

**Pragmatism and Cooperation: Canadian-American Defence Activities in the Arctic,
1945-1951**

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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Abstract

During the early Cold War, as the Soviet menace placed Canada in between two hostile superpowers, the Canadian government decided to take steps to ensure that its sovereignty and national interests were not threatened by the Americans in the new strategic environment. This study examines the extent to which the Canadian government actually defended its sovereignty and rights against American intrusions in the early Cold War. At its core is an examination of the government's policy of gradual acquisition in the Arctic between 1945 and 1951. This thesis explores the relationships that existed at the time, the essence of the negotiations, the state of international law and the potential costs and benefits of certain Canadian courses of action. It also explains how Canada's quiet diplomacy allowed it to avoid alienating its chief ally, contribute to continental defence, and strengthen its sovereignty during this period.

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Introduction: Activists and Gradualists

Concerns over Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic have arisen intermittently since the Second World War, provoking national anxiety. The irony of this powerful and familiar reaction is that when there appears to be no immediate threat to Canada's control of its North, the entire region retreats to the all important "land of tomorrow" that can be forgotten today. When some kind of external threat looms over the Arctic, and Canadians suddenly perceive that other nations or foreign companies are developing strategic or commercial interests in the region, the place is rescued from the periphery of Canada's national interests. "Arctic sovereignty seems to be the zombie – the dead issue that refuses to stay dead – of Canadian public affairs," explain the authors of *Arctic Front*. "You think its settled, killed and buried, and then every decade or so it rises from the grave and totters into view again."¹ The issue has become a proverbial thorn in the side of Canadian governments.

The threats to Canada's sovereignty in the North have ranged from the influx of American personnel into the region during the Second World War and the early years of the Cold War, to the disputes over the status of the Northwest Passage spurred on by the voyages of the S.S. *Manhattan* in 1969 and the United States Coast Guard (USCG) cutter *Polar Sea* in 1985. As climate change warms the Arctic at an exceptional rate, contemporary challenges have drawn attention to disputes over boundaries, control over the Northwest Passage, and an alleged "race for resources." How decision-makers read

¹ Ken Coates, Whitney Lackenbauer, William Morrison, and Greg Poelzer, *Arctic Front*, (Toronto: Thomas Allen Publishers, 2008), 1.

pasts decisions will undoubtedly influence their perceptions of how to anticipate and deal with current and future ones.²

The gravest sovereignty crises that Canada faced historically shared two distinct features: they involved the Americans and they forced Canadian governments, both Liberal and Conservative, to choose between adopting a gradualist or activist stance on Arctic sovereignty. The gradualist approach is the more cautious of the two responses, characterized by careful negotiations and quiet diplomacy to achieve an implicit or explicit recognition of Canada's sovereignty. Gradualists argue that sovereignty is strengthened over time and wish to avoid overly aggressive acts that might jeopardize Canada's claims.³ An activist approach involves a more forthright and forceful pronouncement of Canadian sovereignty, such as the drawing of straight baselines by the Mulroney government. Both approaches seek the same objectives: the attainment of international recognition of Canada's *de jure* sovereignty over the North, especially by the United States, and of *de facto* control of the Arctic land and waters.⁴

Canadian diplomats have had to walk a fine line in deciding how far to push the boundaries of international law and how much they could test the patience of the

² Whitney Lackenbauer, "From Polar Race to Polar Saga: An Integrated Strategy for Canada and the Circumpolar World," paper for the Canadian International Council, July 2009.

³ Franklyn Griffiths, "Canadian Sovereignty and Arctic International Relations," in *The Arctic in Question*, ed. E.J. Dosman, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1976), 144-148.

⁴ Sovereignty is officially defined as "The possession of supreme authority within a territory." This concept is further split into *de jure* and *de facto* sovereignty. *De facto* "is the reality of control or possession, but not by right of law," and basically involves exercising control over land and water. *De jure* is legitimate ownership under the law, and the recognition of others that one can use force in a designated territory; Elizabeth Elliot-Meisel, *Arctic Diplomacy: Canada and the United States in the Northwest Passage*, (New York: Peter Lang, 1998), 5; In 1946, Vice Chief of the General Staff D.C. Spry defined sovereignty as "as power, right or authority over a clearly defined and delimited area, *Sovereignty in the Canadian Arctic in Relation to Joint Defence Undertakings*, Memorandum from Department of National Defence to Cabinet Defence Committee, 18 May 1946, Department of External Affairs, *Documents on Canadian External Relations (DCER) Volume 12, 1946*, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1967-), 1555-1561.

Americans in affirming Canada's sovereignty. For the most part, decision makers weighed the costs and benefits of a forceful assertion of sovereignty and erred on the side of caution. In the years of the early Cold War, the Liberal government faced this dilemma as the exigencies of continental defence brought the world's attention squarely on the Arctic.

In the spring of 1946, Canada's senior diplomats pondered the troublesome problem of Arctic sovereignty as American defence plans piled up on their desks. The presence of a Soviet threat across the northern approaches could be plainly seen on the polar projection maps that Canadian and American officials began to use in place of their old Mercator projections. Canada found itself sandwiched between two superpower adversaries, and its American neighbour expected it to cooperate in defending the continent. Decision makers understood the implications of the new world situation for their country's sovereignty. In order to defend North America from communist aggression, the Americans would demand the right to carry out defence operations and projects in the thinly occupied islands of the Arctic Archipelago: an area in which Canadian control and ownership seemed insecure. The documents from this period reflect an almost frantic worry over the establishment of an American presence in the North and the potential dangers this posed to Canada's claims. It took Canadian officials several years to recover from the fallout of the mega-projects undertaken by the United States in the Canadian Northwest during the war, when the government had allowed the Americans onto Canadian territory *en masse* and with little regulation. Embarrassment and panic ensured that this oversight would not be repeated.

This time the Canadians insisted that American proposals be met with a measured response and effectively controlled from the start. Sitting in his office at 1746 Massachusetts Avenue NW on 5 June 1946, Lester B. Pearson, the Ambassador to the United States, pondered Canada's sovereignty problem and decided that his country had an opportunity to gain formal and public acknowledgement of its claims in the Arctic. The American desire for defence rights in the region gave Canada a bargaining chip that it could use in its negotiations with the U.S. "I am wondering whether we could not take advantage of the present situation," mused Pearson in a letter to Hume Wrong, the Acting Undersecretary of State for External Affairs, "to secure from the United States Government public recognition of our sovereignty of the total area of our northern coasts, based on the sector principle."⁵ If his bid worked, Pearson's activist approach would secure Canadian control over a large slice of the polar region in short order.⁶

Hume Wrong doubted that the State Department would simply "fall in line, if falling in line means that they are asked to proclaim their adherence to the sector theory of Arctic sovereignty."⁷ Wrong told Douglass Abbot, the Minister of National Defence, that Pearson "underestimate[d] the difficulties" faced by the United States. The Americans

⁵ "Ambassador in the United States to Acting Undersecretary of State for External Affairs, 5 June 1946," Department of External Affairs, *DCER Volume 12, 1946*, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1967-), 1565-66.

⁶ The Sector Principle was a concept adopted largely for nation's wishing to claim a portion of the polar regions. Gordon Smith defined the sector principle as: "Each state with a continental Arctic coastline automatically falls heir to all islands lying between its coastline and the North Pole, which are enclosed by longitudinal lines drawn from the eastern and western extremities of the same coastline to the Pole." In Canada this principle claimed all areas in between the 141st and 60th meridians to the North Pole. Gordon Smith, "Sovereignty in the North: The Canadian Aspect of an International Problem," in *The Arctic Frontier*, ed. R. St. J Macdonald (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966).

⁷ H.H. Wrong to A.D.P. Heeney, 8 June 1946, Library and Archives Canada (LAC), RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40, part 1.

would not accept the sector principle,⁸ and any Canadian pressure on the issue might “put some unwelcome thoughts into some heads in Washington”⁹ and prompt them to challenge Canada’s claims.¹⁰ “For a good many years now we have proceeded without difficulty on the assumption that our sovereignty was not challenged,” Wrong observed. “A declaration of this sort would revive discussion of an issue which may in practice turn out to have been closed.”¹¹

While Pearson wished to lay all of Canada’s cards on the table, Hume Wrong embraced a modest diplomacy that sought a more sustainable, if less dramatic, solution to Canada’s sovereignty worries. A successful defence of Canadian sovereignty avoided antagonizing the Americans into a confrontation over the legal status of the Arctic. Unwilling to push the U.S. into a position where they had to disagree with Canada’s claims, Wrong advised Pearson to avoid any formal attempt to secure American recognition that would, in all likelihood, prove impossible to obtain.

How well Wrong’s strategy worked is open to debate. The Canadian decision to cooperate with the U.S. in continental defence, the terms under which the two countries worked this relationship out and its impact on Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic has generated three distinct schools of thought. The first school reflects the ideas of Donald Creighton’s seminal work *The Forked Road*, which proposed that the government of William Lyon Mackenzie King led Canada into the suffocating embrace of the

⁸ H.H. Wrong to D.C. Abbot, 13 June 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40, part 1. Wrong cited the interests the United States had in the Antarctic as one of the main reasons why they would not accept Canada’s sector claims.

⁹ Note to R.M. MacDonnell, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40, pt. 1, H.H. Wrong to A.D.P. Heeney, 8 June 1946.

¹⁰ H.H. Wrong to A.D.P. Heeney, 8 June 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40, part 1.

¹¹ H.H. Wrong to D.C. Abbot, 13 June 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40, part 1.

Americans, who ignored Canada's wishes and threatened its sovereignty in the North.¹² During the Second World War the Liberals advocated collective security first and considered national sovereignty to be a distant second, allowing a military dependency on the U.S. to grow unchecked for a decade.¹³ Although the Canadian government worried about its sovereignty it still allowed the Americans to take "a good big bite, nearly free of charge, out of the Canadian north, and thereafter they never lost their appetite for more."¹⁴

Other scholars expanded on this theme of American dominance and Canadian weakness in protecting its North. In *Sovereignty or Security?*, Canadian Studies scholar Shelagh Grant alleged that Canada sacrificed its control of the North to meet American continental defence needs and failed to protect its sovereignty.¹⁵ While the Canadians obtained "paper guarantees" from the U.S. government, the ever conniving Americans continuously violated Canadian laws and *de facto* control in their quest for security.¹⁶ In a quick survey of Arctic policy, "Lock, Stock and Icebergs?," historian Adam Lajeunesse has also sharply criticized the Canadian government for not adopting a sufficiently aggressive approach to defending sovereignty after 1946. "The situation," he claimed, "seemed to call for a clarification of official Arctic policy and a more forceful assertion of Canadian control."¹⁷ Instead of taking a strong course of action, the Canadians established a policy of purposeful ambiguity and tried to avoid the issue, which worked

¹² Donald Creighton, *The Forked Road: Canada 1939-1957*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976).

¹³ Creighton, *The Forked Road: Canada 1939-1957*, 241, 285.

¹⁴ Creighton, *The Forked Road: Canada 1939-1957*, 74.

¹⁵ Shelagh Grant, *Sovereignty or Security? Government Policy in the Canadian North, 1936-1950*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988)

¹⁶ Grant, *Sovereignty or Security? Government Policy in the Canadian North, 1936-1950*, 241, 243.

¹⁷ Adam Lajeunesse, "Lock, Stock, and Icebergs? Defining Canadian Sovereignty from Mackenzie King to Stephen Harper," CMSS Occasional Paper No. 1 (Calgary: Centre for Military and Strategic Studies, 2007): 3.

in the 1940's and 1950's, but set Canada up for failure in the ensuing decades. Though not as staunchly anti-American as Creighton or Grant, Lajeunesse insisted that Canada's unwillingness to invest in the Arctic, and the sheer dominance of the U.S. on the ground, undermined Canada's *de facto* control of the region.¹⁸

The second school, aptly named the "middle ground,"¹⁹ began with the work of Charles Stacey and James Eayrs, who stressed the conflict, cooperation and complexity of the Canadian-American relationship. It also includes historians such as Morris Zaslow, Norman Hillmer, and Jack Granatstein. Proponents of the middle ground school view the bilateral defence relationship and its projects within the context of the global efforts of the Western allies in the early Cold War, which is an important point. While Canadian officials agonized over the situation in the Arctic, their American counterparts thought of it as one theatre of operations amongst many. Nevertheless, Canada remained an important ally to the U.S. and had to participate in continental defence, despite inevitable consequences for sovereignty.²⁰ Arguing that Canada acted as required, given the prevailing Cold War context, these scholars rarely provided any praise for the government's handling of the situation and ignored Canadian accomplishments in preserving its sovereignty while ensuring security.

The third line of thought, which can be called the revisionist school, challenges these interpretations. Scholars David Bercuson, Whitney Lackenbauer and Joseph Jockel have emphasized the cooperation, respect and open dialogue that characterized

¹⁸ Lajeunesse, "The True North As Long As It's Free: The Canadian Policy Deficit 1945-1985," (MA thesis, University of Calgary, 2007), 25.

¹⁹ Whitney Lackenbauer, "Right and Honourable: Mackenzie King, Canadian-American Bilateral Relations, and Canadian Sovereignty in the Northwest, 1943-1948," in *Mackenzie King: Citizenship and Community*, eds. John English, Kenneth McLaughlin, and Whitney Lackenbauer. (Toronto: Robin Brass Studio, 2002): 153.

²⁰ Cuff and Granatstein, *Canadian-American Relations in Wartime: From the Great War to the Cold War*, 105.

the defence relationship after 1943, and illuminated the victories of the Canadian government in safeguarding its sovereignty while pursuing Canada's security.²¹

Canadian manoeuvring led to American recognition of Canada's terrestrial sovereignty in the Arctic from 1947 onwards, they argue, balancing security and sovereignty needs in a prudent manner.

