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● (0940)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.)): Good morning, everyone, to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

[*Translation*]

This is hearing No. 7. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we commence our study of disarmament issues.

[*English*]

We are pleased to have as our witnesses this morning, from the University of Manitoba, Mr. James Fergusson, the director of the Centre for Defence and Security Studies; and from Project Ploughshares, Mr. Ernie Regehr, executive director.

You have both appeared in front of our committee before. Welcome.

Who wants to speak first? Mr. Fergusson, the floor is yours, please.

Dr. James Fergusson (Director, Centre for Defence and Security Studies, University of Manitoba): Thank you and good morning. It's a pleasure to have this opportunity to testify before the committee even on short notice, and I look forward to testifying in the future when the committee begins examining the government's international policy review, hopefully in early 2005.

My preliminary comments today should be understood as part of much larger concerns and issues I have with the state of Canadian security policy, which I hope will be addressed to some degree in the international policy review. In this regard, I will also put aside in my initial comments the issues surrounding the outer space weaponization arguments, while remaining open to answer any questions regarding them.

To that end, my answer to the issue posed today about the relationship between ballistic missile defence and disarmament is straightforward. There is no significant relationship, at least not as critics argue. Of course, one may suggest that any new weapons program, by definition, is contrary to disarmament, but to do so makes the term “disarmament” and the procedure associated with it meaningless. Disarmament becomes rhetoric and a useful examination of the theoretical and empirical record becomes improbable, if not impossible. Emotion triumphs over analysis.

In this context, disarmament should be understood in two forms relative to missile defence: the first, the impact defences might have on the ongoing strategic nuclear weapons reductions that date back to the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaties, START I and START II, of the 1990s, and more recently, to the strategic offensive arms reduction treaty signed by Russia and the United States in 2003; and the second, the impact defences might have on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and associated strategic or long-range ballistic missiles.

The two, according to critics, are inherently related. Simply, the collapse of the arms reduction process, which includes the Chinese increase in its strategic forces, will amount to nuclear powers reneging on their non-proliferation treaty commitments, resulting in the collapse of the non-proliferation regime itself.

This also includes a linear vertical proliferation process in which a Chinese increase will be followed by an Indian one, which will be followed by a Pakistani one, and then drive Iran down the same path. All this, according to missile defence critics, will follow from the deployment of a limited operational ground-based mid-course phase missile defence system consisting of initially up to twenty interceptors in Alaska and approximately four in California, as well as a rudimentary sea-based system, based upon the AEGIS-class cruisers and destroyers.

The argument, better known as missile defence creating an arms race, simply cannot be sustained, and I would be pleased to provide more details through the question and answer session. For now, please consider the following points.

First of all, there are no incentives for Russia to walk away from SORT and future reductions. Even if the lower ceiling of 1,700 warheads were to be reduced by 90% to 170 warheads, they still would be sufficient to inflict unacceptable damage on the United States and North America. Even if the limited defence capability were expanded greatly to 200 interceptors, a Russian arsenal of 170 warheads still would be able to inflict unacceptable damage.

Second, Russia's ongoing modernization program, primarily consisting of a new generation of intercontinental ballistic missile and submarine-launched ballistic missile, is not explicable by U.S. missile defence plans. The Russians may boast about advance penetration aids and link or justify the new weapons as a response to missile defence, but it is simply modernization, which has occurred and will occur regardless of U.S. missile defence plans.

Finally and perhaps most importantly, the political conditions do not exist for rapid expansion of arsenals, which occurred during the Cold War, despite some irresponsible press reports of Russia becoming more like the Soviet Union. If it were to become more authoritarian, the question still remains as to the specific political situation, that we would re-create the adversarial relationship as in the Cold War.

The Chair: A little slower, please.

Dr. James Fergusson: My apologies.

If such conditions were to re-emerge—and I don't think this is likely—the reduction process would likely collapse, regardless of missile defence. It is important to recall that the expected arms reductions following the signing of the ABM Treaty in 1972 did not materialize. In fact, arsenals expanded. The decline followed changing political circumstances.

Even if an adversarial relationship did emerge—and this applies especially to the case of China, which many see as the true target of U.S. missile defence plans—the prediction that the response would be to expand the number of weapons simply because of this SDI critique—and the Soviets tried to use this to bolster anti-SDI opinion in the United States—may not hold. In fact, the very situation existed during the adversarial relationship between Beijing and Moscow in the 1970s and 1980s.

The Chinese response was not to increase its strategic arsenal. Instead, it continued on a long-term modernization path independent of the strategic balance as affected by the Soviet missile defence capability around Moscow, which I should note still exists today but is not problematic, it seems.

This Chinese modernization program is now bearing fruit with its first solid-fuelled mobile intercontinental ballistic missile. The program and the process will continue. In fact, only the Chinese have increased the size of their nuclear arsenal over the past decade, regardless of the ebb and flow of U.S. missile defence plans to the science of so-called world public opinion, and will likely continue even if limited U.S. missile defence is cancelled—nor would cancellation bring China to the negotiating table.

Like Russia, China will continue to point to U.S. missile defence programs as justification for modernizing their strategic forces, but such rhetoric is not surprising. Importantly, decision-makers must recognize that the overall proliferation issue, vertical and horizontal proliferation, is being driven by a range of domestic and regional political concerns and is not going to be significantly affected by U. S. missile defence efforts.

Valuing disarmament and implicitly linking it to arms control and proliferation to the level held by many in the west and Canada provides a political weapon that others have and will continue to use to advance their interests. These interests are political, and weapons decisions will be driven by these interests and circumstances, not specific weapons systems.

In this regard, let me conclude with three other key points.

First, a case based upon the comparative cost of missile defence to the acquisition of strategic offensive arms leads to the conclusion that missile defence will have a positive impact in reinforcing the non-proliferation regime by negating the political and military utility of offensive arms. However, this complicated case should not be overstated or else it falls victim to the same critique applied to the arms race arguments.

Second, it remains puzzling to me that critics are so quick to condemn the United States missile defence initiative but say nothing about the Russian program, which is not dead, the Israeli operational system, and the involvement of many more countries in seeking to acquire missile defences through cooperation with the United States.

Third, arguments that surfaced over the last decade of managing the nuclear dilemma by adopting a virtual deterrence posture, whereby a state could disarm but would possess the knowledge and components to reassemble its arsenal quickly, are viable with the existence of missile defences. Defences act as a hedge against cheating. When no one possesses nuclear weapons, the significance of one cheating to acquire one weapon is extremely high. With thousands, one more doesn't matter. With none, one does.

Missile defence acts as a hedge against this cheating and in this regard may well facilitate future disarmament. These are the lessons of chemical and biological weapons: international agreements bolstered by defences.

