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CANADA AND UNITED STATES TO RENEW NORAD AGREEMENT

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Right Honourable Joe Clark and the Minister of National Defence, the Honourable Bill McKnight, today announced that the Governments of Canada and the United States have agreed to continue their co-operation in the air defence of North America and the joint surveillance and control of continental aerospace through a renewal of the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD) Agreement. The renewal -- for a further five years -- will be signed in Washington before the expiry of the current NORAD term on May 12.

The decision to renew the NORAD Agreement was taken by the Government of Canada following an extensive review of various factors. The review took into account the comments and recommendations of the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade and a group of Canadian defence specialists commissioned by the Committee to provide expert advice on this question. Renewal of the Agreement has subsequently been endorsed by private Canadian defence and research groups.

The Government supports the intention of the Standing Committee to carry out a study of Canada-U.S. defence relations, with emphasis on future surveillance needs.

NORAD has been and continues to be an efficient and cost-effective means for Canada to protect its sovereignty and national security by providing prompt, reliable information on possible or reported incursions and threats to Canada's air and aerospace. Together with NATO, NORAD continues to play a vital role in safeguarding Canada's defence and security interests.

In agreeing to the renewal, both governments have also acknowledged that with respect to their common interest in maintaining effective surveillance and control of North American airspace, such control includes the monitoring of aircraft suspected of smuggling illegal drugs into North America. This reflects the important counter-narcotics mission which both governments assigned to NORAD since the Agreement was last renewed.

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