While scholars of the revisionist school have forged a new trail for the study of the defence projects undertaken in the North during the Second World War and the early Cold War, the details of the defence negotiations and projects undertaken in the early post war years require elaboration. The late 1940's were formative years in the bilateral defence relationship that developed through the Cold War, and Canada succeeded in shaping a firm platform for cooperation. Given its strategic position and its historic alliance with the U.S., Canada had to participate in continental defence. Canadian officials, however, understood that a purely passive approach to northern sovereignty and security could only end in disaster. From the beginning they attempted to work out a solution that offered both, and they managed to do so.

Critics such as Grant and Lajeunesse, who argue that Canada should have taken more activist steps to better protect its sovereignty in the early years of the Cold War, are practicing 'what if' history. They argue that Canada should have secured its Arctic claims more aggressively, given that it could have taken a different course of action and

²¹ Lackenbauer, "Right and Honourable: Mackenzie King, Canadian-American Bilateral Relations, and Canadian Sovereignty in the Northwest, 1943-1948;" Elizabeth Elliot-Meisel, *Arctic Diplomacy: Canada and the United States in the Northwest Passage*, (New York: Peter Lang, 1998); David Bercuson, "Continental Defence and Arctic Sovereignty, 1945-1950: Solving the Canadian Dilemma," in *The Cold War and Defence*, eds. Keith Neilson and Ronald Haycock (New York: Praeger Press, 1990); Joseph Jockel, *No Boundaries Upstairs*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987).

that this would have yielded a stronger Canadian claim today. To assert that Canada could have pushed the U.S. into formally accepting its sovereignty shows a misunderstanding of the relationships that existed at the time, the essence of the negotiations, the state of international law and the potential costs and benefits of certain Canadian courses of action. Canada's cautious and gradualist strategy allowed the country to consolidate its territorial sovereignty over the Arctic lands. While agreeing to disagree about controversial legal issues like the sector principle, the two countries used informal negotiations to create workable solutions that supported Canadian claims in the region.²²

Although Canada adopted a reserved policy to secure its claims, this course proved sensible and successful. Rather than becoming a subservient partner, the Canadians managed to maintain their influence and an acceptable degree of control over defence projects executed in the Canadian Arctic between 1946 and 1951. Instead of losing their cool in the face of minor American indiscretions and embracing the alarmism prevalent in the media, Canadian officials developed a mutually acceptable strategy with the Americans that protected both countries' interests. Through informal networks and mutual accommodation, the two countries built a defence relationship based on cooperation, respect and open dialogue. Although quiet diplomacy lacked the glamour of a grand sovereignty-asserting action, Canada managed to avoid alienating its chief ally, contributed to continental defence, and laid the groundwork for a relationship with

²² This paragraph and the following are drawn from a book chapter, "Sovereignty and Security: The Department of External Affairs, the United States, and Arctic Sovereignty, 1945-68," that I co-authored with Whitney Lackenbauer, and reflects his research and thinking on this topic as well as my own. Work from our joint research appears in this thesis with his expressed permission.

the Americans that culminated in the amicable “agree to disagree” principle officially adopted by Mulroney and Reagan.

Chapter 1: In the Shadow of the Second World War

Old Nightmares and New Threats

In August 1945 Germany and Japan lay in ruins, and people everywhere anticipated a new era of peace. After six long years of war, the Canadian government looked forward to cutting down on defence expenditures and investing its resources in areas neglected during the conflict. Canada could be proud of its wartime service as one of the leading members of the Western alliance. Furthermore, the politicians could breathe a sigh of relief that American troops were leaving the Canadian North. Earlier in the war, politicians had feared that the American presence might become permanent.

At the end of 1941, the destruction of the Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor and the continued march of the Nazi war machine across Russia led North Americans to fear that the Axis powers might attack the attic of the continent. To defend the northern approaches the Americans increased the size of their garrison in Alaska from 21,500 to 40,424 men. To supply it, the U.S. military undertook large scale defence projects in northern Canada. The aerial component, the Northwest Staging Route (NWSR), included airfields to accommodate fighters, bombers, and transport aircraft on their way to Alaska. By the end of 1943 the U.S. Army completed the Alaska Highway, a 2,451 km supply route to the isolated territory that cost a staggering 150 million dollars to build.²³ The third major wartime effort in the northwest, the Canol project, involved the building of a major pipeline and oil processing facilities to supply Alaska and support the

²³ Gregory Johnson, "Strategic Necessity or Military Blunder: Another Look at the Decision to Build the Alaska Highway," in *Three Northern Wartime Projects*, edited by Bob Hesketh (Edmonton: Canadian Circumpolar Institute and Edmonton and District Historical Society, 1992), 18, 28.

highway.²⁴ Concurrently, the Americans developed several ambitious projects in the Northeast, including a major air base at Goose Bay, Labrador, and the Crimson Route, an incomplete system of airfields for ferrying planes to Britain, which involved an installation on Baffin Island.²⁵ For the most part, the U.S. paid for the construction costs of these projects and operated the completed facilities independently from Canadian command.

By 1943, at the height of the war time projects, nearly 33,000 Americans (military personnel and civilian workers) operated in Canada's North and the host government did little to monitor or regulate their actions. Although Liberal Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King allowed the Americans onto Canadian soil en masse and with few constraints on the "army of occupation,"²⁶ he remained suspicious of their intentions. In 1942 King confided that the Alaska Highway "was less intended for protection against the Japanese than as one of the fingers of the hand which America is placing more or less over the whole of the Western hemisphere."²⁷ Still, he took little action to protect Canada's interests in the North.

Worrisome reports from Malcolm MacDonald, the British High Commissioner, and other concerned Canadian officials and journalists who grew alarmed at the scale of American activities when they visited the defence projects, finally spurred the prime

²⁴ James Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada Vol. 3: Peacemaking and Deterrence*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 349.

²⁵ Coates et al, *Arctic Front*, 61. The Crimson Route included bases at Frobisher Bay, Southampton Island, Churchill and The Pas. Although the North-eastern projects were massive, most of the sovereignty concerns revolved around the North-western projects.

²⁶ Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada Vol. 3: Peacemaking and Deterrence*, 349.

²⁷ WLMK Diary, 29 March 1943. The full text of MacDonald's memorandum is reprinted in *The Alaska Highway* ed. Coates, 95-101.

minister to retake control of the Canadian North.²⁸ In late 1943 the King government became more proactive and started to assume control of events ‘on the ground.’ The government appointed a special commissioner, Brigadier-General W.W. Foster, to oversee the American defence projects in the North and began to set parameters on new American proposals. As the war drew to a close, Canada secured its control by paying to acquire full ownership of the permanent facilities on its territory.²⁹ The Americans also agreed that, before they began any project on or over Canadian territory, they required approval from the Canadian government.³⁰ With the threat to the continent gone and the Canadians assuming control of the northern defence projects, the Americans soon began to leave the region. By the summer of 1945, most had gone home.

The Canadian effort to secure its control of the North was timely because the post war international situation dictated almost immediate American requests to return to the region. Even before the Japanese capitulation in August 1945, the wartime relationship between the Western allies and the Soviet Union began to dissolve. On 11 September 1945, this fact became all too apparent to the King government, which desperately wanted to avoid becoming embroiled in another global crisis. Igor Gouzenko, a cipher clerk at the Soviet embassy in Ottawa, provided evidence of an extensive spy network that reached into the Department of External Affairs, the labs of Canada’s atomic

²⁸ Elliot-Meisel, *Arctic Diplomacy*, 43.

²⁹ By the end of the Second World War, Canada had spent \$76,811,551 to purchase all American bases on Canadian soil to regain its solitary claim of ownership in its arctic.

³⁰ Lackenbauer, “Right and Honourable: Mackenzie King, Canadian-American Bilateral Relations, and Canadian Sovereignty in the Northwest, 1943-1948,” 154.

program, and the bureaucracies of its senior allies. A discouraged King remarked that “if there is another war, it will come against America by way of Canada from Russia.”³¹

In the ensuing months tensions continued to mount between the East and the West. As relations between the two blocs grew more frigid, analysts within External Affairs wrote reports attempting to gauge Soviet intentions. Although Dana Wilgress, one of the leading Canadian experts on the Soviet Union, believed that Soviet policy remained essentially defensive in nature and did not pose a significant threat to the West, he also realized the dangers posed by the new power system. He sensed the mounting tensions as Western toughness against the Soviets increased and disputes began to form over the fate of the Balkans, Iran and Turkey. “It is this irresponsible readiness to play with fire that makes me uneasy about the ability to avoid conflagrations,” Wilgress lamented in September 1945.³² By November, he argued that the hard stance the United States took against the Soviets should be replaced by the gentler “Roosevelt touch.”³³ In forwarding these arguments, Wilgress echoed the sentiments of a number of Canadian analysts and reflected the general opinion held by External Affairs.³⁴

While Canadian analysts urged the West to adopt a more conciliatory approach to the Soviet Union, concerns over the security of the North American continent continued to grow in the minds of Canadian and American officials. Prior to the Second World War, few people had adopted the strategic outlook of Brigadier-General W.B. “Billy”

³¹ King, 11 September 1945. Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada Vol. 3: Peacemaking and Deterrence*, 320.

³² Dana Wilgress to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, 25 September 1945, LAC, RG 25, File 2-AE(s). Reproduced in Denis Smith, *Diplomacy of Fear*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 111.

³³ Dana Wilgress to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, 12 November 1945, King Papers, 389: 359440-42. Reproduced in Smith, *Diplomacy of Fear*, 118.

³⁴ See Smith, *Diplomacy of Fear* and Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada Vol. 3: Peacemaking and Deterrence*.

Mitchell, who viewed Alaska as “the most central place in the world of aircraft” and one of the most important strategic positions on the planet. “Whoever holds Alaska will hold the world,” Mitchell asserted.³⁵ During the war, however, strategists recognized the vulnerability of the northern approaches to a limited conventional attack. In the post war years, the Soviet Union sat ominously across the North Pole, the technological advances of the war slowly strengthened its military arsenal, and many strategists came to see the Arctic as North America’s Achilles heel. Although the large scale strategic bombing operations carried out during the war proved more ineffective than Western strategists had hoped, the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki changed the strategic picture.³⁶ The prospect of one devastating blow effectively ending any future war suddenly became all too real.

Led by American A.D. de Seversky, military thinkers began to unroll polar projection maps which emphasized the proximity of the United States to its new enemy, the Soviet Union. Vilhjalmur Steffanson’s much publicized idea of the Arctic becoming the world’s ‘new Mediterranean’ no longer seemed far fetched.³⁷ The short distance between the opposing superpowers through the Arctic basin suddenly became one of the most important geostrategic regions in the world. American military strategists and the press obsessed over the idea of Soviet bombers coming over the Pole to launch bombing raids on the industrial heartland of the United States.

³⁵ S. Conn, R. Engelman, and B. Fairchild, *The U.S Army in World War II: The Western Hemisphere. Guarding the United States and its Outposts*, (Washington: Department of the Army, 1964), 247.

³⁶ Kenneth Eyre, *Custos Borealis: The Canadian Military in the North*, (Submitted to UBC Press in 2007).

³⁷ Eyre, *Custos Borealis: The Canadian Military in the North*.

The Soviets seemed far advanced of the Americans and Canadians in Arctic flying. As early as 1936, the air fleet of Glavsevmorput comprised 125 planes and ninety pilots trained in Arctic operations, a valuable nucleus for an Arctic air corps that slowly expanded during the war. In 1937, two spectacular flights started in Moscow and ended in Vancouver and San Jacinto, California, and a third flight started in LA and finished in Moscow.³⁸ Although at war's end the Soviet Union possessed only a small strategic bomber force and no aircraft capable of making a round trip bombing mission to the U.S., the idea of a Soviet aerial assault preoccupied members of the American military, especially in the United States Army Air Force (USAAF). On 5 December 1945 General H.H. Arnold, Commander in Chief of the USAAF, declared to the public that the Arctic would be the heart of any new conflict.³⁹ The strategic importance of Alaska and the Canadian North only grew in the minds of defence planners in the years ahead.

Wartime and early postwar Canadian military operations in subarctic and arctic conditions convinced some government officials that the northern approaches could become the focus of an attack by hostile ground forces.⁴⁰ In the late winter and spring of 1945 the Canadian military undertook Exercise *Polar Bear* in northern British Columbia and Exercise *Lemming* in northern Manitoba and the southern portion of the Northwest

³⁸ *Report on the Arctic, Atlantic Division Air Transport Command*, Headquarters, Atlantic-Division Air Transport Command, Report on the Arctic, 1946, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), RG 319, Entry 82 (A1), Box 2975.

³⁹ David Beatty, *The Canadian-United States Permanent Joint Board on Defence*, (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1969), 117.

⁴⁰ *Post-War Canadian Defence Interests in United States Defence Projects in Northwest Canada*, Preliminary Draft by Army Representatives on Joint Drafting Group, Working Committee on Post-Hostilities Problems, 6 July 1945, Department of External Affairs, *DCER Volume 11, 1944-45*, 1588.

Territories.⁴¹ These exercises, coupled with technological developments, led defence planners to claim “that the inaccessibility of the Arctic is just another myth, and, providing supplies are ensured, operations on the barren grounds which represent one-third of Canada’s area can be as unhindered as operations on the Libyan Desert.”⁴²

Already officials worried that the enemy might use a diversionary land assault in the North to tie down large numbers of friendly forces. In the winter of 1946 the Canadians conducted another large scale exercise, Operation *Musk Ox*, which gained international attention.⁴³ With these new aerial and land threats Canadian decision makers foresaw that the Americans would soon be pressuring them assist in continental defence.

In November 1945 the American section of the Permanent Joint Board on Defence (PJBD), the senior bilateral defence agency created at Ogdensburg in 1940, suggested that a joint revision of ABC-22, the wartime defence plan, be undertaken as quickly as possible.⁴⁴ In September, Canadian officials anticipated that ABC-22 would be revised in light of the new strategic situation, and they embraced the opportunity to do so.⁴⁵ The process would allow the Canadians to learn as much as possible about American plans and assessments, help them to prepare for the responsibilities the U.S. would impose on Canada, and give them the opportunity to assist in preparing specific

⁴¹ Hugh Halliday, “Exercise “Musk Ox” Asserting Sovereignty “North of 60,” *Canadian Military History*, Vol. 7, No. 4, (Autumn 1998) 37-44. Exercise Polar Bear, held between February and March 1945, tested wet cold conditions and used 1150 soldiers. Exercise Lemming, held between 22 March and 6 April 1945, tested transportation in the North and used a small convoy of vehicles based out of Churchill, Manitoba.