In conclusion, the idea that missile defences will result in a new arms race and the end of strategic arms reductions, and thus prospects for disarmament, are theoretically and empirically problematic and dubious. There is as much, if not more, to the argument that missile defences will support reductions and disarmament. Regardless, the fate of disarmament will remain a function of political circumstances, which in fact drive weapons acquisitions decisions.

In the final analysis, one thing should be recognized. Unless defences are developed to deal with ballistic missiles, the most useful delivery vehicle for nuclear weapons, an incentive will remain for states to construct their security on the basis of nuclear deterrence.

Like arms control, defence does not have to be perfect. It only has to provide support to international agreements and a significant damage limitation capacity as a hedge against something going wrong.

● (0945)

In the end, it is better to provide the decision-makers with another option than simply nuclear retaliation.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fergusson.

Mr. Regehr.

Mr. Ernie Regehr (Executive Director, Project Ploughshares): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I also appreciate the opportunity to participate in the hearing, and look forward to the committee also engaging in extended hearings on these issues.

As you said, a written brief has been circulated. In my introductory comments I want to recap some of the main points I raise there. In particular, I want to take these few minutes to draw your attention to three related arms control measures that should receive priority attention in an international security environment that could soon include what the re-elected Bush administration will call a deployed strategic missile defence system.

The three arms control measures are: agreed international limits on ballistic missile defence interceptors, consistent with stated limited defence objectives; a ban on anti-satellite weapons testing and deployment; and a ban on testing and deployment of weapons in space.

The U.S. national missile defence emphasizes that the BMD system intended to protect the American homeland is directed toward only a “limited ballistic missile attack”. That's a quote from the act. That raises the key question, what is the definition of “limited”? How many interceptors make up a limited defence?

Strategic missile defence has never been totally banned, but from 1972 to 2003 it was severely restricted under the ABM Treaty. BMD proponents now say they will continue to restrict it. So let's make sure of that by insisting on international rules to set the limits.

The brief explores what the limits might be, and that requires further exploration, obviously, but it's clear that anything over the very low tens will be destabilizing and dangerous on a number of fronts. Even a system with low limits will undermine the disarmament objectives that Canada shares with much of the world.

Given that Washington's commitment to BMD militates against a total ban, we are necessarily in a damage control mode, and that is what an international agreement to limit interceptors must do.

Of course, related offensive missile control efforts, which have been given significant attention by Canada, are the kinds of preventative actions that should be a primary focus. As you know, the missile technology control regime is an attempt to coordinate export controls to prevent the development of long-range missiles and missile programs linked to weapons of mass destruction. A code of conduct works to build an international norm of restraint and transparency toward that end.

When it comes to missile-borne nuclear weapons, our security depends entirely on preventing their use, not on defence once they are used. There is no security in waiting until states acquire missiles and then hoping for a capacity to intercept them. This committee could helpfully investigate current missile and weapons of mass destruction and non-proliferation efforts, in the interests of proposing and supporting intensified Canadian action on these fronts.

Without a ban, or at the very least strict limits on missile interceptors, the pursuit of a universal ban on anti-satellite weapons will remain stalled. America's nuclear rivals—Russia and China remain nuclear rivals because there's no other point to their arsenals—will not abandon the effort to counteract the BMD system that includes the threat of expansion to the point of raising doubts about their deterrent. A counter-threat against U.S. satellites is a credible but dangerous option that they will also not ignore.

The Chinese-Russian proposal at the CD points in a hopeful direction, calling for a prohibition on resorting to the threat or use of force against outer-space objects. Of course, it languishes in the CD along with a proposal to prohibit the basing of weapons in space. The pursuit of an ASAT ban thus needs to be revitalized along with efforts to prevent the weaponization of space.

There are precedents and norms that support both an anti-satellite weapons ban and non-weaponization of space. Globally, the desire to keep weapons and shooting wars out of space still has overwhelming political support.

● (0950)

Success will require a direct challenge to the Pentagon's continuing ambition to develop what it calls counter-space operations—that is to say, attacks on space assets and satellites of their adversaries—and such operations that lead to what they term space superiority. That's how the U.S. air force's recent counter-space doctrine puts it.

Resisting those intentions represents a looming struggle in which Canada cannot afford to be sidelined. We will be sidelined if we commit to a ballistic missile defence system that has no defined limits, does not preclude the weaponization of space, and that undermines our primary objective of prevention through non-proliferation.

Again, with regard to space security, prevention must be the priority. The Department of Foreign Affairs is working cooperatively with partners outside of government, including an international community of experts, in a promising and integrated approach to space security. The focus is on an annual measurement of progress toward, or retreat from, ensuring space as a secure and sustainable environment for the global public good—Mr. Graham's phrase—that serves the common interests through space communications, navigation, remote sensing, science, and so on, and to ensure that our terrestrial life is free from space-based threats.

The project has already produced a report on space security for 2003, and the committee might find it useful to explore this approach of broad space security efforts, in the context of pursuing bans on space weapons and ASATs.

In conclusion, I also want to comment briefly on the striking reluctance among advocates of our participation in BMD to argue the merits of BMD itself. That was the case recently when the former Canadian ambassador to Washington weighed in on the issue. The main thrust of the argument was that BMD itself may be of dubious worth, but we have to embrace it because that's what security cooperation with the United States requires.

Recent statements by the defence minister also seem to suggest that historical mutual security commitments between the United States and Canada are somehow conditional. It's as if we can't take Ogdensburg and NATO article 5 commitments at face value, but must renegotiate or means test them from time to time. The test is Canadian approval of particular weapons systems or programs that the United States unilaterally decides to pursue.

The United States has decided for its own reasons to make BMD a priority. It didn't ask Canada first, and Canada certainly didn't ask the United States to pursue that capacity on our behalf. It's never been a Canadian priority. If the Americans assumed that participation in BMD was a test of Canada-U.S. defence cooperation, then they had a responsibility to put that proposition to Canada and consult with Canada prior to passing the National Missile Defence Act.

The Americans didn't consult Canada because they regard BMD as a strictly national program, and not a test of the Canada-U.S. security relationship. In fact, the United States has been remarkably sanguine about Canada's involvement. It has not pressured Canada to become involved, and is not particularly worried about a timeline and a decision. It exercised its prerogative to pursue BMD, whether we think it wise or not. But the U.S. cannot now say that because it decided on its own to pursue BMD, Canada's non-participation would call into question its commitment to cooperative continental security.

A similar line of argument is frequently taken with regard to the matter of a seat at the table. There is the suggestion that somehow Canada has to earn the right to be consulted, and the way we earn that right is by endorsing and signing on to the very system or issue about which there are to be consultations. Canada does indeed need to be at the BMD table. It is a system that has serious implications for us and for the international community.

● (0955)

Good neighbourliness requires of the United States that it consult us. If among the many tables that already exist there's none suitable for ongoing BMD consultations, then, as they have already done on this issue and others, the diplomats are quite capable of establishing the appropriate table.

