espionage plot." Canada actively promoted the idea over the next few years, but "Open Skies" could not overcome the atmosphere of mutual East-West suspicion then prevailing.

The concept lay dormant until the spring of 1989 when President Bush directed his staff to undertake a comprehensive review of US arms control policies and potential initiatives. During the course of regular consultations on arms control, Canada became aware that "Open Skies" was under consideration as one of these initiatives. The idea of an "Open Skies" regime was attractive to Canadian officials, who encouraged their US counterparts to consider the proposal sympathetically. Prime Minister

Mulroney mentioned Canada's interest in "Open Skies" to President Bush at a meeting in early May, as did Secretary of State for External Affairs Joe Clark at a meeting with his counterpart, Secretary of State James Baker.

On May 12, President Bush, in an address to the graduating class of Texas A&M University, proposed that an "Open Skies" regime be created as a confidence-building measure. Canada welcomed the President's proposal and pledged its full support in the development of an "Open Skies" regime.

Canadian officials spent the summer quietly encouraging their counterparts in Western and Eastern Europe to consider the "Open Skies" proposal. These efforts by Canada and others were rewarded on September 21 when Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze indicated to Secretary of State Baker during discussions at Jackson Hole, Wyoming that the USSR would participate in an international conference on the subject.

The type of "Open Skies" regime envisaged would open NATO and Warsaw Pact members' territories to aerial surveillance by unarmed, non-

combat aircraft subject only to internationally-accepted civilian flight safety rules. The regime would not be related to a specific treaty, but would rather serve as a general confidence-building measure between East and West. As the Prime Minister stated on September 24: "the scheme's strength is its simplicity.... It will provide greater assurances to individual participating countries that the military activities of their neighbours are not preparations for surprise attack."

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An "Open Skies" regime would allow states — such as Canada — that do not possess satellite means of observation to exercise an independent capability of monitoring activities of potential concern. It would enable the North American members of NATO to demonstrate their willingness to shoulder some of the burden of intrusiveness that the European allies will incur under a conventional force reduction agreement in Europe. It would also provide an opportunity for Soviet President Gorbachev to re-emphasize his commitment to "glasnost" in a dramatic yet practical fashion. □

Bilateral Arms Control and Disarmament Consultations February — September 1989

Canada conducts annual and ad hoc arms control and disarmament consultations with a variety of countries at the senior officials' level. Below is a list of consultations during the February-September 1989 period.

DATE	COUNTRY	LOCATION
April 6-7, 1989	USSR	Ottawa
June 6, 1989	Czechoslovakia	Prague
June 8, 1989	Poland	Warsaw
June 12, 1989	France	Ottawa
July 20, 1989	USSR	Ottawa
September 26, 1989	New Zealand	Wellington