⁴² *Post-War Canadian Defence Interests in United States Defence Projects in Northwest Canada*, Preliminary Draft by Army Representatives on Joint Drafting Group, Working Committee on Post-Hostilities Problems, 6 July 1945, *DCER Volume 11, 1944-45*, 1582.

⁴³ Hugh Halliday, “Exercise “Musk Ox” Asserting Sovereignty “North of 60,” *Canadian Military History*, Vol. 7, No. 4, (Autumn 1998) 37-44.

⁴⁴ Smith, *Diplomacy of Fear*, 153.

⁴⁵ Canadians began discussing this prospect in early September 1945. PJBD Note on General Henry’s Statements, 3 September 1945, King Papers, 318: C220140-44, esp. 142-143; Smith, *Diplomacy of Fear*, 153.

defence plans. Almost immediately, however, concerns grew amongst Canadian officials in Washington that the PJBD was starting premature and improper planning for a formal defence treaty.⁴⁶ Canada had managed to create some breathing room between it and the behemoth to the south and the prospect of an even closer and connected defence relationship with the U.S. was disconcerting to politicians and some senior bureaucrats. The Canadians, however, had learned valuable lessons from the Second World War. Their attitude and approach changed, and they would not repeat the mistakes – or the apathy – of 1942 and 1943.

A New Canadian Approach

Prior to the end of the war, Canadian officials foresaw a global power struggle looming just over the horizon. In 1943 the government created the Advisory Committee on Post-Hostilities Problems, which released their final report in February 1945. The committee correctly surmised Canada, lying across the shortest air routes from Europe and Asia, would become of more “direct strategic importance to the U.S. This new strategic importance made it likely that the Americans would “exert undue pressure on Canada, particularly as respects matters of defence.”⁴⁷ The report concluded that Canada could not retreat into the isolation of the interwar years and that, to protect its

⁴⁶ Ambassador in U.S. to Secretary of State for External Affairs, 19 January 1946, *DCER Volume 12, 1946*, 1604-1605. While the Canadians were worried about defence planning getting out of hand, they also took hope in Recommendation 34 of the Permanent Joint Board. Accepted in early 1946, the Recommendation allowed for the “free and comprehensive exchange of information” between Canadian and American intelligence agencies.

⁴⁷ Final Report of Advisory Committee on Post-Hostilities Problems, Jan./Feb. 1945, *DCER Volume 11, 1944-45*, 1567-1570. Already in August of 1944, Norman Robertson argued that Canada could only maintain its independence if it provided adequate defences. “If we cannot maintain adequate defences, we cannot blame the United States for wanting to interfere in order to protect ‘itself.’ (Cited in Smith, *Diplomacy of Fear*, 149)

sovereignty, Canada must provide adequate defences for its part of the continent. In April 1944, Maurice Pope, Chairman of the Canadian Joint Staff Mission in Washington, echoed these thoughts, explaining that if the U.S. went “to war with Russia they would look to us to make common cause with them and, as I judge their public opinion, they would brook no delay...what we have to fear is more a lack of confidence in U.S. as to our security, rather than enemy action.”⁴⁸ As the Canadian and American defence relationship tightened, this simple reality became even more obvious.

How could Canada handle the Americans and their defence needs? This was one of the most pressing questions facing External Affairs during the last two years of the war. In February 1944, R.M. MacDonnell reported on the nature of Canadian-American relations and remarked that wartime developments would only increase the propensity of the U.S. to get its own way. He recommended that Canada take a firmer stand on important issues.⁴⁹ As the Minister-Counsellor at the Canadian Legation in Washington, Pearson also criticized the overbearing Americans, as well as the Canadian habit of taking a hard line on issues and then simply giving in when the Americans applied any pressure.⁵⁰ “When we are dealing with such a powerful neighbour, we have to avoid the twin dangers of subservience and truculent touchiness,” claimed Pearson. “We succumb to the former when we take everything lying down, and to the latter when we rush to the State Department with a note every time some Congressman makes a stupid statement

⁴⁸ Eays, *In Defence of Canada Vol. 3: Peacemaking and Deterrence*, 321.

⁴⁹ R.M. MacDonnell, February 1944, *DCER, Volume 9, 1944*, 1138-1142.

⁵⁰ Cited in Denis Stairs, “Realists at Work: Canadian Policy Makers and the Politics of Transition from Hot War to Cold War,” in *Canada and the Early Cold War*, ed. Greg Donaghy, (Ottawa: Canadian Government Publishing, 1998), 99.

about Canada...”⁵¹ When it found an issue worth fighting over, Pearson insisted that Canada should “go to the mat with Washington” and pursue the matter until the end.⁵² During the early Cold War era, Canada would follow this advice while keeping its close bilateral relationship intact.

By 1946, most of the issues that had fed wartime fears that Canada might lose its sovereignty because of American northern defence projects no longer existed. Shelagh Grant argues that in 1942 and most of 1943 Canada sacrificed its sovereignty in the Northwest when the U.S. acted to ensure its security. When reviewed in the context of the war, however, Canada’s short-sightedness becomes more understandable. Facing the prospects of a possible German victory over Britain in 1940, Canada signed the Ogdensburg Agreement and grew accustomed to working in close cooperation with the Americans on hemispheric defence.⁵³ While the Americans became more forceful with the Canadians after their entrance into the war, they remained one of Canada’s closest allies. To reject their defence plans seemed out of the question. Wartime urgency ensured a positive Canadian response to American proposals.

In the early postwar years, however, the imperative for urgent action seemed less obvious. Reports from Canada’s analysts and diplomats did not spark fear of an imminent threat and the Americans could not convince the Canadians otherwise. In February 1946 George Glazebrook and Gerry Riddell argued that they could find little

⁵¹ Minister in United States to First Secretary, 21 March 1944, *DCER Volume 11, 1944-45*, 1406. In order to be successful in its broader relationship with the United States, Canada had to be careful not to use the “strong glove over the velvet hand” type diplomacy.

⁵² Stairs, “Realists at Work: Canadian Policy Makers and the Politics of Transition from Hot War to Cold War,” 99.

⁵³ Elliot-Meisel, *Arctic Diplomacy*, 28.

indication of an undue Soviet interest in the continent and little evidence of aggressive Soviet designs.⁵⁴ This, however, is where the Canadians differed markedly from their American counterparts. The Americans, especially those in the military, tended to anticipate threats based on Soviet capabilities rather than their intentions. The Canadians, on the other hand, tended to emphasize intentions and motives, rather than technical capabilities. In any case, they had to take note of American thinking.

Canadian officials attempted to review the situation as soberly and calmly as possible in 1946. They investigated American requests and evaluated them with the protection of their country's interests in mind. Despite the willingness of the Canadians to engage in bilateral defence planning, they were more cautious about proceeding beyond the planning stage. At the September meeting of the PJBD the American section suggested that the time had come for the allies to standardize their military equipment. The Canadian section of the Board, led by its new chairman Andrew McNaughton, saw little need for this action and rejected the proposal. In their first postwar test the Canadians demonstrated that they could delay or reject American proposals, without fear of the U.S taking drastic unilateral action.

Historian Elizabeth Elliot Meisel has argued that the failure of External Affairs to properly regulate American defence activities in Canada during the war stemmed from its small size and its relative inexperience. With a severe shortage of personnel, External Affairs had to set feasible priorities – which did not include the Canadian North early in the war. Neither did the Department plan for the difficult sovereignty issues that arose

⁵⁴ Memorandum on Soviet Motives in Relation to North America, 2 February 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 5749, file 52-c(s).

during the war or develop an effective way of dealing with American pushiness. As the war progressed, however, it grew in size and sophistication and began to handle complex problems more effectively.⁵⁵ Accordingly, the Canadians were much better prepared to meet the incoming onslaught when defence planning started to heat up in 1946.

Planning the Defences

By early 1946 high ranking Americans fully accepted the Soviet Union as an enemy and the threat to the continent as reality. Two events in particular influenced American decision makers, especially James Forrestal, the influential Secretary of the Navy.⁵⁶ On 9 February 1946, Stalin delivered a speech which emphasized the need for the Soviets to remain prepared for the continuing conflict inherent in the capitalist world. Whatever Stalin's intentions, Forrestal took this speech as the 'Declaration of World War III' and decided that a peaceful solution was no longer possible. George Keenan, the U.S. charge d'affaires in Moscow, unintentionally fortified this sentiment with his famous 'Long Telegram.' Keenan argued that while the Soviets could be unscrupulous and did represent a threat, they did not want to engage in another global conflict.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, Keenan's nuanced report on Soviet intentions became required reading for hundreds of American military officers, who read in it the possibility of a threat. "The Soviet Union was the enemy, war a possibility, bombers were the threat, the polar corridor the route," historian James Eayrs explained.⁵⁸ Although some Canadian analysts

⁵⁵ Elliot-Meisel, *Arctic Diplomacy*, 56.

⁵⁶ Smith, *Diplomacy of Fear*, 122.

⁵⁷ Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada Vol. 3: Peacemaking and Deterrence*, 335.

⁵⁸ Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada Vol. 3: Peacemaking and Deterrence*, 335.

like Riddel and Glazebrook disagreed with these estimates, Canada remained a faithful ally of the U.S. because of geography, trade, and history.⁵⁹ If the Americans believed that the continent required defences, the Canadians would listen. They would not, however, be cajoled into making swift and damaging decisions.

By the spring of 1946 the Americans began to pepper the Canadians with defence proposals aimed at improving their capabilities in the Arctic. The projects suggested for the Canadian Arctic Archipelago in March, April and May 1946 all sought to give the U.S. military greater knowledge of Arctic conditions. They did not demand large scale installations, but relatively small operations with specific goals. On 14 March 1946, Major General Guy V. Henry, American chairman of the PJBD, alerted his Canadian counterparts that the U.S. War Department wanted to establish a program of photographic and virtual reconnaissance in the western Arctic Archipelago, covering the islands of Banks, Victoria, Prince Patrick, Borden, Meighen, Bathurst and Prince of Wales. The USAAF 46th Reconnaissance Squadron working in Alaska could be diverted to the Canadian Arctic for the following winter.⁶⁰ From a military perspective, this project was sensible. The first step to any military operation is understanding the lay of the land; the reconnaissance proposed by the Americans would have provided this essential knowledge. Any defence planning would also require detailed maps of the Canadian Arctic, which Ottawa did not have. Photographic reconnaissance would begin to resolve this problem.

⁵⁹ Bercuson, "Continental Defence and Arctic Sovereignty, 1945-1950: Solving the Canadian Dilemma," 154-155.

⁶⁰ Major General Henry to Members of the Permanent Joint Board on Defence, 14 March 1946, LAC PJBD files 113.

Despite the military benefits inherent in the American request, the Canadians quickly attempted to sidestep it. In early April, Charles Deerwester, the U.S. Air Member of the PJBD, approached the Canadian Joint Staff in Washington seeking an answer to his country's proposal. Deerwester told the Canadians that the U.S. welcomed Canadian participation in the project, but that it would act unilaterally if permitted to do so.⁶¹ The Canadian Joint Staff responded that this proposal created difficulties for the King government. They chose not to give a definitive answer regarding cooperation, nor did they give the Americans permission to act unilaterally. Although disappointed, Deerwester chose "to advise the A.A.F not to proceed with the operation until they have obtained Canadian government approval."⁶² Although the reasons for the Canadian rejection are not stated, they likely worried about the Americans exploring and taking pictures of a portion of the Canadian Arctic that remained unoccupied and barely explored. In this case, Canadian sovereignty trumped the defence needs of the Americans.

On 30 April 1946, General Henry wrote to the Canadian secretary of the PJBD requesting permission for the USAAF to institute a "regular air transport service of three round trips per week" over the Canadian Arctic.⁶³ The three B-29s assigned to the mission would travel over Canadian territory as they moved between Meeks Field, Iceland and Ladd Field, Alaska. Henry outlined the five purposes of the *Polaris* project: "to gain operational experience in the Arctic; to determine navigational difficulties and

⁶¹ Memorandum for the Record by Charles Deerwester, 11 April 1946, NARA, RG 233, Entry 17-A, Box 1, File "Top Secret General Correspondence, 1941-1956," Folder 2.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Senior United States Army Member, PJBD, to Secretary, Canadian Section, PJBD, April 30, 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1541-1542.

procedures for overcoming same, to investigate the reliability of communications; to analyze polar air masses; [and] to study air mass circulation in Polar regions.”⁶⁴ This rationale reflected the American desire to improve its operational capability in the region, especially in Arctic aviation. If American bombers ever had to cross the Polar Regions on a mission against the Soviet Union, the crews required advance training and their equipment needed to be tested in conditions unique to the Arctic. The Canadians did not immediately respond to this proposal, however, preferring to give the issue more thought.

At the end of April, the American section of the PJBD also requested the continuation of the low frequency long range aid to navigation (Loran) program established in northern Canada to assist in the air and ground navigation for Exercise *Musk Ox*. The program consisted of three transmitter stations at Dawson Creek, Himli and Gimli, and monitoring stations operated by the RCAF in Yellowknife, Norman Wells and Edmonton, the army at Baker Lake, and the Navy at Churchill. The U.S. operated and provided equipment for the transmitter stations, while Canada did the same for the monitoring sites and assisted in the messing, housing and transport for the American controlled stations. The PJBD “agreed that the continuation of these tests of low frequency Loran was essential in that they were not only of the utmost importance in the development of long range aids to navigation, but also valuable in the development of early warning systems, long range guided missiles etc.” It recommended that Canada

⁶⁴ Senior United States Army Member, PJBD, to Secretary, Canadian Section, PJBD, April 30, 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1541-1542.

approve the American request.⁶⁵ On 10 May 1946 the Cabinet approved the extension of the Loran program until the following May.⁶⁶ During that time, the program would work its way into the less secure areas of the Canadian Arctic.