Finally, let me reiterate that given the re-election of the Bush administration and its ongoing commitment to BMD deployment, Canada has a responsibility to join with other states in pursuing arms control measures to try to mitigate the worst implications of BMD. It is necessary to seek international agreement to severely limit BMD interceptors, as well as to ban anti-satellite weapons and to ban stationing of weapons in space, and especially to pursue with sustained effort the preventive non-proliferation agenda that has been and must continue to be a priority of Canadian security strategy.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Regehr.

Now I'm going to pass to the questions and answers.

Mr. O'Connor, please.

Mr. Gordon O'Connor (Carleton—Mississippi Mills, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, I'm quite pleased to have you here today, because we're genuinely here to learn about ballistic missile defence and hear the opposing opinions. The Conservative Party at this time neither supports nor rejects ballistic missile defence. Our decisions are suspended because we don't have any details. The government has not provided us with any details whatsoever on what they're prepared to sign, and so our caucus has not discussed this subject, we have not come to any conclusion. Recently, with the throne speech, we forced an amendment through to make sure this issue will come before Parliament and there will be a vote on it. But before we vote on it, we want to know what we're voting on. That's why I'm pleased to have both of you here today.

My first question I'd like both of you to answer. Do you consider the threat that has been identified to be credible and probable?

The Chair: Mr. Fergusson, first.

Dr. James Fergusson: Thank you.

Is the threat credible and probable? In 1999, then Secretary of Defense William Cohen announced that among the four key decision areas for proceeding to deploy an unlimited national missile defence system was that the threat did exist. So check that box. The grounds on which he made the announcement was not that the threat existed then or necessarily exists now, but it was based upon earlier national security estimates that essentially raised the question of when potentially rogue states, or states of concern, i.e., the non-nuclear states, particularly those not being Russia or China, would likely acquire ballistic missiles capable of striking at North America and more than likely possess nuclear weapons. In 1999 Cohen suggested that would likely be credible and that it would occur within roughly the next 15 years.

If we take from 1999 to today, and look at the basic progress of certain states who have not possessed nuclear weapons and have not possessed long-range missiles but who have, as far as the public domain is concerned, been exploring, researching, and developing these areas, we do see certain progress.

As you know, North Korea earlier launched a three-stage missile, which was supposedly a peaceful test. A three-stage rocket would have the capacity, estimated at the time, to likely strike at limited targets in western North America. We suspected much earlier that North Korea possessed at least one, if not several, nuclear weapons.

If we look at the progress of India, Pakistan, and Iran in the ballistic missile area, we know that India and Pakistan are now nuclear weapon states, whether we like it or not. We believe they have married their nuclear arsenals to at least limited missile capabilities. The Indians have a space-launch capability. They are not very far away from an intercontinental ballistic missile capability. By the way, they just expressed an interest in missile defence as well.

Iran has developed and tested two-stage intermediate range ballistic missiles, and boasts of a 2000-range missile. The IAEA expects or suspects that Iran has an active nuclear weapons research program.

Those are the primary actors right now who are the concern, but what it tells us in the bigger picture is that despite existing international agreements, despite the non-proliferation agreement, despite the missile technology control regime, if a state is interested and willing to devote resources—and I won't go back to what we knew of Iraq's program as well in 1990-91—it can acquire these weapons. It takes time; it takes a great deal of investment.

The threat is reasonably credible enough and reasonably probable enough relative to the strategic situation in the world today, and that situation is the incentives these states have—no matter how you want to look at it or what value you want to put on it—to try to acquire the capacity to practice nuclear deterrence.

Missile defence thus is an attempt to respond to this by negating the political-military utility of attempts to acquire these weapons. It dampens down proliferation incentives, but it also provides a credible option against the probability—which isn't 100%, of course, because we won't know if missile defences are deployed and if Iran and other nations stop deploying those weapons.... By the way, there are also other reasons why they want these weapons—prestige, status, regional politics. If they don't deploy them, there's no evidence.

So it is a credible threat in the future.

● (1000)

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Fergusson, but it's five minutes for questions and answers, and I would like to get an answer from Monsieur Regehr also.

Monsieur Regehr.

Mr. Ernie Regehr: Thank you very much.

The threat is credible and probable, but it's a larger threat. The capacity for there to be ballistic missile attacks on North America is widely spread. It's China and the United States that have the most prominent capacity. We have to look at the relative threats here and the imminence of the threats. North Korea, Iran, India, and Pakistan, they're all pursuing extending the range of their ballistic missiles, and it's possible to interpret those as threats to ourselves.

Much more accessible missile technology is cruise missile technology. The threat of cruise missiles on ships a few hundred miles off the shore, up and down the entire coastline, is, in technical terms, more imminent than a ballistic missile threat from either North Korea or Iran. The proliferation of nuclear materials that can be delivered via dirty bombs and explosives to North American soil is much more imminent than this threat. And the probability of those threats is much greater than North Korea. A long-range ballistic missile attack leaves the return address loud and clear. And the wisdom of a state like North Korea advertising that kind of thing, when they can smuggle something in through a shipping container, is something you have to explain. Why is that more imminent than the other?

So all of these things are a threat. Anybody who gets anywhere near a nuclear weapon and with a missile capacity is a threat that needs to be dealt with. Which are the most imminent? Where are political and military resources to be devoted to address the threat that is the most probable, credible, and the most imminent? We're focusing here on a threat that has a high profile while ignoring a range of other threats that have much greater imminence.

● (1005)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Regehr.

Now, we'll pass to Madame Lalonde, *s'il vous plaît.*

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for two very interesting presentations on this issue which has so many levels of interests and raises so many questions.

I will just ask you two questions. First, don't you think the logic that led to the race between the URSS and the USA and that led to the treaty will happen again? The mere fact of being able to stop, if really possible ...Personnally, I don't think we are close to doing that: the technology doesn't seem to be appropriate, doesn't seem to be there but it is the logic it creates that I dispute. The mere fact of being immune from a missile attack will drive others to build other antimissile shields or missiles which are capable of going through the defences.

If you say no to that, it means that everybody accepts the american military superiority and the american empire. I don't think we are there yet.

My other question deals with a completely different level. Some say Canada must sit at the table. But some experts told the Defence Committee that Canada will never be allowed to sit at the table where the shield itself will be discussed, and that we will be very marginal actors.

I would like to have your comments on those two aspects.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Fergusson first.

Dr. James Fergusson: A short answer.

The first question, if I understood you correctly, was whether other countries want to develop their own missile shield. Israel has an operational strategic missile defence capability, the Arrow system buttressed by Patriot, which is a tactical system, and is continuing research on developing a more effective ground-based system.

Russia possesses a limited system, which guards... Moscow has shown interest in investing and developing an expanded system for theatre use. Japan is involved, South Korea is involved, Australia is involved. NATO Europe has undertaken studies. So what we have, in fact, is not a single actor moving down the missile defence path, but many actors.

