

# Secret Military Eye in the Sky

By David Pugliese

Federal politicians and Canadian Space Agency officials had said the system would not be used for military purposes; in fact, they had claimed the military wasn't even interested in the technology. It was solely for peaceful assignments....

Documents obtained by the *Citizen* though Access to Information show that not only was the Department of National Defence planning to use RADARSAT for military purposes even as the satellite lifted off from the launch pad, but RADARSAT information and images are being funnelled to the U.S. Department of Defense [DoD]....

RADARSAT has come a long way from the commercial satellite that the Conservative government announced in 1987. In that year, Science Minister Frank Oberle responded to questions about RADARSAT's potential use for the military. "This technol-

ogy is of no particular use to the military," he said.

At RADARSAT's [1995] launch, Canadian Space Agency [CSA] officials told journalists the same thing: the satellite would not be used for military purposes....

Mac Evans, president of the CSA, said...he wouldn't be surprised if RADARSAT data is being sent to the U.S. DoD... But he said that doesn't make RADARSAT a spy satellite. Nor does it make earlier statements from politicians and space agency officials inaccurate, Evans added: in 1987, the Canadian Forces wasn't interested in RADARSAT, but now they are.

"From the Canadian space program's point of view, we are fostering the use of space for peaceful purposes," said Evans. "That does not exclude military use."

Chris Sands, director of the Canada Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Wash-

When RADARSAT-1 was launched in 1995, Canadian officials insisted it would only be used for peaceful purposes. But, the military had already recruited the pride of Canada's space program before it even left the launch pad.

ington, said the military's progressive involvement in RADARSAT—from supposedly no interest to wanting to become a full-fledged user of the satellite—is typical of the way Canada's Defence Department operates.

"They don't figure they can sell it to the public for honest reasons, so they sell it below the radar screen," said Sands. "It's a passive-aggressive approach. Once the capability exists, then they are running to government and saying, 'Hey we've just discovered we can do a lot of things with this system.'"

Source: *Ottawa Citizen*, March 15, 2000. [cndyorks.gn.apc.org/yspace/articles/radarsat.htm](http://cndyorks.gn.apc.org/yspace/articles/radarsat.htm)

## The Contracts that Privatised RADARSAT are Secret

In the House of Commons and in Parliamentary committees, MPs from the New Democratic Party (NDP) and the Bloc Québécois (BQ) have repeatedly raised concerns that the government's privatisation of RADARSAT might lead to military uses of its data that would go against the wishes of its main funders, the Canadian public.

In the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade in March 2004, Francine Lalonde, the BQ's foreign affairs critic, tried to add an amendment to the government's Remote Sensing Space Systems Act (Bill C-25) to make it

"impossible for RADARSAT-2 to change hands and come under foreign ownership, given that the technology was largely developed at the space agency and that Quebec and Canadian citizens have invested a great deal of money in this satellite."<sup>1</sup>

Lalonde's motion was defeated by the Liberals and Conservatives on the committee. She then tried another motion to allow committee members to at least see the contracts used by the Canadian Space Agency to hand over RADARSAT-2's ownership to Mac-

Donald, Dettwiler and Assoc. (MDA).

The committee's Liberal chairperson, Dan McTeague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, accused Lalonde of using delaying tactics to stall the bill. He then called Bruce Mann, the Senior Counsel for the Justice Legal Services Division of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) to explain why releasing the contracts "would not be in the public interest."<sup>2</sup>

Mann told the MPs that the government could not let them even see the contracts, let alone copy or make them public. He said that the government's chief responsibility was to protect MDA's corporate interests. Apparently, if MPs were allowed to view the contracts it could lead to "material or financial loss" for MDA, or negatively "affect their competitive position."<sup>3</sup>

DFAIT's legal bureaucrat did not explain why the government had deliberately engineered the "material and financial loss" of \$100s of millions in taxpayers' dollars by handing over ownership of RADARSAT-2 to MDA.

The NDP's Alexa McDonough (MP, Halifax, NS), said that she found

DFAIT's legalistic explanations to be "simply further reminders of how wrong-headed it is for RADARSAT not to be retained in the public domain in the first place. It seems as though we're being asked to endorse a black box here and told that we can't know what the contract contains because it could financially harm the private interests into whose hands we've passed this after a massive public investment."<sup>4</sup>

When committee members voted on Lalonde's motion to allow themselves to see the contract, all seven Liberal and Conservative MPs voted no. So, try as they might, the three BQ and NDP MPs were outvoted in their efforts to view the secret agreements that had given away Canada's expensive, publicly-funded RADARSAT-2.

### References

1. Evidence, Francine Lalonde, Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade (SCFAIT), Mar. 24, 2005. [www.parl.gc.ca/committee/Committee/Publication.aspx?SourceId=108300](http://www.parl.gc.ca/committee/Committee/Publication.aspx?SourceId=108300)
2. Evidence, Dan McTeague, op.cit.
3. Evidence, Mac Mann, op.cit.
4. Evidence, Alexa McDonough, op.cit.