

Remarks of Peggy Mason, President of the Rideau Institute (and former Canadian Ambassador for Disarmament to the UN) to the Standing Committee on National Defence, May 5th, 2016.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to address you on this important study

I am going to focus my opening remarks on the issue of Canadian participation in the American strategic system for the Ballistic Missile Defence of North America

I should note that, as International Security Policy Advisor to the then Foreign Minister Joe Clark in the Mulroney government, I was intensely involved in the Canadian decision NOT to participate on a government to government basis in President Reagan's Strategic Defence Initiative; a decision made by Canada in the height of the Cold War – 1985 on the basis that participation in what was then only a research effort, while prudent for the USA to pursue, did not accord with Canadian defence and security priorities;

As everyone is well aware, Canada decided again in 2005 not to participate in what had become a programme not only of research but of development

In a nutshell, my position is that both those decisions *not* to participate were in accordance with Canadian defence and security priorities and the same holds true today.

I will advance six reasons why Canadian participation in USA BMD for North America should not be a Canadian priority:

1. The American BMD system (called GMD or ground-based mid-course missile defence) is not reliable despite 30 years of investment and billions of dollars spent.
2. Strategic BMD is an incentive for Russia and China to build ever more and better offensive systems in order to overwhelm these defences, in case they should ever work and be directed at them. (It is infinitely cheaper to build more offensive systems.) In other words, BMD has very negative security implications.
3. As Senior DND officials testified before you on March 22nd, there is no threat to Canada from either North Korea or Iran. And, in any event,

North Korea is primarily a non-proliferation challenge and addressing it as such, so successful with Iran, should be followed with North Korea. Canadian non-participation in American BMD might even enhance our ability to play a meaningful role in multilateral negotiations to bring North Korea back into the NPT.

4. There is very little likelihood that Canadian participation in missile defence would give Canada the much sought after "seat at the table". In 2004 the United States made the decision to locate the ballistic missile defence command in NORTHCOM not NORAD and, during our subsequent negotiations on participation, would not provide Canada with any guarantee of a meaningful operational role in BMD nor even a guarantee that Canadian cities would be defended.
5. The fact that European members of NATO are participating in a version of theatre missile defence and regional missile defence is an entirely separate issue from whether Canada should participate in a strategic system (that does not work) for North America. (There might be a separate debate as to whether Canada should participate in any way in the NATO systems, for example, on ships, but that is not what is under discussion here.)
6. There will be significant financial costs to Canadian participation, at a time when the Department of National Defence is facing a veritable abyss of delayed procurement, not to mention a major modernization of the North Warning System in about 10 years.

For all of these reasons, I argue that it is not in Canada's defence and security interests to pursue participation in the American Ballistic Missile Defence programme at this time.

Let me pursue some of these reasons in a bit more detail.

1. GMD does not work.

One of the leading American experts on missile defence, the Honourable Philip E. Coyle, testified to this effect before the Senate Standing Committee on National Security and Defence in May, 2014. He brings the technological challenges into sharp relief with the following analogy:

"Shooting down an enemy missile going 15,000 mph out in space is like trying to hit a hole-in-one in golf when the hole is going 15,000 mph. And if an enemy uses decoys and countermeasures, missile defence is like trying to

shoot a hole-in-one in golf when the hole is going 15,000 mph and the green is covered with black circles the same size as the hole.”

Another American expert, retired Lt. General Gard testified that, even if a more reliable interceptor (or “kill vehicle”) is developed than the current version which usually fails to hit its target even when the trajectory is pre-determined, there remains “the insurmountable problem of discrimination between missiles and decoys.

Coyle and Gard are long-standing expert critics of GMD. But even ardent proponents like General (ret’d) Francis Mahon, former head of the Army’s Missile Defence Command and former Director of Testing at the Missile Defence Agency, writing in Defence News in April 2015, cannot help but acknowledge the need for a “redesigned” interceptor and the development of a long-range discrimination radar.