The key is that the United States, by virtue of its investment capability and its technological advance, is the key to cooperative efforts. In fact, the United States has shown very clearly that it is willing to cooperate with states who are interested in missile defence. India is interested as well and does cooperate with Russia, for example, on developments here. So this isn't going to be, as this unfolds—and it's hard to know how the future will unfold here—one in which the United States stands alone with missile defence capacity, declares its superiority and then somehow goes out and acts aggressively. On the contrary, this will be a system where I think more and more states will move down the missile defence path, such as we've done with air defence and all defences.

Second, at the negotiating table, Canada as a secondary player, if we are involved, if I understand—

● (1010)

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Is it a possibility for you to speak slower, because the translator has problems.

Dr. James Fergusson: If I understood the question about Canada as a secondary player at the negotiating table, assuming there is a negotiating table and assuming there's something to negotiate, which I'm not convinced there will be, certainly membership gets us to the table.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Regehr.

[*English*]

Mr. Ernie Regehr: I think it's very important to distinguish between long-range strategic missile defence that has an impact on the strategic balance of the major nuclear powers and theatre missile defence, or regional missile defence, which impacts power balances within the regions. Those are two very different things.

There's also a distinction between broad continental defence and the point defence system that Russia is mounting.

What we need to prevent, as a first priority, is the pursuit of a long-range strategic national continental missile defence for either the United States or for the Soviet Union or China that undermines the strategic balance between those two and produces incentives to increase their offensive nuclear arsenals. That's the issue at hand here.

There's an entirely different question about localized and theatre missile defence that needs to be dealt with through missile technology control. It's the strategic system that will produce increases in or more likely sustain current levels of nuclear weapons and prevent any further reduction and against which there is no defence.

Defence against strategic long-range nuclear missiles does need to be 100%. If it's 5%, it's game over, we've lost. It only works if it's 100%. That's an utter impossibility. So we need to make a clear distinction between long-range continental strategic missile defence and theatre missile defence. It's the former that needs to be precluded and prevented—which was blocked by the ABM Treaty—and it's that basic provision of the ABM Treaty that needs to be recovered.

On the negotiating thing, I think it is a mystery of what there is to sign on to. Further, the United States has made it unambiguously clear that Canada will not be anywhere near the trigger on ballistic missile defence. We will not be in the chain of command in the operation of missile defence. There's no incentive for Canada to try to be that. We participate in the early warning and assessment through NORAD, but we will not have our finger on the trigger nor have any decision-making power related to the use of the system.

The Chair: Thank you, Monsieur Regehr.

We'll now go to Madame Phinney, please.

Ms. Beth Phinney (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Thank you very much.

I'm like a lot of other people in the House: I haven't followed this issue over the years. Maybe we should have been following it, but we all seem to be in a little bit of a fog. You just added something at the end there that made me totally confused. We're supposed to join on to something, but we have no say if somebody pushes the button. When we have no say in it, that has me a little confused. So I'm not quite sure what we're joining.

I think you both said we need to be at the table, but I'm wondering what table. Does this table that's coming up, that we might be signing on to, include continued discussions about arms control and things like that? Or is this table only going to be to discuss when we're going to push the button, but we're not going to have any say when we're pushing the button anyway? Maybe we should be at another table, or should we be at two tables?

● (1015)

The Chair: Mr. Regehr, we'll start with you this time.

Mr. Ernie Regehr: I think it's a very good point that there need to be two tables. An exclusively BMD table will be a table at which we're informed about what they're going to do. Canada comes to the table without our territory involved, without our technology involved, without our money involved—as it's being presented to us now—and with the expectation that we're going to be decision-makers. What planet are we living on? We're not going to be decision-makers when we bring those resources to the table.

I've heard it already from official places or people or usually reliable observers, to put it that way, who have said that the idea that we can come to this table with influence without putting money into it is a shock that Canadians are going to discover too late. If we expect to have influence at this table, we have to make a serious contribution to it and we have to put money into it. If that's the case, ask Canadians if that's where they want to spend the money. Ask the soldier who has served in Afghanistan whether he or she thinks it's better to spend the money on ballistic missile defence or on equipment and more personnel to help them do their work. Canadians can then make the decision.

Influence at a BMD table is going to take Canadian sacrifice, and then we have to make the decision. Is that where we want to put our energy and sacrifice, or are there more urgent places? If we want to be at a table that relates to arms control, then we'd better make it a wider table than a Canada–U.S. table. We have no basis of influence or leverage at that table if it's a bilateral table. Disarmament tables or arms control tables are multilateral tables at which we can build alliances and work in cooperation with others.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. fergusson.

[*English*]

Dr. James Fergusson: The first part of your question was the issue of the finger on the trigger. Nowhere has the United States said, to my knowledge, one thing about the exact issues that would be put on the table if we negotiated participation. The issue that would be put on the table is command-and-control arrangements, which include the question of who issues the command to release the interceptors. It's highly likely the actual interceptor location, for example in Alaska, will remain under Northern Command, under U. S. Army command exactly. Who is going to hold it? It isn't likely that there will be Canadians there, although we might end up putting one or two Canadians there.

But it seems to me that the issue we're going to negotiate is the input we have in the operational planning of the system, the input we have relative to early warning, through to attack assessment, through to decisions about release of the missiles. This is different from strategic weapons, as the release has to be made very quickly. It's very possible we will negotiate Canadian officers in NORAD who will be given that authority, in the same way we have Canadian officers who would pick up the phone to the President of the United States to inform the President that North America is under ballistic missile attack. That's the nature of our close relationship. You're dead right, that is what we're going to negotiate, and if we're not going to get anything more than early warning, then it seems we won't negotiate.

Professor Regehr is correct. There is an issue that has emerged about whether the United States, in negotiations—because they can do this on their own—will come to us and say they think we need to put something on the table, and it might be territory. But the United States knows our budgetary problems and the lack of will to spend on defence, so I think they will be reasonable. It may require certain budgetary investments. Those are all things we have to start talking about. What does it mean to participate?

In conclusion, I would add that in 1996 the door was opened. The Joint Requirements Oversight Council in the Pentagon, under the Joint Chiefs of Staff, reportedly said that on the development and subsequent operational deployment of National Missile Defense, the preference for command and control would be NORAD. Since then, the United States has not said a word. They've basically waited to hear what we have had to say.

With regard to the table, with Professor Regehr's point correctly taken, it's very clear that if you want to negotiate some sort of international agreement on missile defence, Canada does not sit at that table if they're going to be meaningful negotiations unless Canada is part of what's being negotiated. The history of arms control has been that the only actors who sit at the meaningful table are the people who possess them or can possess them, like the United States and the Soviet Union back in the Cold War years.