Throughout March and April an American proposal to establish a joint service testing station in the Canadian North began to bounce around Ottawa. Both the Canadians and Americans agreed that the technical services required a space where they could test equipment in Arctic conditions. Many suggested that the ideal location would be Fort Churchill, Manitoba, which was surrounded by a barren, Arctic landscape that was accessible year round by plane and rail.⁶⁷ This proposal did not unduly worry the Canadians, but they still balked at the idea of permitting the semi-permanent stationing of American troops in the North.

On 14 May 1946 the Americans also alerted the Canadian section of the PJBD that they wanted to carry out naval operations in the Arctic that summer. The objectives of Operation *Nanook* included the training of U.S. naval personnel in Arctic operations and the recording of detailed hydrographic, electromagnetic and meteorological data. The Americans never clearly defined the third objective, the “conducting of other scientific investigations.” Showing sensitivity to Canadian concerns, the American proposal explained that “since it is understood that the Canadian government desires to

⁶⁵ Memorandum from Secretary, Cabinet Defence Committee to Cabinet Defence Committee, 3 May 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1542-1543.

⁶⁶ Extract of Memorandum from Secretary to the Cabinet to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, 10 May 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1547.

⁶⁷ An Introduction to Churchill and Surrounding Area, by 7099th ASU, NARA, RG 156, Entry 646-A, Box A764. According to Andrew Iarocci, “Most significant was its geographic location at an ecotone, a transitional zone between two ecological systems: the arctic barrens to the north and the boreal forest to the south. As such, the terrain around Churchill broadly represented the character of arctic lands across the north.” Andrew Iarocci, “Opening the North: Technology and Training at the Fort Churchill Joint Services Experimental Testing Station, 1946-1964,” *Canadian Army Journal*, Vol. 10.4 (Winter 2008), 76.

supervise magnetic work in the area, any work of this nature undertaken by the United States will be performed under Canadian supervision.” The Americans offered to take along a Canadian observer qualified to take magnetic readings and also invited two Canadian naval officers to accompany the voyage.⁶⁸ The task force would consist of five vessels, including a coast guard icebreaker, an altered net layer, two cargo ships and a submarine. In addition, aircraft would perform ice reconnaissance and obtain data on flight operations in the Arctic. Later in May, the Americans added the USS *Norton Sound*, a seaplane tender, and the USS *Sicily*, a small carrier, along with a destroyer escort to the list of ships attached to the operation. At this time the Americans also sought Canadian permission to land a force of 28 Marines for a one month period, preferably at Dundas Harbour on North Devon Island.⁶⁹

The Americans requested permission to carry out the operation from 1 July to 1 October in the waters of Viscount Melville Sound and Lancaster Sound.⁷⁰ While the seaplane tender and the carrier would carry out most of their work in the high seas off the Baffin Bay area, the other American ships would operate in the Northwest Passage.⁷¹ An internal Canadian memorandum reviewing the project explored the possibilities of the expedition and noted:

That part of ‘NANOOK’ which is going to Viscount Melville Sound is of particular importance in that it is proposed to operate a force of five ships in an area that has seldom been penetrated before save in a spirit of adventure and with

⁶⁸ J. Graham Parsons, Secretary, United States Section to R.M. Macdonnell, Secretary, Canadian Section, PJBD, 14 May 1946, LAC, RG 24, vol. 8152, file NSS 1660-12 (part 1).

⁶⁹ J. Graham Parsons, Secretary, United States Section to R.M. Macdonnell, Secretary, Canadian Section, PJBD, 22 May 1946, LAC, RG 24, vol. 8152, file NSS 1660-12 (part 1).

⁷⁰ J. Graham Parsons, Secretary, United States Section to R.M. Macdonnell, Secretary, Canadian Section, PJBD, 14 May 1946, LAC, RG 24, vol. 8152, file NSS 1660-12 (part 1).

⁷¹ J. Graham Parsons, Secretary, United States Section to R.M. Macdonnell, Secretary, Canadian Section, PJBD, 22 May 1946, LAC, RG 24, vol. 8152, file NSS 1660-12 (part 1).

ships of less than half the size...The experiences and findings of the Melville Sound section are of particular interest when it is remembered that the Soviet operated convoys from Vladivostok to Archangel during the war and that a recent press release states that, in the new Five Year Plan, it is envisaged that the “Great Northern Route” shall have become a normal commercial sea lane by 1950.

The report speculated on the possible commercial promise of the Northwest Passage, and highlighted the lack of Canadian activity in the area. The document admitted that no Canadian naval ship ever entered the Arctic waters and no officers in the navy had any Arctic experience. “While the possibility of naval operations in these areas may be remote,” it emphasized, “it is felt that our complete lack of such experience should be corrected.”⁷² The document made no mention of the expedition’s potential impact on Canadian sovereignty.

When the American Coast Guard Cutter *Polar Sea* transited the same waters in its journey through the Northwest Passage in 1985, it sparked outrage in Canada and elicited a strong response from the Canadian government. In late 1946, however, the government expressed little concern over the status of the Arctic waters. While it consistently worried about the impact of permanent or semi-permanent stations on Canada’s claims to the Arctic islands, large scale American naval operations did not seem to pose the same kind of threat. Terrestrial sovereignty remained the government’s primary focus.

In the fall of 1944, Hugh Keenleyside received a letter from Lt.-Colonel Charles Hubbard of the USAAF, who insisted that weather stations in the High Arctic would be

⁷² Memorandum to ACNS and CNP from P.T.O., Reference – PJBD American Section Letters of 14 May 1946 and 22 May 1946, LAC, RG 24, vol. 8152, file NSS 1660-12 (part 1).

essential to future military operations.⁷³ The following March, Hubbard, who gained northern experience through his work on the Crimson Route, met with Escott Reid and Lester Pearson in the Canadian Embassy in Washington. Hubbard pointed out that the North Atlantic air routes required advanced weather forecasting. By 1944, forecasts for this area could only be made 24 hours in advance and remained unreliable. To solve this problem Hubbard envisioned six or seven stations spread across the Northwest Territories. He suggested that since the benefits of the stations would accrue to both the United States and Canada “in proportions roughly equivalent to their relevant populations” it would be fair if the U.S. bore eleventh-twelfths of the total cost. Of course, if the U.S. bore three quarters of the cost, they would want a share in running the stations. To wrap up his briefing, Hubbard asked Reid and Pearson to keep the discussion strictly confidential.⁷⁴

While the Canadians neither approved nor disapproved of such a scheme, Pearson commented that his government would be more comfortable with an international plan of action that covered Alaska, the Canadian Northwest Territories and Greenland.⁷⁵ In a letter to Norman Robertson, Pearson explained:

In this connection, I pointed out to [Hubbard] that Canadians would look with some hesitation on meteorological stations in Canada’s northern areas unless they were under the control of Canada itself, or of an international organization set up with the knowledge and consent of Canada and in the control of which Canada shared. Colonel Hubbard quite appreciated this but suggested that some doubt

⁷³ C. W. Jackson, Acting Deputy Minister Mines and Resources, to Deputy Minister of Transport, 13 October 1944, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40C.

⁷⁴ Meteorological Stations in the North American Polar Region, 2 March 1945, LAC, RG 85, vol. 823, file 7140.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

still existed as to the extent of our sovereignty over some of these Arctic districts north of Canada.⁷⁶

If Hubbard was trying to coax the Canadians into accepting his proposal on weather stations, raising questions about Canada's sovereignty was a faulty strategy. The Canadians suddenly faced the prospect of increased American activity in the High Arctic. Robertson, however, was already aware of Hubbard's ideas and he questioned senior officials at the Arctic, Desert and Tropic Information Centre of the USAAF about the plan. These officers told Robertson that Hubbard's suggestions should be taken with a certain amount of reserve. "I gather that Hubbard is far from being persona grata to the Arctic experts of that organization who, in fact, managed some months ago to forestall his assignment work with them," Robertson concluded.⁷⁷

After Hubbard's meeting with Reid and Pearson, the weather station proposal fell off the Canadian government's radar. On the other side of the border, however, Hubbard remained hard at work trying to get someone in a position of power to champion his idea. He finally found a willing and powerful ear in Senator Owen Brewster of Maine, whom he convinced to propose a bill requesting funds for the United States Weather Bureau to "construct and operate meteorological stations in conjunction with a number of other countries."⁷⁸ As proposed in the Senate, the project would be initiated and controlled by a civilian agency. Although Senator Brewster recognized the military importance of meteorology he also described the "farming, construction, transportation, merchandising,

⁷⁶ L.B. Pearson to N.A. Robertson, 6 March 1945, LAC, RG 85, vol. 823, file 7140.

⁷⁷ N.A. Robertson, Under Secretary of State for External Affairs to L.B. Pearson, Canadian Ambassador to the US, 8 March 1945, LAC, RG 85, vol. 823, file 7140.

⁷⁸ *Public Law 296*, 79th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1946, S. Doc. 765.

and many other activities” helped by advanced weather forecasting.⁷⁹ The civilian purposes of the weather stations bill proposed by Brewster were significant. In a recent paper on the Joint Arctic Weather Stations, historian Daniel Heidt noted that critics such as Shelagh Grant and Adam Lajeunesse dismissed the “civilian framework of JAWS as fraudulent. Lajeunesse similarly describes JAWS as a ‘military project’ in which the United States ‘played its part’ by using a civilian guise.”⁸⁰ From the very beginning, however, American officials acknowledged the civil importance of the weather stations program and placed control of the project in the hands of the civilian weather bureau. (When the stations were eventually constructed most of the control was left in the hands of civilian operators, with the military playing a supporting role.)

In early May 1946 the Americans formally presented their plan for Arctic weather stations to the Canadian government. A memorandum from Lewis Clark, the Counsellor at the U.S. Embassy, proposed the establishment of three weather stations on islands in the western portion of Canada’s Arctic by the summer of 1947. Clark made it clear that, while the United States was prepared to establish these stations independently, it “assumed that this would not be desired by the Canadian government in view of its general policy of retaining control of establishments in Canadian territory.”⁸¹ In this light, Clark made two suggestions: that the U.S. establish and assist in maintaining the

⁷⁹ “Arctic Weather Stations,” U.S. Senate, 79th Cong. 1st session, 2.

⁸⁰ Lajeunesse, “The True North As Long As It's Free: The Canadian Policy Deficit 1945-1985,” 18, 24; Grant, *Sovereignty or Security?*, 174, 215-216; Daniel Heidt, “Clenched in the JAWS of America? Canadian Sovereignty and the Joint Arctic Weather Stations, 1946-1972,” (Unpublished Article, Spring 2009), 238.

⁸¹ Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to Deputy Minister of Transport, 4 May 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1544.

stations which would be under Canadian control or that Canada establish, operate and maintain the stations independently.

If the Canadians chose the second option, Clark asked that the technical standards meet U.S. requirements and that U.S. personnel be posted at the stations to gain experience. Most importantly, Clark “emphasized that his government wished to work out a programme on a fully cooperative basis and had no thought of interfering in any way with Canadian sovereignty.”⁸² Officials at External Affairs worried despite these assurances. Norman Robertson, the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, told the Deputy Minister of Transport that Canada would not be justified in assuming the total cost of the project, but would also be in a precarious position if the Americans established and controlled the stations. Ideally, Canada required a compromise in which it retained control of the weather stations and made modest contributions to the program, while the U.S provided the supplies, necessary personnel and equipment.⁸³

By mid-May 1946 Charles Hubbard again stood before the Canadians as a member of the American delegation at the first joint conference on the Arctic weather stations. All of the key departments on the Canadian side were represented at the conference, including Mines and Resources, the army and navy, the Department of Transport, External Affairs and the meteorological service. Hubbard reiterated the important role these weather stations could play in advanced forecasting and alluded to the military requirement for these stations when he argued that they would provide essential information about flying conditions in the North. In addition, the United States

⁸² Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to Deputy Minister of Transport, 4 May 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1544.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

Navy (USN) and AAF agreed to provide logistical support for the operation. Lewis Clark argued for a quick decision, stating that “the international political situation at the present time is important. Those on the other side of the Arctic are very active. Because of this we can get funds at the present time and later this may not be possible.”⁸⁴ With these funds the Americans hoped to establish weather stations at Winter Harbour on Melville Island in 1946, and on Banks Island, Prince Patrick Island, and on the west side of Ellesmere Island or Axel Heiberg Island in 1947. Although the U.S. presented a sound plan and seemed respectful of Canadian sovereignty, the Canadians again refused to make a quick decision.

The defence projects proposed by the Americans in the early Cold War made sound strategic sense and all had valuable non-military applications. They had practical and achievable aims and would not involve as many American personnel as the wartime mega-projects had required. The Americans provided multiple assurances that the weather stations program would not jeopardize Canadian sovereignty. These promises, however, did little to counter the *de jure* and *de facto* sovereignty concerns of the Canadian government. In the aftermath of the joint conference on the weather stations, the Northwest Territories Council echoed the opinion of many Canadian officials when it claimed that it “was concerned about the aspect of sovereignty in these remote sections of the Canadian Arctic Archipelago since most of these stations were going to areas where our claims on the basis of actual occupation are very weak.” The council noted

⁸⁴ Memorandum by the Department of Mines and Resources, 18 May 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1551.

that the sector principle had never been accepted internationally and that it believed any permanent northern projects should be operated by Canada.⁸⁵

Sovereignty Worries in the Arctic

By 1946 Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic Archipelago was best encapsulated by Hume Wrong's phrase: "unchallenged, but not unchallengeable."⁸⁶ Since the early twentieth century Canada had taken slow but steady steps to secure its claim over the region. In the interwar period the Eastern Arctic Patrol visited remote stations almost every year, and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) posts, post offices and customs houses dotted the mainland and archipelago up to Ellesmere Island. The government paid the Norwegians to drop their claims in the Canadian high Arctic and insisted that American expeditions entering the region acquire a Canadian permit. From time to time in the House of Commons a Canadian Minister would stand up and make mention of the Sector Principle and declare Canada's intent to protect its Arctic islands.⁸⁷ Other than the occasional brave statement, however, the government showed little concern about the nature of Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic and did even less to develop or settle the

⁸⁵ Memorandum by the Department of Mines and Resources, 18 May 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1553.