2. The vital arms control dimension. It is worth briefly recalling why the Soviet Union and the USA agreed to the 1972 ABM Treaty (which severely restricted ballistic missile defences). It was because of a straightforward proposition: it is much easier and much cheaper to build more offensive systems to overwhelm defensive systems like BMD than it is to develop a reliable defensive system; thus if they are pursued, they risk triggering an offensive nuclear arms race;
 - At a minimum both Russia and China have to take into account the potential effect of a functioning BMD system negating their retaliatory capability which, in turn, means they must keep open the possibility of building up offensive forces as a hedge against USA BMD development (whether or not they believe American assertions that, right now, the system is aimed not at them but at rogue states);
 - The American BMD system also acts as a catalyst to nuclear weapons modernization as Russia and China seek not only increased numbers of nuclear weapons but also increased maneuverability (through MIRVs); (one missile with multiple warheads capable of independent re-entry from space into atmosphere)
 - Preventing these incredibly destabilizing developments was the whole rationale behind the ABM Treaty which President George W. Bush abandoned in 2002 in order to pursue BMD;
 - And it is precisely these destabilizing developments that we have seen increasing since then.
3. Low level of threat from North Korea can best be addressed (as was the Iranian threat) as a non-proliferation challenge.
 - In testimony to this Committee on March 22nd Rear Admiral Scott Bishop, D-G for International Security Policy, DND and Stephen Burt, Assistant Chief, Defense Intelligence, stated quite clearly and

unequivocally that there was “no military threat to Canada”; terrorism was the top overall threat but it was mainly from home grown, namely lone Canadian sources and therefore a public security, not a military matter.

- The best possible way to handle any potential future threat from North Korea is to use the same approach as with Iran, multilateral negotiations using all the levers available in our nuclear non-proliferation architecture;
 - To respond to a low-level potential threat like North Korea with strategic missile defences of dubious value, but which nonetheless risk fueling offensive weapons acquisition and modernization by Russia and China is an extraordinarily bad trade-off. And staying out of BMD could well enhance Canada’s ability to play a meaningful role in negotiations to bring North Korea back into the NPT.
4. Participation will not give Canada a meaningful seat at the table.
- As I mentioned in my intro, in 2004 the United States made the decision to locate the ballistic missile defence command in NORTHCOM not NORAD and, during our subsequent negotiations on participation, would not provide Canada with any guarantee of a meaningful operational role nor even a guarantee that Canadian cities would be defended. There is no reason at all to think the USA will take a different view now. (Physically sitting at the table does not mean you have a say.)
 - In this regard, I would point to the excellent study *NORAD in Perpetuity*, dated 31 March 2014, commissioned by DND and in particular page 34 which draws the same conclusion as I have just done.
 - A related argument is that a more central BMD role for NORAD (beyond the missile detection function) is necessary for NORAD’s continued relevance. I find this a particularly perplexing argument. The actual day to day work of NORAD operations is all about air defence, monitoring the approaches to North America as well as monitoring internal air space. There is also the vital maritime monitoring dimension added after September 11th. Surely it is clear that NORAD’s relevance, regardless of any role in BMD, is assured for a very long time.
5. The fact that European members of NATO are participating in a version of theatre missile defence and regional missile defence is an entirely separate issue from whether Canada should participate in a strategic system (that does not work) for North America. (There might be a separate debate as to

whether Canada should participate in any way in the NATO systems, for example, on ships) but that is not what is under discussion here.

On the cost issue, I will only add that this is discussed in the *NORAD in Perpetuity* report noted earlier.

6. There will be significant financial costs to Canadian participation, at a time when the Department of Defence is facing a veritable abyss of delayed procurement, not to mention a major modernization of the North Warning System in 10 years. (See *NORAD in Perpetuity* referenced earlier.)

For all of these reasons, seeking Canadian participation in BMD at this time does not serve Canada's priority defence, security and non-proliferation interests.

I would like to add one further point. On October 28, 2014, in the hearings then being held by this Committee on the Defence of North America, one of the authors of the abovenoted *NORAD in Perpetuity* Report), Professor James Fergusen gave testimony. He, until that point, had surely been Canada's foremost academic expert on, and proponent of, Canadian participation in American BMD.

But that was not his testimony on that day. He had after all worked on the *NORAD in Perpetuity* Report, which highlighted the extremely low probability of Canada getting a meaningful seat at the BMD table, as well as the costs associated with Canadian participation in BMD. To these reasons he added the low level of the ballistic missile threat from rogue states and the many, many pressing needs of National Defence in relation to procurement, not least for "large chunks of the Canadian navy" as he put it. For all of these reasons, he stated in answer to a direct question about what priority he would give BMD, "it's not one that I would suggest is a high priority right now."

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.