If the table we want is the negotiating table on missile defence—and I have other comments about that—then the only way Canada gets a seat at the table and it's going to be a meaningful seat at a meaningful table occurs if Canada is part of the missile defence system, and how much influence we get at the end of the day is beside the point. And you would probably include Israel in such discussions, because they have a strategic defence system as well.

● (1020)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Chairman, we are all very happy to have the witnesses before the committee today, because we're very concerned to advise ourselves and to ensure that Canadians have an opportunity to be fully informed on what it is we're really dealing with around a decision on whether Canada participates in the U.S. ballistic missile defence system or not.

I have one question. I don't want to use up the time of the committee, but we know there are massive amounts of information. We know that five-minute presentations and five-minute questions can't begin to get to the root of what we're looking for. I therefore want to ask if the witnesses would share with the committee subsequently, with further submissions, the benefit of any work they have each done that is pertinent to this issue.

I note that in the press advertisement of Professor Fergusson's appearance this morning at Breakfast on the Hill, he has written several commissioned reports for both the foreign affairs and defence departments. I wonder if you could share with the committee any of that work and indicate what the nature and the extent of the financial relationships were in both instances, between yourselves as individuals, or between your respective centres, Project Ploughshares and the Centre for Defence and Security Studies.

I was personally very alarmed that in the presentation this morning made by Dr. Fergusson there was virtually no real reference to the impact on Canada as a multilateralist, on the whole issue of Canada's responsible role as a participant in non-proliferation, in arms control, in disarmament. Could I ask for further comments on that?

Second, Dr. Fergusson, you indicated that reasoned debate on Canadian participation in NMD has been drowned out by emotional and misleading arguments. I assume that's with reference to the stance taken by the former Canadian ambassadors for disarmament, both Doug Roche and Peggy Mason. I assume that refers to the American generals, 49 of whom have publicly not only spoken out in the U.S. but have come to Canada to make their concerns known. I assume that includes the eminent scientists who have come together to say that there is no sound scientific basis for this. I wonder if you might comment further on that.

The third thing concerns the whole question of—

The Chair: There will be no time for answers.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: —public debate. I know Dr. Fergusson has said that one of the problems is we've never had a real public debate. I wonder, for the record, if we could hear from both of you what you feel would constitute a full and thorough debate, what the timeframe should be for that, and what the nature of that process should be, involving not only parliamentarians but Canadians.

Thank you.

The Chair: Dr. Fergusson.

Dr. James Fergusson: The reports I've written for the foreign affairs and national defence departments that touch on this issue are the property of the crown. If they are willing to release them, I can certainly provide you with all the detailed information.

With respect to the views of other critiques, it's important to not misunderstand the points I was making this morning. The critique on both sides—and I don't mean this to apply only to those opposed to missile defence but also to those who support missile defence in Canada—have by and large been somewhat sensationalized relative to the issues confronting Canada. That's the point I'm trying to make.

The views of the scientists, for example, that question the technological feasibility raise very important points about technological problems that have been reflected and absorbed, I would add, over time in missile defence agency restructuring, their testing envelope. I refer to the *Rush to Failure* report of 1999, for example, and the subsequent follow-on report to that. Part of the reason the system is the way it is is because they're trying to deal with some of the critiques scientists have made about the technological limitations, and it is a very difficult thing to do.

The American plan is very difficult, and there's no doubt the scientists are right. But we have to put that in the context of other very sophisticated and advanced programs that have been established over the past many, many decades where, if you go back to the origins of them, it was said couldn't be done. The record seems to indicate that eventually it gets done. The best example I always like to use is that when Kennedy said the United States would go to the moon in 1960, there was no shortage of scientists who stood up to say it could not be done. It was done.

You also mentioned Canada's role in non-proliferation arms control and disarmament. As I argued this morning, the question is how you see how significant we have been. I would suggest the most significant contribution in many ways Canada has made in non-proliferation arms control and disarmament has not been in the big negotiating stage, but in fact was the contribution made in the 1990s by a small group in the foreign affairs department who worked on verification measures. This did have a significant impact on all the major actors with regard to the implementation of future arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation.

We had a significant role to play there. It wasn't a big popular one, but it was a significant one. But the important thing to remember is this came about while we were closely allied to the United States, while the relationship between the United States and Canada, the personal relationship between President Reagan and Prime Minister Mulroney, was the closest, perhaps, of any pair of decision-makers. We all remember the view of the world of President Reagan. All these things that we did successfully in our role on the international stage occurred while we were that close to the United States and the cowboy image of Ronald Reagan, so why would we expect that missile defence today is going to have any impact on our ability to take initiatives on the world stage?

● (1025)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fergusson.

[*English*]

You have 30 seconds, Mr. Regehr. That's all the time you have left.

Mr. Ernie Regehr: Thank you.

That was in the context of rejecting participation in missile defence as well by Mr. Mulroney.

On the public debate, I think we need two things: engagement of Canadians and full disclosure. We need to have full disclosure of the costs—what are we anticipating that Canadians are going to spend—and full disclosure on the nature of our ambitions for participation in command and control. Is there going to be a Canadian finger on the trigger? It won't be answering a call from Ottawa, it will be answering a call from Washington. And exactly what do we get for that, being a Canadian there rather than an American?

We need full disclosure on all of that and then the engagement of Canadians, because what we're talking about here is weighing options and weighing priorities: what's the nature of this priority relative to security priorities that we have nationally and internationally?

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we'll pass to Mr. MacAulay.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.): Thank you very much.

It's certainly an interesting subject. I have to admit, I haven't attended a lot of standing committee meetings. I've been used to being briefed before I come, but there's been a change now.

Just looking at the situation and what took place years ago, I think there would be a very different attitude in the country if you could just relate to what it was like back when Khrushchev was sending the vessels across to Cuba, how people felt that night, and what you need to do in the line of protection.

I'm not indicating that we have to be in or out, but the fact is, you wonder how you could stay out, how you could not participate, because it's our sovereignty. It's we who will be protected too.

You indicated that there's probably a bigger threat with the dirty bombs than with missiles. You've also indicated there are many other countries putting that type of missile defence capability in place.

All I would wonder is how we could not be involved, whether it takes one table or two. You were talking about the one table and who was going to handle the trigger and do all this stuff. I think the one that pays the biggest cheque has the biggest say in anything. I expect it's going to be the Americans in this situation, but we've worked well with them over many years.

What would be involved? What dollars would be involved? How do we put the thing in place in order to satisfy the disarmament situation along with the missile defence conditions for whether we'll be involved or not?

● (1030)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Regehr.

Mr. Ernie Regehr: First off, the Cuban crisis is interesting. One thing we should be absolutely clear on is that the ballistic missile defence, if all of it that is planned now were in place and it worked 100%, would have offered zero protection from the Soviet threat at that time. It's not designed for that. So that's not an argument for participating, because it would not have....

My understanding is that Canada wants to participate because we want to influence the direction and the development of the program. We want a guarantee of coverage of Canadian territory, if it's there, and we want industrial participation. I think those are the three things that Canada wants from participation.