⁸⁶ Hume Wrong to A.D.P. Heeney, 24 Jun 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40, part 1.

⁸⁷ The Sector theory was first officially used by the Department of the Interior in 1904, when it cut out a slice of the Arctic on a map of the country. In 1907 Senator Pascal Poirier proposed that Canada make a formal declaration of its sovereignty in the Arctic using the sector principle. An American report on the Canadian Arctic remembered that on 10 June 1925 Charles Stewart "definitely and officially" stated in the House of Commons that Canada claimed everything, "known and unknown, west of Davis Strait – Baffin Bay – Smith Sound – Robeson Channel – 60th Meridian, east of the meridian that divides Alaska from Canada (141°W), and north of the Canadian mainland up to the Pole." Arctic Aviation Development Program for the United States Recommended by the Standing Subcommittee on the Arctic, 6 November 1945, NARA, RG 330, Entry 341A, Box 451, Folder 1, File "Geophysics and Geography."

region. During the war, the Canadian government worried about its *de facto* control of the northwest. Rarely was official attention directed to the Arctic islands.

In 1944 a small number of officials in the Department of Mines and Resources and External Affairs began to ponder the nature of Canada's sovereignty in the high Arctic. On 9 February 1944, J.G. Wright, a member of the Northwest Territories Administration, wrote a report on the establishment of weather stations in the region. He noted that "it is the far and western islands, which are reached by our administration mostly in theory, where our claims to sovereignty are most likely to be questioned." Wright explained that Russia strengthened its claims to its Arctic possessions by establishing scientific and weather stations in the area. He surmised that "we may have to do something like that ourselves, in which case we would require weather stations to service air travel to reach some of our otherwise scarcely accessible islands."⁸⁸

One of the few reports on the issue of Arctic sovereignty released by the Department of External Affairs during the war years argued the necessity of effective occupation under international law. Any attempt to claim land based on discovery would generate possible rival claims from different nations that had explored the archipelago. The report concluded that the Arctic region required some degree of control and administration and "even taking into account that such 'control and administration' need not be as real in northern regions as in more temperate ones, there may be some doubt whether Canada is actually extending enough jurisdiction throughout lands already discovered to make her claim to these territories unquestionable."⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Wright to Gibson, 9 February 1944, LAC, RG 85, vol. 823, file 7140.

⁸⁹ Memorandum to Legal Adviser, 31 May 1944, *DCER, Volume 11, 1944-1945*.

The External Affairs report also recognized that there was no clear definition of effective administration and control. “The principle generally agreed to however, is that the possessing state must make its authority felt in the occupied territory and maintain order therein,” it noted. “As a matter of practice, I should think this is translated in the administration of justice and the enforcement of national laws and regulations in the territory concerned.” The report mused that in the near future this control could be expanded to encapsulate stricter customs laws and regulations, air regulations, immigration control, and the enforcement of specific Northwest Territories (NWT) Acts, such as rules against the importation of intoxicants, game laws, and permits for foreign scientists and explorers.⁹⁰ Enforcing these regulations would strengthen Canada’s *de facto* control of the region. Accordingly, demonstrating a reasonable level of control, rather than making grand assertions of sovereignty based on discovery or the sector principle, became the government’s game plan.

Other Canadian commentators shared a more positive interpretation of Canada’s legal claim to the Arctic. In response to Hubbard’s suggestion that some doubt existed as to the extent of Canadian sovereignty in the region, Charles Camsell, Deputy Minister of Mines and Resources, noted that three wartime publications issued with the consent of the U.S. War Department “refer repeatedly to the islands north of the Canadian mainland as ‘the Canadian archipelago.’”⁹¹ A 1946 report prepared by the U.S. also

⁹⁰ Memorandum to Legal Adviser, 31 May 1944, *DCER, Volume 11, 1944-1945*; Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to Director, Lands, Parks and Forests Branch, Department of Mines and Resources, 1 June 1944, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40.

⁹¹ Charles Camsell, Deputy Minister Mines and Resources to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, 13 March 1945, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40.

employed the phrase “Canadian Arctic Archipelago.”⁹² These mentions, however, did not allay the concerns of Canadian decision-makers involved with continental defence planning.

The American defence proposals called for activity in areas not permanently settled or even patrolled by Canada, claimed using the sector theory which had no solid basis in international law. In particular, the weather stations would be established in areas that few Canadians ever visited and, in many cases, they would be the only settlements and sources of authority for hundreds of miles. The thought of tiny American-controlled stations popping up throughout Canada’s Arctic, flying the stars and stripes, gravely worried all branches of the Canadian government.

The release of PJBD Recommendation 35 in early May did nothing to alleviate the King government’s concerns. The recommendation, which the Board started work on in November, attempted to establish the basic principles for defence cooperation. It called for closer collaboration between the two countries in intelligence sharing, the interchange of personnel, equipment standardization, joint manoeuvres and training, and the right of transit through either country’s territory. The recommendation, however, said little about the protection of sovereignty. The safeguards that the King government had anticipated were absent. Rather than meekly signing on to these principles, Cabinet rejected the recommendation and ordered the PJBD to begin revising the proposal. This time, the Canadian section would have to push harder for clauses explicitly protecting Canada’s sovereignty.

⁹² *Sovereignty in the Canadian Arctic in Relation to Joint Defence Undertakings*, Memorandum from Department of National Defence to Cabinet Defence Committee, 18 May 1946, *DCER Volume 12, 1946*, 1557.

The shortcomings in Recommendation 35 coincided with an equally frightening revelation from R.M. Macdonnell, the Canadian secretary of the PJBD. On 6 May 1946, he circulated a leaked report from the American Standing Sub-committee on the Arctic that called into question Canada's sovereignty over undiscovered lands within its sector.⁹³ The report, prepared in November 1945, explained that a gap existed in the network of Arctic aviation facilities extending from Spitsbergen to Greenland and across the "Canadian islands" to Alaska.⁹⁴ To fill this gap, the paper suggested American reconnaissance flights to look for undiscovered islands in the Arctic upon which to establish weather stations.⁹⁵ The committee questioned whether the U.S. recognized Canadian claims to the region north of Prince Patrick Island and west of Grant's Land, and pondered whether the U.S. could claim newly discovered islands north of the Canadian mainland.⁹⁶ In short, the report dismissed Canadian claims to the region based on the Sector Principle.

Reading too much into this document is erroneous. The Sub-committee's report, a low level planning document, carried little political weight in Washington. To a Canadian government already worried about sovereignty, however, the report seemed to confirm its worst fears. The Americans wanted to improve their capabilities in the Arctic and, it seemed, they might test Canada's *de jure* sovereignty to do so. The American report reinforced concerns expressed by Vice Chief of the General Staff General D.C.

⁹³ Memorandum from Head, Third Political Division Legal Division: Sovereignty in the Arctic, 6 May 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1545-1546.

⁹⁴ Arctic Aviation Development Program for the United States Recommended by the Standing Subcommittee on the Arctic, 6 November 1945, NARA, RG 330, Entry 341A, Box 451, Folder 1, File "Geophysics and Geography."

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

Spry that “hitherto unknown islands may be discovered within the Canadian sector by a foreign power, and claim laid to them by right of discovery and primary occupation.” Spry’s analysis criticized the lack of Canadian occupation, settlement, or development in the area and noted the weakness of Canada’s claims. “Thus it is of great importance that Canada should carefully safeguard her sovereignty in the Arctic at all points and at all times,” Spry remarked, “lest the acceptance of an initial infringement of her sovereignty invalidate her entire claim.”⁹⁷ Solving Canada’s sovereignty concerns remained at the top of the list as the Canadian government and military became more entwined in continental defence. By the end of May a meeting of the Military Cooperation Committee (MCC) made resolving these concerns even more imperative.

Between 20-23 May 1946, Canadian and American military delegations met to hammer out a revised version of ABC-22. After a marathon session of planning and discussion, the MCC released an “Appreciation of the Requirements for Canadian-United States Security” and a “Joint Canadian-United States Basic Security Plan.” The documents stressed that the military potential of North America would be a major target in any outbreak of hostilities. In three to five years the offensive capabilities of any potential enemy would steadily improve, making the continent more vulnerable to attack. If the enemy acquired the atomic bomb, an attack might come sooner and would be much more lethal. Any aerial attack would come over the North Pole, making use of Spitsbergen, Greenland, and the Canadian Arctic islands as stepping stones to the continent. To protect the continent, the Canadians and Americans had to keep ahead of

⁹⁷ *Sovereignty in the Canadian Arctic in Relation to Joint Defence Undertakings*, Memorandum from Department of National Defence to Cabinet Defence Committee, 18 May 1946, *DCER Volume 12, 1946*, 1557.

the enemy capabilities by building an integrated air defence system, air warning, weather forecasting, communications networks, surveillance, anti-submarine capabilities and mobile strike forces to counter any possible enemy lodgement in the north.⁹⁸ The defence scheme of the MCC would force Canada to invest ten-fold more resources into continental defence and brace itself for a veritable Maginot Line in the Arctic. Acceptance of such a plan would also have a drastic impact on Canadian sovereignty.

Defending Against Help

The defence plans and threat assessment prepared by the MCC had an immediate influence on the Canadian policy community. On 11 June 1946 Hume Wrong circulated his thoughts to his senior colleagues at External Affairs and to Arnold Heeney, the Secretary of the Cabinet. He argued that the appreciation overestimated the danger to the continent, gave a greater capacity to the Soviets than they would have in the next decade, and noted that the military occupation of North America seemed highly unlikely.⁹⁹ Later in the month, Wrong observed that the Soviets seemed intent upon building up their military but they would not be capable of waging war for another fifteen years. He also expressed fear that a low-scale local conflict could escalate out of control due to the “blundering diplomacy and the inability to compromise of the Soviet Government.”¹⁰⁰ Wrong believed that the Soviet Union posed a threat, but he thought that the MCC’s defence plans were disproportionate to the probability of an actual attack.

⁹⁸ Memorandum by Joint Canadian-United States Military Cooperation Committee, 23 May 1946, *DCER Volume 12, 1946*, 1615-23.

⁹⁹ Hume Wrong Note, 11 June 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 5749, file 52-c(s).

¹⁰⁰ Memorandum by Associate Undersecretary of State for External Affairs: The Possibility of War with the Soviet Union, 28 June 1946, *DCER Volume 12, 1946*, 1632-1635.

Heeney also reported on the MCC recommendation to Prime Minister King. The senior public servant in Ottawa suspected that continental defence would become the most serious problem facing the government in the postwar years. He predicted that the Canadian military planners would likely come to the same conclusions as the MCC, based purely on military criteria. Heeney told King to prepare for an approach from the highest levels, considering the importance the Americans placed on securing an agreement on continental defence. “The government will probably have to accept the U.S. thesis in general terms,” Heeney concluded, “though we may be able to moderate the pace at which plans are to be implemented and to some extent the nature of the projects which are to be undertaken.”¹⁰¹ Canada was in a difficult position.

Historian Joseph Jockel has made a convincing case showing that the American government did not intend to establish a massive air defence system on Canadian territory in 1946. Despite the threat assessment prepared by the MCC, the USAAF remained predominately focused on offensive operations in the early postwar years, not continental air defences.¹⁰² The American Joint Chiefs of Staff were “interested in signing Canada on as a faithful postwar ally and as a secure geographic element in their forward strategy.” Most defence planners in the U.S. and Canada realized that at some point the Arctic approaches would require protection. The question was how much. Nevertheless, Jockel notes that early bilateral “negotiations were conducted before the

¹⁰¹ Memorandum from Secretary to the Cabinet to the Prime Minister, 12 June 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1627-29.

¹⁰² In March 1946 the AAF created an Air Defence Command, but gave it few resources. Only after the Berlin crisis of 1948 did the Americans initiate their first active air defences, and not until the following year did Congress provide funding for a permanent air defence system. Jockel, *No Boundaries Upstairs*, 9.

higher authorities had fully established what, precisely, the American interest was.”¹⁰³ Senior American officials tended to leave the details of bilateral defence planning in the hands of lower ranking officers and diplomats and often, as in the case of the MCC recommendation, knew little about the actual plans.¹⁰⁴ These senior officials had little interest in the grandiose plans of the MCC, and suggestions for air defence bases and radar stations throughout the Arctic faded away for the short-term.

Regardless of the intentions of senior American officials, the plans prepared by the MCC, the multitude of proposed northern defence projects, and the failure of the PJBD to create a set of basic principles for cooperation that protected Canadian sovereignty left the King government reeling by June 1946. In spite of its sovereignty concerns, everyone knew that Canada would participate in continental defence.¹⁰⁵ As senior Cabinet minister Louis St. Laurent stated, “Canada could not stay out of a third World War if 11,999,999 of her 12,000,000 citizens wanted to remain neutral.”¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, Canadian military officials recognized the importance of the proposed defence projects. After the conference on weather stations in May, Group Captain Bradshaw, the RCAF representative, stated that he “hoped that the project would not be turned down on the basis of the sovereignty question as he felt there was a very great need of these stations for air activity in view of the rather disturbing political situation at

¹⁰³ Jockel, *No Boundaries Upstairs*, 11.

¹⁰⁴ Jockel, “The Canada-United States Military Co-operation Committee and Continental Air Defence, 1946,” *Canadian Historical Review* 64/3 (September 1983), 352-77.

¹⁰⁵ Bercuson, “Continental Defence and Arctic Sovereignty, 1945-1950: Solving the Canadian Dilemma,” 154.

