

Debunking the Myths of "Missile Defense"

By Richard Sanders

In this issue of *Press for Conversion!* I highlight some of Canada's contributions to the creation, development and deployment of sea-based weapons systems within the Theater Ballistic Missile Defense (TBMD) program. TBMD is at the cutting edge of what is popularly known as "missile defense." In reality, this euphemistic term is a linguistic shield that deflects criticism from the most ambitious, weapons-advancement program ever undertaken in world history.

In the not-too-distant future, the sea-, land-, air- and space-based weapons systems now being developed and/or improved upon by the U.S.—under the protective aegis of the so-called "missile defense" program—will

be used for "offensive" purposes.

As usual, Canadian corporate, government, military and scientific communities are very deeply involved in this multinational, U.S.-led effort to build the most advanced tools of war ever seen. Also as usual, the Canadian government has so far successfully managed to dupe many into believing that Canada (1) is *not* involved and (2) has taken a principled stand *against* this offensive, weapons scheme.

In reality, as this and the previous issue of *Press for Conversion!* amply document, Canada has been participating in the "missile defense" weapons program for many years. Despite "saying no" to this weapons scheme, Canada appears to be aiding and abetting "missile defense" in more ways

than any other country.

Besides debunking the myth that "missile defense" will defend anything but weapons deployed in future, U.S.-led wars, a major role of the Canadian peace/anti-war movement should be to expose the absurd mythology that Canada is a global force for peace.

This myth is also being openly challenged by some at the other end of the political spectrum. Some right-leaning, Canadian militarists—including those in the Conservative Party—are urging the Liberal government to be honest enough to stand up and proudly take credit for all the work that Canada is actually doing to help the U.S. with efforts like "missile defense" and the war in Iraq. The *MacLeans* article excerpted below typifies this trend.

Ballistic Missile Defence: Where does Paul Martin stand?

By Luiza Ch. Savage

As Canada sits down this month to negotiate the future of military cooperation with the U.S., Canadian politicians might consider not undermining their deeds with their words, as they did earlier this year in the case of Ballistic Missile Defence....

Canada has proudly participated in [NORAD]...since 1958, but this year ceremoniously declined to take part [in missile defense].

Or did it?

It was the Canadian government not Bush, that in May 2003 asked to open discussions about potential cooperation on missile defence. It quickly became clear that the most valuable contribution Canada could make would be to allow access to space surveillance information collected by the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD).... Canada agreed wholeheartedly, signing in August 2004 an amendment to the NORAD agreement allowing just that.* (This is why Canada's ambassador to the U.S., Frank

* **Editor's Note:** This NORAD-treaty amendment was also a Canadian initiative. The U.S. agreed to Canada's proposal that "missile defense" be added to NORAD. This, however, is only one of many ways that Canada is helping "missile defense."

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McKenna, said the country was participating in BMD, only days before the government denied it.)....

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Contrast this perplexing approach with the shrewd diplomacy of the Australians, who have "signed on" to BMD without anyone being particularly clear on what role they might possibly play. "Whatever it is, they just want to be in it," marvels one U.S. official.

The Afghan and Iraq Wars

The Canada-Australia comparison is instructive in other ways. Canada has deployed 15,000 personnel and 20 warships to Afghanistan and the Persian Gulf area since 2001. It has been the largest participant in the war in Afghanistan, after the U.S.. Australia has sent

a fraction of the soldiers, and yet Australians are seen as model allies, in part because they politically supported the Iraq war.

Canadians, making the numerically greater sacrifice but withholding moral support for the Iraq conflict, are seen with some suspicion.... Yet while then

prime minister Jean Chrétien was declaring Canada's nonsupport for the Iraq war, Canada was leading a naval task force in the Persian Gulf area fighting the war on terror.** Canada's deployment to Afghanistan freed up U.S. troops to fight in Iraq. The U.S. government has awarded 30 Bronze Stars to Canadian service personnel and a presidential unit citation to members of Joint Task Force 2 in the war on terror.

Canada now has an opportunity to turn the page and match its political rhetoric to its on-the-ground cooperation with the U.S.. By doing so it could get more credit in Washington for the reliable ally that it continues to be in actuality—if not in words.

Source: "Ballistic missile defence: where does Paul Martin stand?" *MacLeans*, Sept. 12, 2005.

** **Editor's Note:** Canada's frigates escorted U.S. warships through the Gulf so they could bombard Iraq. This is only one of many ways that Canada aided this war.