

Remarks by Steven Staples, President of the Rideau Institute, Ottawa, Canada

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Senate of Canada, National Security and Defence Committee

Study on the status of Canada's international security and defence relations, including but not limited to, relations with the United States, NATO, and NORAD

TOPIC: Ballistic Missile Defence

Honourable Senators, Ladies and Gentleman.

Thank you for inviting the Rideau Institute to participate in this discussion today regarding Canada's role in the US Ballistic Missile Defence system. My name is Steven Staples, the organization's president. My colleague Bill Robinson also contributed to this submission.

The Rideau Institute is an independent research, advocacy and consulting group based here in Ottawa, founded in 2006. We are a federally registered non-profit, and do not receive funding from the Department of National Defence, or defence contractors.

In a "previous movie," I was very involved in the last debate on Canada's role in the Ground-based Midcourse defence (GMD) system, which I chronicled in my 2006 book, called *Missile Defence Round One*, published by Lorimer.

We argued for Canada to not join the GMD missile shield, and supported Prime Minister Paul Martin's decision in February 2005. It was remarkable that not one party leader in Parliament that day opposed that decision, and most claimed it as their own victory – quite astonishing.

In fact, when Canada's defence minister Bill Graham called Donald Rumsfeld, his US counterpart, to tell him it was a "no" on missile defence, he got the equivalent of a shrug. Rumsfeld's deputy, Paul Wolfowitz, told Graham he was sympathetic to the political problem that GMD was causing, and said the US was going ahead and didn't need Canada operationally anyway.

Graham summed the conversation up like this: "Wolfowitz basically told me, 'We don't give a damn.'"

Of course there were a lot of folks who were unhappy – several of whom I see have already presented to your committee; others have been writing in the newspapers, and lobbying on the Hill behind the scenes recently.

Missile defence keeps stumbling along like the zombies on the *Walking Dead*.

At the time, the hawks argued that if Canada didn't join the GMD system either some, or all, of the following would occur: NORAD would dissolve, our security relationship with the Americans would

worsen, and the US administration would be so unhappy with us that we would suffer some kind of economic retribution.

All of it, of course, was nonsense.

Canada and the US negotiated a new information-sharing agreement in 2004, and NORAD continues today. NORAD watches for missile attacks, and US Northern Command runs the GMD missile interceptors. No problem.

Our security relationship with the US hasn't changed over missile defence. In fact, our massive effort in Kandahar freed thousands of US troops to leave Afghanistan to go fight in Iraq. At home, there was unprecedented binational security cooperation for the Vancouver Olympics and the G8.

And finally, as far as our relationship with our number one trading partner goes, we still have our agreements and disagreements with the US. But there is absolutely **no evidence** that there is a link between our defence relationship and our trade. There is no "linkage."

Minister Baird should know that joining missile defence will not get the Keystone XL pipeline decided any faster.

Now, missile defence proponents argue that the ground-based midcourse defense system has improved greatly in the last few years. To hear some people put it, it can score more goals than Wayne Gretzky.

Not so. First, the tests are completely controlled, scripted, and without obstacles. It's pretty easy to score when there's no goalie.

But even then, the GMD system has failed to achieve a hit in 8 of 16 intercept tests since 1999, according to the US Missile Defense Agency's own published statistics. So it's got an empty net, and it still can't put a puck in half the time.

What's worse is that the system is becoming less reliable – not more. The last three tests have failed – so there has not been a successful test since President Obama moved into the White House.

Some proponents fall into an easy trap - they only look at whether it will work – overlooking the most important question, which is: Will it make us more secure?

The answer is no. In fact, missile defence systems that can target intercontinental ballistic missiles are terribly destabilizing.

And let's be clear – we're not talking about systems like Israel's Iron Dome or the Patriots in Gulf War I. Those are much smaller versions of what is sitting in the GMD's missile silos in Alaska and California, and the smaller systems don't pose the same risks to global security.

We are talking about intercepting nuclear warheads in the vacuum of space, launched from half-way around the world – like a bullet hitting a bullet. That's the GMD system that is in question.

The GMD system has no deterrence capability, as some witnesses have asserted. It upsets deterrence, giving one side an advantage over the other. The country that has a shield can not only fend off a small first strike, but it can launch a first strike of its own and then neutralize an opponent's counter-attack with what remains of his victim's arsenal.

So with such a poor performance record as that, you might ask why any other country, like Russia or China, would feel threatened by it? It's because if you're a defence planner in Russia or China's seat you have to assume it will work – if not now, then in the future.

The country without a shield will build more missiles, improved missiles, and will launch them more quickly during a crisis to try to overcome a potential aggressor's missile shield. Two warriors armed only with swords may never strike each other for fear of each being killed by the other. But give one warrior a shield, and he can attack the other with impunity.

Will the world be safer if China feels it must build up its nuclear arsenal to match those of the US and Russia? Why should Russia agree to further nuclear reductions with the end of the Cold War, after the US withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile, or ABM, treaty and continues to put missile defences right up to its borders in Europe?

The fundamental reason that missile defence won't work is not the technical difficulties that plague the system, which are substantial: It is the fact that missile defence deployment will lead to responses by the countries who feel their forces are threatened by it.

It is those responses that will ensure that missile defence doesn't "work", and it is those responses that make missile defence deployment more likely to undermine our security than to improve it.

So, what are the alternatives? Diplomatic solutions pose a far greater chance of success than military systems. The New Start treaty has resulted in great strides in nuclear disarmament, and will bring the US and Russia down to about 1550 deployed weapons each – still far too many, but an improvement nonetheless.

And consider Syria: We were on the brink of Western military invasion because the red line of chemical weapons use had been crossed. But it was US-Russian cooperation that removed that chemical weapons threat, with the UN's help. Although the tragedy of the civil war continues, it was a clear victory for human diplomacy over military action that would have been disastrous.

Senators, in preparation for my remarks today I invited our community to contribute comments for you, and we received over three hundred submissions in a just a few days. Most people felt that missile defence does not address the security needs that Canada is facing.

Paul Beckwith said that the risk of a missile strike is insignificantly small compared to the risks to Canadians from abrupt climate change. Beth Johnson added that we need to return to our role as peacekeepers, while assisting the less fortunate in Canada and around the world in achieving a reasonable, sustainable level of living.

I hope we can discuss the costs, contributions, and the technical problem of decoys during the discussion period.

Let me conclude with this challenge for you to consider.

Canada's role in missile defence is not a problem that needs fixing. In 2004, at the height of the missile defence debate, one political figure put it like this: "We need to know clearly the objective of this initiative. Whether it is technically feasible, exactly what role Canada would play, as well as the potential costs and benefits [and] the nature and length of any Canadian commitments." All good points that were raised in the House by then opposition leader Stephen Harper.

To my knowledge, this remains the Conservative party's position. I would urge you to consider these questions as well, and if they cannot be answered satisfactorily, then I hope that your final recommendations will suggest that Canada stays its current course outside of the US ground-based midcourse missile defence system.

Thank you.