Regarding influence direction, there is no influence available from Canada. The Missile Defence Agency says they will go where the technology leads them. They spend in excess of $10 billion, more than the entire Canadian defence budget, just on research every year. That's what's going to influence the direction of the program, not a couple of diplomats from Canada sitting in chairs in NORAD. We shouldn't kid Canadians into thinking we're buying influence on this system.

In regard to guarantee of Canadian coverage, guarantee of Canadian coverage means that we have command and control. Command and control for this system is going to cost Canadian territory and money. It's not going to come without that. So let's be honest, put that to Canadians: Do you want Canadian territory and money in significant measure to be put there?

In regard to industrial participation, it's going to be the same as the joint strike fighter aircraft—we buy it. If we want industrial participation, we put money in. That's the kind of contract we're going to be getting out of it. Put that to Canadians and see whether that's the priority they want to follow.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go to Mr. O'Connor, please.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Could I ask Mr. Fergusson to answer that one?

The Chair: Just a short one—30 seconds.

Dr. James Fergusson: We are getting hundreds of millions of dollars of benefit out of the joint strike fighter with no commitment to participate down the road. That's the current state of affairs right now. More money is coming back than going in.

To your question of how can we stay out, we can stay out. We stayed out of the strategic nuclear world and did the early-warning mission for the national command authorities of Canada and the United States with not a finger on the trigger with regard to American strategic nuclear retaliatory forces. We didn't want it. The Americans didn't want to give it to us. We can stay out.

On the question of how much this is going to cost, it is very difficult for us to know right now. It depends on what we're going to do. One thing we do know is that this system has to work very quickly. The system is designed to be able to release non-nuclear kinetic kill interceptors within roughly four to six minutes of the notification of a strike. There's no going to Washington. This will go right down the chain.

The input we want—and if we don't get it, we don't sign on—is with a limited number of interceptors relative to what we're willing to do, how are we going to negotiate an arrangement, given a strategy that has to be very quickly decided upon in relation to the advance software computer systems that are going to run this thing, so that one knows how one is going to basically undertake the intercepts?

Who do you shoot at? Who do you not shoot at? Choices have to be made.

That's the influence we get by getting in. The more we get in, then we get into issues of how much we want to pay relative to all these things, which we have to negotiate. We can get in probably for a little. We can get in for a more effective system to defend Canadian cities by paying more—including territory.

Ernie is right. Territory is something we may have to give rather than money.

● (1035)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. O'Connor.

Mr. Gordon O'Connor: Because my time is brief, I'm going to ask both of you gentlemen to answer briefly two questions.

I note your comment about science and how it can achieve great things, but they still haven't figured out how to put more hair on the top of my head.

My two questions: what's your assessment of the technical feasibility of the ballistic missile system; and, as a policy question, if we were to join the ballistic missile defence system, how would this affect us in relationship to any international treaties?

The Chair: That's a good question.

Mr. Fergusson.

Dr. James Fergusson: With regard to international treaties, it would affect us zero; there's no effect on our commitment to international treaties.

With regard to the technological feasibility, of the 12 integrated flight tests to date, eight of them have been intercepts and five of them have been successful. They've been fairly basic.

The way testing envelopes go, I would expect that as the system matures and the technology gets better, it gets tested. The new boosters themselves are now on the ground; they've been successfully tested. We're looking at a system that will be within the grounds of a feasible defence capacity that will be probably 60%, perhaps 70% effective on a one-shot basis.

I would add to that, to the cities involved and the millions of people, saving one city is perhaps worth a bit of investment.

The Chair: Thank you.

Monsieur Regehr.

Mr. Ernie Regehr: That the tests were basic is an understatement. They were utterly pre-planned.

The amazing thing is that in some of the systems, it wasn't the direction, it wasn't the "stop a bullet with a bullet" part of it that failed. It didn't get to that because something happened to the booster. This is a country that has been sending up booster rockets for 40 years. It's not that they don't know how to do it, but in one of the tests, that was the failure.

The point is no matter how long you've been doing it, these are extraordinarily complex and susceptible to failure.

I don't know where Mr. Fergusson gets the 70% from. The Pentagon's own tests and analyses say they have no basis for any estimate, because there has been no testing in anything in system circumstances and they can't offer them. In fact, it's the Pentagon that's putting pressure on, saying that they have to have some tests of these things.

The things that they put in Alaska...there's no plan for two years for any of them to fly.

It takes someone with a lot more technical expertise than I have to make a guess on how effective the system is. The scientific community and the Pentagon itself say that at the moment there's no capacity for making any claims about the effectiveness, because the thing just hasn't been tested enough.

In regard to the impact on treaties, I'm not thinking right now that there is a specific treaty violation that's involved here. The ABM Treaty, which was relevant, was reversed, But it does have an implication on the international strategic environment. That has an implication on nuclear non-proliferation, vertical and horizontal, so it has implications for the objectives that we seek via treaties.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Regehr.

Mr. McTeague.

Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Mr. O'Connor, I just want to make available to you and your party—I have done so with your critic, your colleague Kevin Sorenson, and our House leader has also offered to your House leader, and I have done so in person—an opportunity for a briefing from both the Department of National Defence and from Foreign Affairs. There was one here, ironically, in this room last evening for our party. I note that the Bloc Québécois has already taken that up and will give us a date at some point in the future. So I just wanted to let you know that, in the context of the first comment you made. It's important that you understand that an offer has been made, sir.

My questions are manyfold. Mr. O'Connor, we can talk about this a little later if you wish.

I want to first of all salute both of you. I think it's a very interesting presentation you've made. There are obviously some differences, but one area where you have both demonstrated some similarity is that the threat is credible.

Mr. Regehr, there are varying degrees of what is a threat and what is more likely imminent. I know every time I go in an airport and go through a metal detector there is some kind of defensive procedure. I know because I have to take my belt off, my shoes off, so the probability is reduced by the ability to understand the risk and to address the risk.

That leaves us with a gaping hole. In particular, when my seven-year-old son points out to me a global picture, and he looks at a globe of the world and sees Canada as being the sort of massive flare-out from the United States.... The prospect of Canada being used as territory where a missile will come over us requires us to at least understand where the deployment might take place, whether it's done unilaterally by the United States or not.

Quite aside from the question of money—you're postulating we can't get any kind of cooperation here unless we put in money—I'm wondering if you could answer a very simple question for me. Would it be better for us to be participating in a discussion, as opposed to simply allowing the Americans unilaterally to make this decision on their own, notwithstanding the fact that it's clear that the missiles more than likely will have to come over our territory in the event? And you would say perhaps the unlikely event, but nevertheless it is credible.

● (1040)

The Chair: Mr. Regehr.

