

# RADARSAT: From Spin to Secrecy

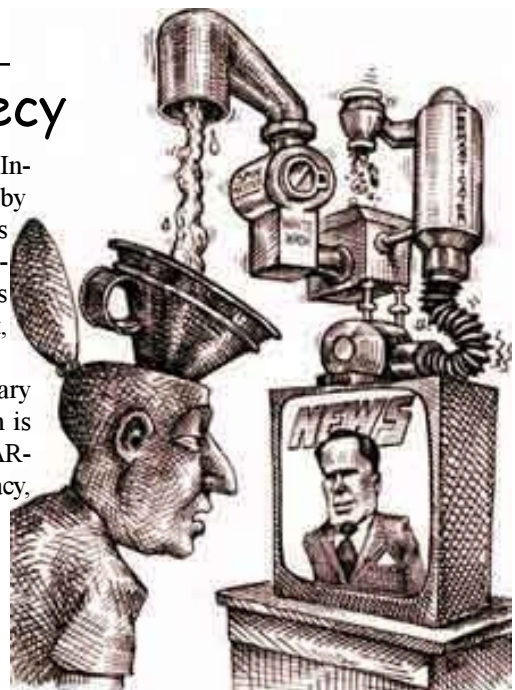
As RADARSAT-1 spins by, much about it is hidden from public scrutiny. Although spies and warfighters are probably its largest users, they often go unmentioned in spin doctors' glowing accounts. For example, a Canadian Space Agency puff piece by Marc Garneau presents RADARSAT-1 as a completely virtuous defender of humanity and global ecosystems, but neglects any mention of its use in war. As he says, from: "protecting our Arctic seas to monitoring potential oil spills in Brazil's delicate ecosystem, RADARSAT-1 has been benefiting people from all walks of life, across Canada and the world."<sup>1</sup>

Knowing that RADARSAT's valuable role in war would not be viewed favourably by Canadians, who naively see their nation as a global defender of peace and human rights, Garneau, the former military weapons specialist (see p.47), excluded the fact that RADARSAT has provided vast amounts of data for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance tasks during recent U.S. wars. (See pp.33-38.)

When pressed, RADARSAT International president John Hornsby said 35% of RADARSAT data was sold to the military.<sup>2</sup> This may not include that 15% of RADARSAT-1's time given to the U.S. government, in lieu of NASA's launch services.<sup>3</sup>

When RADARSAT's military uses are mentioned, the discussion is crafted to "spin" the view that RADARSAT is enlisted to "defend" democracy. Canadian values and national security. Couching it in such terms is typical of corporate media that consistently refer to profit-seeking arms makers as "defence" companies.

RADARSAT is, in fact, a major Canadian contribution to U.S.-led wars that have killed tens of thousands of innocent civilians in order to defend



large corporations, particularly those with interests in strategic Middle East and Central Asian energy resources.

## References

1. Marc Garneau, "Canada's Eye in the Sky - RADARSAT-1's Triumph," CSA Communique, June 12, 2002. [www.ccmc.nf.ca/diffusion/issues/2002/issue\\_13,19.htm](http://www.ccmc.nf.ca/diffusion/issues/2002/issue_13,19.htm)
2. Standing Committee, Foreign Affairs

- and International Trade, Feb. 3, 2005 [www.parl.gc.ca/committee/CommitteePublication.aspx?SourceId=125106](http://www.parl.gc.ca/committee/CommitteePublication.aspx?SourceId=125106)
3. NASA Media Release, "RADARSAT Launch Aboard Delta II Rocket Set Nov. 3," October 27, 1995. [www-pao.ksc.nasa.gov/kscpao/release/1995/107-95.htm](http://www-pao.ksc.nasa.gov/kscpao/release/1995/107-95.htm)

## Meet "the RADARSAT family of Satellites"

### RADARSAT-1

What does NASA say about RADARSAT-1? "RADARSAT is a cooperative venture between NASA and Canada. This sophisticated remote sensing satellite carries a Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR), a powerful microwave instrument that can transmit and receive signals to see through clouds and darkness, obtaining detailed images of the Earth.

**"The world's most advanced SAR [synthetic aperture radar] satellite."**

The RADARSAT program exemplifies how domestic and international partnerships benefit the world. Industry, government and the scientific community in the U.S., Canada and abroad have contributed funding, expertise and human resources to build, launch, operate and commercialize RADARSAT, the world's most advanced SAR satellite."

Source: RADARSAT, National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) <[www.earth.nasa.gov/history/radarsat](http://www.earth.nasa.gov/history/radarsat)>

### RADARSAT-2

As for RADARSAT-2, its prime contractor, MacDonald, Dettwiler and Associates (MDA), says: "Canada's RADARSAT-2 Earth-observation (EO) satellite program incorporates state-of-the-art technology and the most advanced commercially-available EO Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) imagery to provide users around the world with an enhanced range of high-quality Earth information products."

Source: More About RADARSAT-2 [www.radarsat2.info/rs2\\_satellite/overview.asp](http://www.radarsat2.info/rs2_satellite/overview.asp)

#### Ultra-Fine Resolution

RADARSAT-2's three-metre "ultra-fine resolution" will be the "highest-resolution SAR commercially available."

Source: RADARSAT-2 Data products [www.space.gc.ca/asc/eng/satellites/radarsat2/inf\\_data.asp](http://www.space.gc.ca/asc/eng/satellites/radarsat2/inf_data.asp)

### RADARSAT-3

RADARSAT-3 will be even more military-oriented than -1 and -2. The Department of National Defence (DND) which plans to be a "full partner in RADARSAT 3," said "Defence surveillance activities is ranked as the No. 1 application for RADARSAT 3."<sup>1</sup>

The Canadian Space Agency (CSA) contracted MacDonald, Dettwiler to study a "tandem mission" for RADARSAT-2 and -3 to capture "the first...complete 3-D elevation mapping of the entire planet."<sup>2</sup> It is "the most advanced space-borne land information and mapping mission ever conceived."<sup>3</sup>

## References

1. David Pugliese, "Secret military eye in the sky," *Ottawa Citizen*, Mar. 15, 2000.
2. MDA media release, "CSA Awards MDA Contracts," June 20, 2001. [www.mdacorporation.com](http://www.mdacorporation.com)
3. MDA media release, "Radarsat-2/3 Tandem Mission Feasibility Study Extended," February 14, 2002. [www.mdacorporation.com](http://www.mdacorporation.com)