¹⁰⁶ Cited in Lt. Colonel Bernd Horn, “Gateway to Invasion or the Curse of Geography? The Canadian Arctic and the Question of Security, 1939-1999,” in *Forging a Nation: Perspectives on the Canadian Military Experience*, ed. Bernd Horn (St. Catherines: Vanwell Publishing Limited, 2002), 318.

the present time.”¹⁰⁷ The Canadian Arctic would be one of the front lines of any new global war and, according to historian David Bercuson, this posed a series of important questions for policy makers:

Did Canada have the resources to guard that front line to the satisfaction of its powerful ally, the United States? It was obvious, almost from the start, that it did not. But could Canada allow the United States to mount that “long polar watch” alone, from Canadian territory? Would this not be an admission that whatever sovereignty Canada claimed in the polar regions was weak at best and nonexistent at worst?¹⁰⁸

How would Canada respond to the proposals for American defence projects in the Arctic? How would it protect its sovereignty in the region?

Canada required a solution to its problem that both protected sovereignty and provided adequate continental defence. Whitney Lackenbauer introduced the idea of defence against help into the scholarly discourse on the northern defence projects of the early Cold War. Nils Orvik first suggested defence against help in the early 1970’s as a way for small states to avoid infringements on their sovereignty by large neighbours for defence purposes. “One credible objective for small states,” suggested Orvik, “would be, while not attempting military resistance against a large neighbour, to persuade him that they are strong enough to defend themselves against any of the large neighbour’s potential enemies.”¹⁰⁹ In 1981 David Barry suggested that one of the major tenets in Canadian foreign policy during and after the Second World War was the idea of defence against help. Barry argued that Canada could not ignore the requirements of U.S.

¹⁰⁷ Memorandum by the Department of Mines and Resources, 18 May 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1554.

¹⁰⁸ Bercuson, “Continental Defense and Arctic Sovereignty,” 154.

¹⁰⁹ Nils Orvik, “Defence Against Help – A Strategy for Small States?” *Survival* Vol. 15, No. 5 (September/October 1973), 228.

security and had to create credible responses to any external threats to the security of the continent that might arise.¹¹⁰

Following Barry's lead, Lackenbauer has argued that the driving force behind Canada's approach to the Cold War Arctic was the need to "defend against help."¹¹¹ The Canadians worried that the Americans might act unilaterally if they did not attempt to defend the Arctic, which the U.S. perceived as a strategically vulnerable position. To effectively defend the Arctic, however, the Canadians had to partner up with the U.S. and once again allow American soldiers onto Canadian territory; which raised grave sovereignty concerns. In the process of securing the continent the U.S. would become a threat to Canada. In the end, defending against help actually strengthened Canada's claims in the Arctic. The negotiations that brought the Americans into the region protected Canadian sovereignty. In addition, the partnership "offered the Canadians a say in decision-making, solidified its alliances with the Americans, and could guarantee both security and sovereignty."¹¹² Canadian diplomats realized that any policy in the Arctic would need to provide both sovereignty and security. Defence against help guaranteed both.

In the summer of 1946, however, such an advantageous outcome seemed like wishful thinking to the King government. As the summer wore on and American

¹¹⁰ Donald Barry, "The United States in Canadian Security Policy: Defence Against Help," (paper prepared for the annual meeting of the Western Social Sciences Association, San Diego, California, 23-25 April 1981.): 1-2, quoted in Whitney Lackenbauer, "From Defence Against Help to A Piece of the Action," CMSS Occasional Paper No. 1 (May 2000), 2-3.

¹¹¹ Whitney Lackenbauer, "From Defence Against Help to A Piece of the Action: The Canadian Sovereignty and Security Paradox Revisited," CMSS Occasional Paper No.1. Calgary: Centre for Military and Strategic Studies, 2000. See also Donald Barry and Duane Bratt, "Defense against Help: Explaining Canada-U.S. Security Relations," *American Review of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 38 (2008).

¹¹² Coates et al, *Arctic Front*, 78.

pressure for Canada to sign on to its continental defence plans mounted, the King government continued to struggle to find the solution to its dilemma. Nevertheless, the government showed signs it learned some lessons from its wartime experiences. It did not plunge head first into defence cooperation with the Americans and accept every defence proposal immediately. Instead, the government bided its time, pondered the problem, and attempted to form a response that would protect Canada's sovereignty and provide the American's with the security they desired. The shadow of the Second World War haunted King and his senior advisers, and they sought to avoid the mistakes they had made in 1942.

Chapter 2: Deferment and Negotiation

Activist versus Gradualist Approaches and the American Position

By the beginning of June 1946 the Americans began to press the Canadian government for a quick decision on the proposed defence projects, lest they miss the narrow window of opportunity for operations during the Arctic's short summer. Canadian officials understood that their country had little choice but to participate in continental defence, but as American pressure mounted Canadian decision-makers became more determined to find a solution that would allay their sovereignty concerns.

Some scholars have used the northern defence projects of the Second World War and the early Cold War to support arguments about peripheral dependence. This theory has been applied to Canadian foreign, defence and economic policy to show that Canada is "a weak and penetrated country with little ability to resist others, in particular the United States."¹¹³ In this framework, Canada is generally unable to articulate a proper response to American requests and concedes to its ally's demands. Canadian actions during the summer of 1946, however, do not support this conclusion. Canadian officials engaged in a seemingly endless cycle of debate and planning as they focused on the twin problems of Arctic sovereignty and continental defence. Throughout this period, the Canadians challenged American assertions and refused to capitulate to pressure as they delayed decisions about defence projects planned for the Arctic.

¹¹³ Andrew Richter, *Avoiding Armageddon: Canadian Military Strategy and Nuclear Weapons 1950-1963*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002), 7.

R.M. Macdonnell, who had notified Ottawa about the U.S. Subcommittee on the Arctic's alarming 1946 report questioning Canada's claims, anticipated that Arctic problems would be at the forefront of Canada's foreign affairs in years ahead. Soon "there will be extensive programmes of northern exploration and development in which the United States will either be participating with Canada or will have been given permission to act independently," he predicted. With worrisome thoughts of American flags flying over bases in the Canadian Arctic flashing through his mind, Macdonnell suggested that the Canadians go on the offensive from the start and "endeavour to secure [American] agreement to our claims about Canadian sovereignty."¹¹⁴ He advocated an activist approach to Canadian sovereignty – a radical departure from the gradualist approach of the first half of the century.

After the Canadian-American Arctic weather stations conference in May, James Allison Glen, the Minister of Mines and Resources, expressed his worry to Louis St. Laurent about the prospect of permanent American installations in a region where Canada did little to strengthen its sovereignty. Glen thought that the project was not as urgent as the American alleged, and he emphasized that any resolution should include "a clear and definite understanding" of Canadian sovereignty over the Arctic islands.¹¹⁵ Senior military officers seemed to agree that an aggressive offense was the best defence, and also advocated formal recognition of Canada's claims. Charles Foulkes, the Chief of the General Staff, felt that "the whole question of Canadian sovereignty should be settled now, and that if weakness is shown at the present juncture it will only lead to increasing

¹¹⁴ Memorandum from Head, Third Political Division, 6 May 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1545-1546.

¹¹⁵ Minister of Mines and Resources to Louis St. Laurent, 25 May 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40.

demands in future.”¹¹⁶ A memorandum concerning the army’s position highlighted its agreement with the Department of Mines and Resources (DMR) and suggested that Canada work to gain “full title” to the islands on which defence installations might be built.¹¹⁷ The military’s leadership, usually so willing to work closely with the Americans, remained wary of their chief ally setting up permanent facilities in the Arctic during peacetime.

In early June, Lester Pearson wrote his letter to Hume Wrong suggesting that the Americans be asked to recognize Canadian sovereignty based on the sector principle. Historian Adam Lajeunesse alleges that Canada should have adopted the approach endorsed by Foulkes, Macdonnell and Pearson. Canada should have pushed the U.S. for acceptance of its claims, in return for the defence rights the Americans wanted in the Arctic.¹¹⁸ Certainly a dramatic activist approach had tremendous appeal. In theory, forcing the powerful Americans to bend to Canadian demands while solving, once and for all, Canada’s sovereignty worries is both alluring and idealistic. Given the world situation of 1946, this approach surely would have failed. Neither Lajeunesse, nor Pearson, Foulkes or Macdonnell, offered any evidence to support the assumption that the U.S. might have formally accepted Canada’s claims. In the late 1940’s, strategic and political considerations ensured that the Americans would not and could not accept a forceful Canadian request for sovereignty recognition.

¹¹⁶ Lieutenant-General C. Foulkes, Chief of the General Staff, to Chief of the Air Staff, 31 May 1946, Directorate of History and Heritage (DHH) 2002-17, Box 113, File 2, pt. 1.

¹¹⁷ Chiefs of the General Staff Memorandum 2 June 1946, DHH 2002-17, Box 113, File 2, pt. 1.

¹¹⁸ Lajeunesse, “Lock, Stock, and Icebergs? Defining Canadian Sovereignty from Mackenzie King to Stephen Harper,” 6.

The situation in the Arctic necessitated a gradualist approach. Although the State Department made it abundantly clear that the United States did not want to violate Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic, the Americans never offered to formally accept Canada's claims.¹¹⁹ Global interests made such a declaration unrealistic, lest this be seen as acceptance of the sector principle. In 1926 the Soviet Union issued a decree that proclaimed its recognition of the sector theory and claimed an enormous swath of territory stretching from its eastern and western borders to the North Pole. Even if the U.S. did not object to Canada's sectoral claims in principle, it did not want to strengthen the position of the Russians. Any formal acceptance of Canada's claims would have done just that.

U.S. political and strategic interests in the Antarctic also dictated its response. In the first decades of the twentieth century countries used the sector principle to claim vast portions of the southern polar continent. The U.S. government refused to do so, and stated in 1924 that no Antarctic claim could be made unless it satisfied a strict definition of effective occupation far more stringent than the British version for polar regions (which only called for the occasional visit and legislative act).¹²⁰ In September 1929, the U.S. Navy Department criticized the sector principle as an illegal attempt by a few of the world's powers to unfairly divide up a large portion of the globe.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Letter to Dr. Charles Camsell from R.M. Macdonnell, Associate Under Secretary of State for External Affairs, 11 May 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3346, file 9061-A-40C, pt. 1; Memorandum for File: "Canadian Sovereignty in the Arctic," 25 September 1946, LAC, RG 25, Vol. 3047, File 113.

¹²⁰ W. Hughes to Norwegian minister, 2 April 1924, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1924* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939), 519-520.

¹²¹ *Report on the Arctic, Atlantic Division Air Transport Command*, Headquarters, Atlantic-Division Air Transport Command, Report on the Arctic, 1946, RG 319, Entry 82 (A1), Box 2975.

After the war the United States began preparing its territorial claim in the Antarctic, and the strategic importance of the continent grew as the Soviet Union began to express an interest in the region. The USN began planning for a massive military project in the Antarctic, Operation *Highjump*, initiated in August 1946 and involving 13 ships, nine aircraft and 4700 personnel. That December, Dean Acheson, the Acting Secretary of State, indicated the political importance of the American Antarctic expedition when he claimed that the operation highlighted “a definite policy of exploration and use of those Antarctic areas to which we already have a reasonable basis for claim...in order that we may be in a position to advance territorial claims to those areas.” *Highjump*, and a later expedition known as *Windmill*, provided the Americans with a firm foundation for claims based on effective occupation.¹²²

Between 1946 and 1948 the State Department slowly crafted the American claim in the Antarctic. Samuel Boggs, the State Department’s Geographic Adviser and the man responsible for these plans, argued that the Americans could gain possession of an area from 35 degrees West to 180 degrees to 13 degrees East. Boggs’ idea ignored all sector claims on the continent and formulated an American claim based on discovery and effective occupation. As long as the sector principle was not established in international law, the U.S. government could argue for a portion of the Antarctic that it considered both accessible and economically attractive.¹²³ Any recognition of the sector principle in

¹²² Acheson to Secretary of Navy, 14 December 1946, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1946* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), 1497.

¹²³ Jeffrey Myhre, *The Antarctic Treaty System: Politics, Law, and Diplomacy*, (London: Westview Press, 1986). The other idea prevalent in the State Department in the post war years focused on making the Antarctic into an international zone administered by a commission of nations or the United Nations. Regardless, this idea still required the sector principle not to be enforced in the Antarctic.

one polar region would have established a precedent for the other, to the detriment of the American position in the Antarctic.

As long as the Americans rejected the sector claims in the Antarctic, they could also continue to operate in any area of the region they chose. The American military considered the Antarctic to be valuable for training and experimentation. Learning to cope with the extreme conditions could prepare men and equipment for deployment in the Arctic, while avoiding the political sensitivities involved with undertaking a project the size of *Highjump* in the Canadian archipelago.¹²⁴ Senior American officials realized that they would lose this ability to train and prepare their forces for war against the Soviets if they accepted the sector theory in the Arctic.¹²⁵ Accordingly, if Canada had insisted on formal American recognition of its sovereignty in the early post war years, based on the sector principle, the U.S. would have inevitably rejected its request. This would have weakened any legal claim based on foreign acquiescence.

Two documents from this period illuminate American opinion on Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic. While at times critical of Canadian claims, both reports endorsed cooperation rather than unilateral American action. In early 1946 Lt. Colonel James Brewster, Assistant Chief of Intelligence, Atlantic Division Air Transport Command, noted that international acceptance of a territorial claim and effective occupation were the only ways to take possession of a territory. Brewster pointed out

¹²⁴ Peter Beck, *International Politics of Antarctica*, (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 37. A close contemporary parallel to the American issues with the sector principle is the United States' position on the Northwest Passage. If the Americans accept Canada's position on the passage and allow it to be treated as Canadian internal waters, a precedent would be set for more strategically important straits throughout the world. Strategic and political implications ensure that the U.S. will never accept the Northwest Passage as Canadian internal waters, just as similar considerations kept the U.S. from accepting the sector principle in 1946.