Mr. Ernie Regehr: I'm not sure that I follow. I don't know of anyone who's advocating not talking to the Americans about missile defence. The question is whether it's a precondition to say "Good on you. We support you in missile defence. Now let's talk about it." That's the issue.

Clearly we have to talk about them. As members of a common strategic region, they have an obligation to consult with us when they propose to do something that impacts upon us. Just as Mackenzie King said to Roosevelt, "We will make sure that threats from our territory do not emerge to threaten you undetected", we need to have the same assurance from the United States. So we have to talk to them. The notion that there are preconditions is the issue here.

The Chair: Mr. Fergusson.

Hon. Dan McTeague: If I could just continue, it's an important point, Mr. Fergusson, if you don't mind.

I think it's pretty clear that the position the government is taking on this is to enter into discussions to find out what it's all about. I think Canadians, as a measure of security—whether we believe philosophically in a social contract to ensure we have some kind of protection in the event this takes place—would make it incumbent on the government to at least find out what the system is all about.

Are you prepared to say that you at least support the Government of Canada entering into a discussion to find out what BMD is all about, even though there's no formal request for us to do anything?

Mr. Ernie Regehr: The Government of Canada has been in discussions, at least since 1999, with the Government of the United States. Hasn't it been since May 2003 that Mr. McCallum or Mr. Pratt, I forget which one.... There have been formal discussions. They've been ongoing on the implications of BMD. So that's there.

The Chair: Mr. Fergusson.

Dr. James Fergusson: I don't think the United States has any such obligation. It may be in their interest to do so and it may be in our interest to do so, but to suggest that they have an obligation....

Mackenzie King had no obligation—to respond to Mr. Regehr—to respond to President Roosevelt's unilateral announcement that the United States would defend Canada. His response, I will remind you, was one of a neutral state, not an ally. If that's the basis of our view of the relationship with the United States—which it isn't, of course—I think we have to be careful.

I think there is an obligation on the part of the Government of Canada—a principle, as I said this morning—that if a system is being deployed that will defend North America and defend Canada, to not entirely turn that over to a foreign government to do. There is an obligation involved here.

I'll just leave that there for now.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Paquette, you have five minutes, please.

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will come back to Mr. Fergusson.

In a text you wrote in the fall of 2001 about Canada and ballistic missile defence, you mention the fact that the Canadian defence policy reflects mostly international interests, for example the prevention of an arms race and so on. You state that this policy should instead reflect specific national interests of Canada.

In the case of the missile shield, what are the national interests we should identify before making a decision?

In you text, you indicate that money could play a decisive role. If this costs too much, it may not be in the national interest of Canada to join this project. I would like you to elaborate a bit on that point. What would be, according to you, the Canadian national interests we should keep in mind when our government will decide to join or not to join the US missile shield initiative?

● (1045)

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Fergusson.

Dr. James Fergusson: There are three prime national interests involved. The first, as we've already talked about, is the question of the obligation of the Government of Canada, if there's a system out there that is going to exist, to have some role and say in how that system would be used to protect Canada. It has been longstanding Canadian defence thinking that the relationship with the United States is premised upon the reality that the United States, à la Roosevelt, will defend us. Our interest has always been to make sure that the United States defends us the way we would prefer to be defended, rather than ceding all that to Washington and American thinking.

The probability of attack against North America by a ballistic missile may be near zero, but it is in our interest to ensure that if the situation does occur, the system is optimized so that Ottawa and Washington as targets, Toronto and New York as targets, and any other targets you can think of are treated as equal, to the best degree possible.

Second, it is in our interest to ensure that the bilateral relationship remains operative in the aerospace sector; that it does not simply decline into an arrangement covering air alone, and perhaps maritime and land arrangements, pending NORAD renewal and our relationship with Northern Command. That will have an impact upon Canada's knowledge and understanding of U.S. planning, U.S. strategic thinking.

Third, and related to that, NORAD, the aerospace arrangement, is the only arrangement that gives Canada a truly strategic window on the world. We may not be able to influence what the United States does or does not do, but Canadian policy-makers will be in a much better position to act to develop and implement policy by having that privileged access to American thinking than by not having it.

Canada has direct national interests in having that privileged access into this part of the world. If we don't have it we become no different from most other states in the world, in terms of our relationship in the defence area, in this particular area, with the United States. That is the key area with regard to defence and security, right now and in the decades to come. We will marginalize ourselves.

The Chair: Thank you.

Do you want to comment, Mr. Regehr?

Mr. Ernie Regehr: Just briefly, through NATO there are mutual commitments for the common defence, and it's the sovereign policy and responsibility of each state to define what they bring to the common defence. If there's a missile attack on Canada, it's the obligation of Germany to come to our aid. We don't enter into a relationship with Germany that defines how they're going to do that. That's part of the common agreement.

We're not in a position to enter into negotiations with the United States about how they defend us, unless we make it a joint defence project. To make it a joint defence project we need to decide whether that's our priority, whether we need to spend millions, perhaps billions—we don't know the number—on defence of a threat the probability of which, as Mr. Fergusson has just described, is near zero. Whether that's the priority we want to spend money on or whether there are other areas of national defence and security that we spend on is the fundamental question we face.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go to Madam McDonough. We just have ten minutes left, and Madam McDonough wants to ask questions, and Mr. McTeague again, and Mr. Goldring.

● (1050)

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd just like to ask the reaction of both witnesses to the fact that George Bush himself, now overwhelmingly re-elected as President of the United States, asserted in the last couple of months that NMD was in fact really the fulfillment of the Star Wars dream. He made an assertion, whether it was unguarded or a bit of hubris or whatever, in the last couple of months that really confirmed for those who said this wasn't really about Star Wars that it unquestionably is.

Dr. Fergusson, you admitted earlier this morning or again before the committee that Canada would really have no influence over any of the command and control strategic decisions made around missile defence by signing on, but would simply have privileged access to American strategic thinking.

I want to ask if you can weigh that against the possibility that Canada's signing on to missile defence will create some serious tensions—in fact, credibility problems—around our role as a significant middle power with major influence around non-proliferation, disarmament, and arms control and so on. Or do you dismiss that possibility?

Second, would you acknowledge whether there is any vulnerability Canada should be concerned about in terms of how we may be viewed by some hostile countries in the world?

The Chair: Mr. Fergusson.

Dr. James Fergusson: Very briefly, I think George Bush's comments—and I'd have to go back and read his exact speeches—were referring to the legacy of Star Wars. And remember, Star Wars was a big, big research program that absorbed everything related to missile defence and space, including the predecessor to the current system, which was based upon the homing overlay experiment that existed years before Star Wars. I think he was paying legacy or homage to Reagan's initiative, but that doesn't necessarily translate into Star Wars.