¹²⁵ Coates et al, 83.

that the rigid American conception of effective occupation did not align with the precedents established by international law. In 1933 the *Eastern Greenland Case* decided that Denmark had demonstrated sufficient authority over parts of Greenland to claim the entire area as its own, although this jurisdiction was manifested solely by Danish legislative acts which could not be effectively enforced in most of the territory involved. The case indicated that the administration established for areas like the Canadian Arctic could be adapted to local conditions and meet only local requirements. Brewster recognized that development or mass settlement of the region was not required.¹²⁶

Although the report acknowledged Canadian efforts to assert their sovereignty in the Arctic, Brewster still found many problems. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police carried out patrols and set up posts, but the region remained “incompletely explored” and “inadequately administered,” especially in comparison to the Soviet Arctic. As a result the northernmost regions of North America remained susceptible to foreign intrusion. These islands “represent[ed] either a potential spearhead pointed at Europe...or, on the other hand, an especially vulnerable area, a possible spring-board for any foreign assault on the North American continent.” Brewster did not suggest the U.S. take immediate unilateral action in the Arctic, however, or that it should look for undiscovered islands to claim. Instead, he called for joint defence activity in the region, including patrols and the deployment of a network of meteorological, radio and air stations to ensure effective

¹²⁶ *Report on the Arctic, Atlantic Division Air Transport Command, Headquarters, Atlantic-Division Air Transport Command, Report on the Arctic, 1946, RG 319, Entry 82 (A1), Box 2975.*

occupation before some other foreign power did so.¹²⁷ The U.S., after all, would much rather see Canadians in the Arctic Archipelago than Russians.

A second report entitled, “Problems of Canadian-United States Cooperation in the Arctic,” also came from the intelligence branch of the Atlantic Division, Air Transport Command.¹²⁸ Released in October 1946, the paper claimed that, while many of Canada’s senior military advisers understood the interdependence of the two countries in continental security, many Canadians opposed any American military presence in the Arctic during peacetime lest it erode Canadian sovereignty. The U.S., however, did not want to challenge Canada’s position in the Arctic. While the American government might think that the Canadians had not done enough to effectively occupy the region, “in light of the latter decision [East Greenland], we are forced to conclude that the Canadian claim to sovereignty over the entire American Arctic would be sustained by an international judicial body.”¹²⁹

The Air Transport Command report listed Prince Patrick Island, Banks Island and Grant Land as the only locations that the American government could occupy with any hope of making a legal defence of its actions. While such an occupation might be technically legal, the violation of Canadian territorial rights “would lead to repercussions so severe that the violation, except in the case of emergency, would not be worth it.”

¹²⁷ *Report on the Arctic, Atlantic Division Air Transport Command*, Headquarters, Atlantic-Division Air Transport Command, Report on the Arctic, 1946, RG 319, Entry 82 (A1), Box 2975.

¹²⁸ *Problems of Canadian-United States Cooperation in the Arctic*, Headquarters, Atlantic Division, Air Transport Command, 29 October 1946, RG 319, Entry 82 (A1), Box 2785.

¹²⁹ The report went on to list the Northwest Territories permits required before any foreigner could enter the Canadian Arctic, the creation of an Arctic Game Preserve and the establishment of police posts as signs of Canada’s occupation of the region. The report concluded that even in areas only occasionally patrolled by the RCMP an international tribunal would accept this activity as “sufficient to fix sovereignty.”

The report stressed that the United States should not undertake a unilateral program of polar defence. Cooperation was preferable, even if this meant grappling with Canada's sovereignty concerns in ways that did not prejudice American interpretations of international law. In short, the U.S. could not accept the sector principle, but it also did not want to challenge Canada's sovereignty.

Shelagh Grant used the October 1946 report on the problems of Canadian-American defence cooperation in the Arctic as proof of diabolical American intentions. In her view, the Americans consistently considered undertaking the defence of the Arctic unilaterally and thought seriously of annexing certain Canadian islands.¹³⁰ This judgement stems from a problematic reading of the primary sources. In the end, this was a low-level planning document prepared by a low-ranking officer attached to a unit that was one small part of USAAF. "Sweeping internally generated 'think' pieces, discussing hypothetical situations does not represent actual policy," David Bercuson explained in a review of Grant's book. "In fact, there is not a shred of evidence that any top-level US policy body ever disputed Canada's claims to the Arctic Archipelago."¹³¹ While the paper investigated unilateral action in the Canadian Arctic, it actually concluded that Canadian sovereignty must be respected, even informally recognized by Washington. The report advocated cooperation, not coercion or intimidation.

The majority of Canadian officials understood that the Americans would not approve the sector principle. U.S. proposals never suggested the acceptance of the principle and often implicitly rejected the theory. One of the clearest examples of this

¹³⁰ Grant, *Sovereignty or Security?*, 67.

¹³¹ David Bercuson, "Review of *Sovereignty or Security? Government Policy in the Canadian North, 1936-1950*," *The Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 70 (December 1989): 587.

came in September 1946, when the American section of the PJBD announced the intention of the United States to establish a Great Circle Flying Route from the West Coast to Tokyo. In presenting the proposal, General Henry explained to the Canadian Section:

that these weather planes which would be doing a great deal of flying in the Arctic would not fly over territory between 60° and 142° without permission from Canada. The State Department Representative said that this was not to be construed as acceptance by the United States Government of the Sector Theory and intimated that the State Department was concerned about the implication of this Theory in other parts of the world. Possibly the selection of 142° as the Western limit rather than 141° which is the boundary between Alaska and Canada, was made so as to avoid giving support to the Sector principle. In any event, it is a matter of satisfaction that these planes will stay out of this territory in question unless Canadian permission is obtained. Canadian claims in this area are at least implicitly recognized.¹³²

Like Hume Wrong, most officials in External Affairs recognized American concerns about the sector principle in the Antarctic and suggested not placing the U.S. government in a position where it had to officially reject Canada's application of the theory in the Arctic.¹³³

Despite the desire of several prominent officials to adopt an activist approach to Arctic sovereignty, other public servants intervened before damage was done to the Canadian case. On 8 May 1946, E.R. Hopkins, a member of External Affairs' Third Political Division, advised that "we should not raise any question concerning our sovereignty in the Arctic in advance of necessity." It did not make legal sense to cast

¹³² Memorandum for File: "Canadian Sovereignty in the Arctic," 25 September 1946, LAC, RG 25, PJBD File 113; Throughout 1946, the USAAF instructed all crews participating in Operation Polaris to remain within the area bounded by 60 degrees W and 142 degrees W. *SAC Historical Material*, Strategic Air Command, 4 October 1946, OI No. 2, NARA, RG 27, Entry 5, Box 1, Air Force.

¹³³ *United States Claims in the Antarctic*, Note for Mr. Wrong from R.A.J. Phillips, 12 June 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40.

doubt about Canada's own claims. Instead, the government required time to consolidate its knowledge about Arctic sovereignty and establish a firm position before it made any decision.¹³⁴ Since the days of O.D Skelton, External Affairs had promised to update its file on sovereignty in the North. By the summer of 1946, the department still had done nothing.¹³⁵ The government accepted Hopkins suggestion and soon officials started to articulate different ways to fortify Canada's claims.

Debating the Options

Given the relatively permanent nature of the Arctic weather stations and the long-term plan proposed by the Americans, the most substantive discussions revolved around this proposed program. A number of public servants believed that Canada should take full responsibility for the weather stations, erecting and operating all of the facilities itself. The Northwest Territories Council questioned why Canada, after spending an obscene amount of money buying back all the wartime American bases in the North, would once again invite the U.S. into the region?¹³⁶ Canada might as well construct, operate, supply and man the stations on her own, rather than spend money to purchase them from the U.S. later.¹³⁷ The Minister of Mines and Resources took this idea seriously and rationalized to External Affairs that:

¹³⁴ Memorandum from E.E. Hopkins, Legal Division, to Head, Third Political Division, 8 May 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1547. The Department of Mines and Resources was particularly annoyed by this.

¹³⁵ Deputy Commissioner to Dr. Camsell, Re – Sovereignty in the Arctic, LAC, RG 85, vol. 823, file 7140, 11 May 1946.

¹³⁶ J.G. Wright to R.A. Gibson, 18 May 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40.

¹³⁷ J.G. Wright, Acting Superintendent of the Eastern Arctic, to R.A Gibson, Director, Northwest Territories Council, 18 May 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40, pt. 1.

Canada should establish and operate any necessary stations even if U.S. official publications admit Canada's sovereignty. This looks like one of those defence (?) proposals that seem as though we were getting everything for nothing at the beginning and then we wake up after a while to find that the U.S. Senate has turned everything upside down and that the U.S diplomats are back again to ask us to pay for work we could have done better and more cheaply ourselves."¹³⁸

After the joint weather stations conference in May, J.G. Wright, the Acting Superintendent of the Eastern Arctic, proposed that if Canada scraped the bottom of the barrel in the Meteorological Service and the military it might be able to find enough personnel to operate the stations.¹³⁹

Several Canadian officials recognized that it would be impossible for Canada to independently establish and operate such stations in the Arctic. Representatives from Canada's Meteorological Service complained that to supply the necessary personnel to operate the proposed station, they would have to close at least one, and possibly two, current stations. Additionally, they doubted the likelihood of recruiting enough qualified personnel to staff all of the proposed Arctic stations. Andrew Thomson and Commander Edwards noted that Canada's position on sovereignty seemed "unduly cautious." Edwards suggested that Canada really only needed to supply three of the ten staff members when the first stations were established. In the ensuing years, this number could increase so that Canadians made up at least half of all weather station personnel.¹⁴⁰ In his sober appraisal, this personnel ratio would effectively protect Canada's claims.

¹³⁸ Wright, Department of Mines and Resources to Head, Third Political Division, 20 May 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1550.

¹³⁹ Memorandum by the Department of Mines and Resources, 18 May 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1550-1554.

¹⁴⁰ Andrew Thomson to R.M. Macdonnell, 18 May 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40.

Other officials worried about the costs of the project. Estimates for the construction of each station hovered around \$200,000, and planners estimated annual operating costs of \$465,000.¹⁴¹ During the war Canada ran up a debt of \$16,807,000,000¹⁴² and by 1946 the Federal deficit remained at \$2,452,000,000.¹⁴³ The costs of Arctic defence seemed like an unnecessary burden to bear alone, especially when the U.S. Weather Bureau received substantial financing to build the stations. Furthermore, what would paying for the stations mean if Canada could not find sufficient personnel to operate them? How would the Canadians supply these stations without the assistance of the United States Navy and Air Force? The Canadian Navy was noticeably absent in the Arctic and the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) did not have the capacity to supply the stations by air. Creating a Canadian transport capacity in the Arctic would require time and money, both of which were in short supply. All of these factors pointed to one obvious solution: Canada needed to cooperate with the Americans.

At the end of May, the Department of External Affairs produced a memorandum discussing the different courses of action available to Canada.¹⁴⁴ Either the U.S. or Canada could undertake the weather station program independently, although sovereignty concerns and the huge price tag made this option unattractive. The King

¹⁴¹ External Affairs Memorandum for Cabinet Defence Committee, United States Prospects for Arctic Weather Stations, 21 May 1946, LAC, RG 25, Vol. 3347, File 9061-A-40.

¹⁴² Lajeunesse, "The True North As Long As It's Free: The Canadian Policy Deficit 1945-1985," 15.

¹⁴³ Canada, Department of Finance, *Federal Budget of Canada: 1946* (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, 1946), 6.

¹⁴⁴ External Affairs Memorandum for Cabinet Defence Committee, Subject: United States proposals for an Arctic Weather Station Programme, 30 May 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40. The report outlined the benefits of the program, underlining that these stations would supply meteorological information needed for civil aviation, provide intelligence for Service Departments undertaking future exercises in the North, offer bases from which further study of the Arctic could be undertaken, and create the occupation necessary to halt encroachment by foreign powers in the region. The weather stations program could, however, endanger Canadian sovereignty in the region if the United States was given to long of a leash.

government could refuse to cooperate with the project, although this would elicit a strong reaction from the U.S. and, in a worst case scenario, could lead to unilateral American action. The Canadians might defer decision on the program until a joint planning group could go over the plans and establish the specific parameters of the project. Finally, approval could be given immediately for the program, with the stipulation that it be a joint project with as many Canadian observers as possible.¹⁴⁵

None of the courses of action did enough to protect Canada's sovereignty in External Affairs' opinion. It wanted to create a set of guidelines for the weather station program that would safeguard Canada's claims and control over the Arctic. Acknowledging U.S. assurances that Canadian sovereignty would not be threatened, the Department suggested that the weather stations program be approved as a joint project so long as Canada controlled the stations, the U.S. had no vested interests or claims in the facilities, Canadians replaced American personnel as soon as possible, and the two countries shared the annual operating costs.¹⁴⁶ Such an approach is reflective of the steps taken during the final years of the war to gain control of the defence projects in the Northwest. Using these tested methods, which resembled those adopted with the Northwest defence projects late in the war, the Canadians hoped to secure their sovereignty.

A report prepared under the auspices of the Vice Chief of the General Staff, Major General D.C Spry, listed the same possible courses of action as the External Affairs memorandum. The general embraced the idea of establishing a clear set of

¹⁴⁵ External Affairs Memorandum for Cabinet Defence Committee, Subject: United States proposals for an Arctic Weather Station Programme, 30 May 1946, LAC, RG 25, Vol. 3347, File 9061-A-40.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

formal guidelines for all defence projects in the North. Spry added that the Americans should be required to seek permission before starting any exercise or project on or over Canadian territory, that the majority of personnel involved at permanent installations be Canadian, that Canadians participate in all projects (even if only as observers), and that any publicity on the projects stress their joint nature.¹⁴⁷ The Cabinet Defence Committee accepted his recommendations at its meeting on 6 June 1946.¹⁴⁸ At last, the Canadians seemed ready to offer the Americans a positive answer on their proposals for defence projects in the Arctic.

Deferring the Decision

As Canadian officials discussed their preferred course of action, the United States attempted to hasten a Canadian decision. At first the Americans tried to alleviate Canadian concerns by making the northern defence plans appear less threatening. For instance, the original plan for the weather stations program called for extensive air facilities at the Melville Island site. In early June, the Americans informed the Canadian government that “this programme has now been scaled down considerably. Strategic Air Command have been put in charge instead of Air Transport Command and they do things more simply than the somewhat grandiose Air Transport people.” Strategic Air Command downgraded the proposed permanent airstrips to small scale temporary

¹⁴⁷*Sovereignty in the Canadian Arctic in Relation to Joint Defence Undertakings*, Memorandum from Department of National Defence to Cabinet Defence Committee, 18 May 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1555-1561; Bercuson, “Continental Defence and Arctic Sovereignty, 1945-1950,” 157-158.