With regard to command and control, be careful here. We will have influence over the specifics of the ground-based midcourse phase system. We can't talk numbers and issues to the Americans until we say we are interested; we want to do this and we'll see what the negotiations lead to. So we have to make a decision before we get the numbers. But we will have influence over that by participating; that's the whole point of participating. What I meant was that we shouldn't think we will necessarily have influence. We may have zero influence on bigger, broader strategic areas with regard to where strategic command is going, how Pacific Command deals with missile defence and all the other aspects. But we will know about them—and that's important, I think, for wise Canadian decisions, including on disarmament.

With regard to the potential downside impact on our role in non-proliferation and arms control from participating, as I said earlier, first of all I think it's Canadian hubris to think we are still a significant middle power. I think we'd better seriously look at what's happened to Canada in the past decade or so, because if there's one thing there's general agreement about among the academic community it's that Canada is not a significant middle power any more. Our influence and status have declined dramatically; we have become marginal on the international stage. I wouldn't be one to suggest that part of that marginality is a function of what's happened to perceptions about our relationship with the United States; but as I said before, if it didn't bother the rest of the world for us to do something in the bilateral Cold War arrangements under NORAD regarding strategic nuclear weapons and all those issues, I'm not sure why it would bother the world if we were involved in missile defence either.

The Chair: Thank you.

Very short, because I have Mr. Goldring, and I'm limited by time.

Mr. Ernie Regehr: Briefly, whether Canada is a middle power or not, we have to make sure we're not a satellite power. At the conference on disarmament, Canada has made very specific commitments through the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs about the pursuit of an international agreement and treaty on the non-weaponization of space. I am very concerned about the impact on Canadian credibility in that exercise if we have formally endorsed and supported a missile defence system that has an explicit intention to pursue the possibility of stating weapons in space. We can't have it both ways; if we want to have influence in that forum, then we have to act consistently with our objectives in that forum.

● (1055)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Thank you very much.

Thank you for your presentation. It's very interesting to me, having come through the military in the 1960s and having been at the North Bay complex at the time when the Bomarc-B missiles were there—and they were nuclear-tipped at that time, too. So I'm viewing this as more or less an extension of that and a modernization of the detection portion of it, which I'm sure will not only be satellite-based but also have undersea detection—a submarine fleet maybe—surface ships, surface radar, and be fully integrated.

I rather agree with Mr. McTeague that we are not an island alone here; we are connected to the United States. The likelihood of us being in the flight path of a threat to the United States is probably pretty good.

My question is about the threat itself. We talked about rogue nations, but how do you assess the threat from actors—and we might say that 9/11 wasn't necessarily by a rogue nation, but by a rogue influence—who might have access to Korea, which has a very large submarine fleet of 70 or 80 submarines and has missile technology? We also have commercial development of missile technology. So this technology is developing and will be available, and by all probability will be able to be purchased by any group or individuals around this world in a short order of time. The likelihood of a submarine popping up 500 miles offshore or 1,000 miles offshore... it's irrelevant whether it's close to shore or distant from shore, it's still the same threat, detected by the same system, and it must be dealt with, whether by an ICBM or by other means.

Is part of the very real threat other than rogue nations perhaps individual actors that take over? Like in 9/11, they commandeered commercial airlines. And in the more modern threats coming up, could they commandeer commercial activities and purchase materials from around the world? Is that a very real consideration in this?

The Chair: Who's willing to answer that?

Mr. Regehr.

Mr. Ernie Regehr: Thank you.

I think you are raising a very important point, which is that we're entering into an era when the capacity or know-how to develop and use ballistic missiles and to equip them with weapons of mass destruction is going to be increasingly difficult to control. In other words, these things are going to.... The danger of proliferation is there, so the priority has to be non-proliferation.

It's also important to remember that the only thing making it possible to even contemplate ballistic missile defence of North America is the fact that non-proliferation has been extraordinarily successful. It has confined the rogue threat to one possible state, maybe two, and it has kept it small enough that you can even contemplate the fact of missile defence dealing with it. In other words, it's effective non-proliferation diplomacy that makes it possible to think about missile defence. If non-proliferation diplomacy did not work, and Brazil had used ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destruction and Argentina had, and the thing was spread around, then you'd have to give up on missile defence, because there is no defence against a proliferating threat.

The notion that defence is somehow a substitute for failed disarmament diplomacy doesn't wash; it depends upon disarmament diplomacy being successful. What we need to do is pursue that diplomacy much more effectively in North Korea and Iran.

● (1100)

The Chair: Mr. Ferguson, the last word.

Dr. James Fergusson: Very quickly, I'm not one who believes that even though the technology is diffusing and nuclear weapons purportedly are, or at least the knowledge is present, and you've heard the stories for decades now of the first-year physics students who know how to build a bomb—and this is all in the realm of ballistic missiles as well, etc.—I don't see a significant proliferation problem with regard to civilian terrorist organizations, at least not in the ballistic missile realm, but cruise missiles perhaps. But if a cruise missile is a primary threat, and of course there are other aspects being done for cruise missile defence in the United States.... Ballistic missile defence is designed to deal with ballistic missiles. But if cruise missiles are a real problem in Canada that we should be concerned about, then I would ask you what is Government of Canada doing about cruise missile defence? As far as I know, nothing. I think maybe it's not that big a problem.

To get to the point Mr. Regehr discussed on the proliferation problem, what we know from the evidence is that non-proliferation agreements have not been successful. We all know that if states are determined for whatever reasons to go down a path, they do cheat. Defence is a hedge against cheating. It's the same hedge with regard to chemical weapons. If someone decides they can go down the chemical weapon path and there's a way they can get away with it and cheat, the fact that we can put chemical masks on and defend ourselves acts as a hedge against this. Defence and international agreements are mutually supportive in managing the proliferation problem. The proliferation problem will not be managed successfully unless you have both. Right now in the missile realm we only have one.

The Chair: Thank you.

I must end this meeting this morning. Thanks, Mr. Ferguson, Mr. Regehr. It was very interesting to have you both here this morning.

I want to remind my colleagues that our next meeting will be November 15, in the afternoon, Monday afternoon. We have the minister and we'll do also at that time other business.

Madam McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Mr. Chairman, I have a brief comment. I know the parliamentary secretary has referred to the offer of full briefings by both the Department of Foreign Affairs and National Defence. I read in the newspaper that every caucus had been offered this, but my leader had no knowledge of that and my defence critic had no knowledge of that. I had no knowledge, as foreign affairs critic. It's been confirmed that the other two caucuses have in fact received that offer. I wonder if the parliamentary secretary could confirm what the situation is.

The Chair: He just did it publicly, and he's done it publicly before. He just maintained that. He made his offer. That's not a matter for this committee. It's a matter between your leader and the PS.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: I want to put on the record that this had been done with the other two parties.

The Chair: You're on record.

Hon. Dan McTeague: Ms. McDonough, I offered you this, yourself, in a subcommittee meeting in one of the first meetings we had. But more importantly, the House leaders have in fact for some time discussed this. The offer has been made, and I checked with your House leader.

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.

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