¹⁴⁸ “The Associate Under Secretary of State for External Affairs observed that Canada’s claim was somewhat better established than might appear from the memorandum. It could be said that our claims had never been seriously contested. In his opinion, the challenge of sovereignty was less serious than the user’s rights which would come about through occupancy.” (Hume Wrong) Cabinet Defence Committee Minutes, 6 June 1946, LAC, RG 25, PJBD File 113.

ones.¹⁴⁹ When these changes failed to elicit a quick and favourable Canadian response, the U.S. government began to apply more pressure to expedite the Canadian decision.¹⁵⁰

Unwilling to make a decision without King, who was in England at the time, the Cabinet decided to defer decision on the weather stations at their meeting on 12 June 1946.¹⁵¹ As the month went on, worries continued to surface about Canada's interests and continental security. On 21 June Pearson told Norman Robertson that he asked "the War Department...not press us too hard with urgent requests for quick action in the field of defence in the North. I said that, while developments in the north were perhaps relatively small items in the defence plans of this country, they were for us matters of great importance, strategically and politically."¹⁵² In a letter to Albert Heeney, Hume Wrong noted that the U.S. utilized "a number of different channels in an effort to extract a prompt and favourable decision." The Canadian government was still in a precarious position.¹⁵³

Prime Minister King returned from a trip to London to find the weather stations as one of the most pressing issues on his agenda. After attending a meeting of Cabinet, King wrote in his diary that:

Before Council was over, the question was brought up of the U.S. seeking to get certain weather stations established in our territory and

¹⁴⁹ *Weather Stations in the Arctic*, Memorandum for Hume Wrong, Mr. Heeney, Colonel Gill and PJBD File, 5 June 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40.

¹⁵⁰ Memo for U.S. Ambassador by Lewis Clark, 20 June 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40.

¹⁵¹ Bercuson, "Continental Defence and Arctic Sovereignty, 1945-1950," 158.

¹⁵² Pearson to Robertson, 21 June 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40.

¹⁵³ Hume Wrong to Albert Heeney, 24 June 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40. If it allowed the Americans into the Arctic, even on joint projects, Canadian sovereignty might be questioned as incomplete. If, however, the Canadians did not allow the Americans to establish posts "to which they attach a high degree of importance, they may seek to attain their ends eventually by claiming sovereignty themselves and treating some of the islands – especially those far from police and trading posts and not covered by Canadian patrols – as their own territory by right of occupation."

reference was made to a discussion of Council during my absence as to not allowing the Americans the use of Canadian territory for the protection of their own country. Gardiner had suggested that the exchange be made of the Panhandle on the Pacific Coast or certain islands on the North. I am not at all sure that the pan handle is not in many respects a very strong protection to our own country. However, apart from this, I told Council what I had said in conference with Attlee, Lord Addison and Ismay with respect to the arrangements that would have to be made on this continent between the Americans and ourselves for the protection of North America; that the British admitted they could not hope to hold their own against Russia without the aid of the U.S. Also the belief was very strongly that the only war that was likely to come in the future would be a war with Russia and would be a war for world conquest. In overtaking the U.S. the Russians would make the base of operations - Canada, and on the whole we had to re-orient all our ideas about protection. I insisted there should be the fullest discussion with the British before we made any agreement with the U.S. which might affect the general plan, and also that we were not to be rushed in settlement on what was to be done. I said this whole matter needed the fullest possible discussion.¹⁵⁴

King clearly understood the magnitude of the situation. Though he considered continental defence to be necessary, he would not rush into a decision without taking careful steps to protect his country's interests - and his legacy.

At a Cabinet meeting on 27 June, King and his ministers decided to deny the American request to start the weather station program that summer.¹⁵⁵ The Prime Minister emphasized that the government required more time to study the general problem of continental defence and to formulate a coherent policy.¹⁵⁶ Despite the merits of the program, the absence of formal guidelines regulating the Canadian-American defence relationship and unresolved questions about the extent of Canada's participation

¹⁵⁴ William Lyon Mackenzie King, *King Diaries*, Vol. 154, 1 June-15 August 1946, entry for 20 June 1946, 572.

¹⁵⁵ Memo for file by R.M. Macdonnell, 28 June 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40.

¹⁵⁶ *U.S Request for Arctic Weather Station*, Memorandum by Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, 28 June 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1571.

in the project troubled the government.¹⁵⁷ King would not take risks without an urgent threat forcing Canada's hand. His government adopted a cautious policy of delaying decisions on continental defence until the complex situation could be sorted out to Canada's benefit.

On 2 July R.M. Macdonnell informed a disappointed Lewis Clark about the Canadian decision over the telephone, carefully noting that this "did not rule out future consideration of the project." In his memorandum describing the Canadian decision, Macdonnell argued that "there were not lacking indications of developments not calculated to increase Canadian confidence in the intentions of some United States officials. Some irresponsible enthusiasts in lower levels in Washington were known to have made ill considered remarks about the possibility of raising the Stars and Stripes in unoccupied Arctic territory." The Americans had already collected vast amounts of material for the project and started to recruit personnel for service in the Arctic. These hasty actions did little to alleviate Canadian concern about American intentions. After hearing the decision, Clark relayed the disappointment of the U.S. government and Macdonnell concluded that the Americans would continue to place pressure on the Canadian government to accept defence plans.¹⁵⁸

As the summer months wore on, pressure on the Canadian government grew as the press slowly learned more about continental defence planning and the Arctic.¹⁵⁹ In June, Kenneth R. Wilson's *Financial Post* article appeared with the long and misleading title "Canada 'Another Belgium' In U.S. Air Bases Proposal? Hear Washington Insists

¹⁵⁷ Note for Mr. Pearson from R.A.J. Phillips, 30 October 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40.

¹⁵⁸ Memorandum from R.M. Macdonnell, 4 July 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40.

¹⁵⁹ Bercuson, "Continental Defence and Arctic Sovereignty, 1945-1950," 159.

Dominion's Northern Frontier be Fortified - 'Atomic Age Maginot Line' is Feared." Wilson wrote that the United States offered Canada a 'virtual ultimatum' to establish a massive air defence system in the North. He noted that the King government denied British proposals for the establishment of a United Kingdom air training scheme in Canada prior to the war, but proved unwilling or unable to reject much more intrusive American defence plans in peacetime.¹⁶⁰ Wilson argued that Canada should cooperate with the U.S., but also invest more resources in the North to safeguard its sovereignty.

Wilson's article enraged King and his advisers. Macdonnell characterized the article as "irresponsible and mischievous" and described the author's assertion that the Americans gave Canada an ultimatum as "absurd."¹⁶¹ King decided that the situation called for a public denouncement of the story in the House of Commons. On 28 June, the Prime Minister reassured parliament that "this wholly misleading article contains so many serious inaccuracies that I am bound to take exception to it in the strongest terms. It is, of course, absurd to imagine that the government of the United States would present anything that could, by any stretch of the imagination, be described as an ultimatum."¹⁶² King explained that the PJBD was investigating joint defence problems, and he shared nothing more.

Despite King's public attack on his article, Wilson published another piece on 20 July entitled "Ottawa Scotches U.S. Plan to Man Weather Bases in Canadian Arctic."

¹⁶⁰ K. R. Wilson, "Canada 'Another Belgium' In U.S. Air Bases Proposal? Hear Washington Insists Dominion's Northern Frontier be Fortified - 'Atomic Age Maginot Line' is Feared," *The Financial Post*, 29 June 1946.

¹⁶¹ R.M. Macdonnell, Memorandum for the Prime Minister, 27 June 1946, LAC, RG 25, Acc. 84-85/226, Vol. II, File 9061-40.

¹⁶² House of Commons *Debates*, 28 June 1946, pp. 2987-2988.

Having gained access to insider information, Wilson provided detail about the proposed project and Ottawa's rejection of it.¹⁶³ An editorial emphasized that Wilson had received his information from "unimpeachable quarters" and that there "can now be no doubt whatever that very considerable pressures are being exerted on Canada by the United States" for defence projects in the North. The editorial concluded that "the moral is clear: Canada must quickly get a policy of her own for developing the North or someone else may insist on doing it for us."¹⁶⁴

Pearson joined the public discussion with his 1946 article on the Canadian North in the popular journal *Foreign Affairs*, which tried to alleviate some of the sovereignty concerns raised in the press.¹⁶⁵ Pearson explained that Canada used the sector principle to claim not only Canada's northern mainland, but also the islands and the frozen sea up to the North Pole – the first public indication of maritime claims. He emphasized the importance of continued cooperation in the Arctic, with the U.S. and other interested nations.¹⁶⁶ The article left the reader with the distinct impression that the Americans respected Canada's claims, but did not dispel all reporters' concerns about American interests in the region.

While the Canadian government dealt with difficult questions on the home front, the Americans shifted tactics. In August and September American officials stopped pressuring the Canadians to accept continental defence proposals. Instead, they set about

¹⁶³ Kenneth Wilson, "Ottawa Scotches U.S. Plan to Man Weather Bases in Canadian Arctic," *Financial Post*, 20 July 1946.

¹⁶⁴ *Financial Post*, 20 July 1946.

¹⁶⁵ Gordon Smith was not sure whether he had the government's blessing or not for this article.

¹⁶⁶ L. B. Pearson, "Canada Looks 'Down North'," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 24, No. 4, (July, 1946), pp. 638-647.

reassuring their Canadian counterparts. Major General Victor Henry wrote to Graham Parsons and explained why he felt the Canadians resisted the American defence plans. He argued that Canada's response was shaped by the large costs, the perceived threat to sovereignty, the possibility of negative public opinion, unwillingness to desert the Commonwealth in favour of the U.S., and the fear of becoming another Belgium. To fix these insecurities, he suggested, "Canadian public opinion must be convinced of a potential threat before the Dominion Government will feel fully justified in carrying out this new, and from a Canadian point of view, revolutionary policy." Henry urged that the two countries reach an agreement in principle to alleviate Canadian fears.¹⁶⁷

In early September, General Henry attempted to convince the Canadian section of the PJBD to sign on to continental defence. The international situation dictated that the "security of the homeland of both Canada and the United States is unalterably bound up one with the other and will require the utmost of coordination." He emphasized that the American High Command did not want to violate Canada's sovereignty or its rights: it was a purely military problem that required joint defence cooperation. Henry admitted that the civilian benefits of the weather stations also "fit into the military picture."¹⁶⁸ Nevertheless, the Canadians continued to defer their decision.

As King struggled to manage the situation, Bernard Montgomery, the chief of the Imperial General Staff, paid a visit to Canada and met with the Prime Minister and key military personnel. The old soldier, whom King held in high regard, insisted that there would be another war in ten to fifteen years. "There was no possibility of Russia

¹⁶⁷ *United States – Canadian Relations*, 23 August 1946 and attached oral message, NARA, RG 59, Series PJBD, vol. 10, file "Correspondence – 1946."

¹⁶⁸ Memo for members of PJBD by Maj. Gen. Henry, 9 September 1946, DHH File 955.013 (D10), Vol. 5.

attempting to invade the North American continent at any time during the next fifteen years,” Montgomery noted, “but ... she might attempt air raids either direct or from a base, or bases, established in the Arctic Islands.”¹⁶⁹ Although the inaccessibility of the North provided some security for the continent, Montgomery thought that an air defence scheme should be implemented to thwart any Soviet raid across the northern approaches. When Montgomery hinted that Canadians should pay for the scheme, King told him “all development in the Canadian North was frightfully expensive, and he also explained the difficulty of securing large appropriations from Parliament for this purpose without disclosing the reason these appropriations were necessary.”¹⁷⁰ Still, King kept the Americans waiting.

Although the Canadian government stubbornly refused to accept continental defence in principle and withheld permission for permanent projects like the weather stations, they appeased the Americans by approving less ambitious projects in the summer of 1946. Despite misgivings about the Americans overflying the Arctic, the Cabinet Defence Committee (CDC) considered the proposal for Operation *Polaris*. According to secretary J.W.C Barclay, the Committee felt that since “these proposed flights would be primarily concerned with gaining experience in the operation of long range aircraft in the Arctic and the investigation of an analysis of matters relating hereto, the establishment of this air route would prove advantageous.”¹⁷¹ The CDC asked that publicity concerning the project be kept to a bare minimum, reflecting the Canadian

¹⁶⁹ Smith, *Diplomacy of Fear*, 160.

¹⁷⁰ Charles Foulkes, Notes on Conference, Prime Minister-Field Marshall Montgomery, 10 September 1946, *King Papers*, 389: C274007-13, cited in Smith, *Diplomacy of Fear*, 160.

¹⁷¹ Memorandum from Secretary, Chiefs of Staff Committee, Cabinet Defence Committee, 3 June 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1564-1565.

government's extraordinary sensitivity about the public's reaction to any disclosure of American presence in the North.¹⁷² Still, the Canadians, like their American counterparts, thought that if war broke out the type of experience provided by *Polaris* would be essential.

The Canadians granted permission for Operation *Polaris* on 8 June 1946. Macdonnell supported General Spry's recommendation that "careful attention should be given to the form in which such permission is granted and to the manner in which such undertakings are carried out."¹⁷³ He made it clear in his letter that the government only approved the project as laid out by General Henry on 30 April. He also mentioned that "it would be appreciated if an opportunity could be provided for the participation of Canadian observers in the flights in order to gain experience of mutual benefit."¹⁷⁴ The Americans accepted the restrictions placed on publicity and agreed to Canadian observers.

In the middle of June the Canadian government also approved Operation *Nanook*, the American naval exercise proposed earlier that year. The Canadians wanted the USN to drop the 'Operation Nanook' title for the project and adopt something less military. This way, Canadian officials hoped that the press might emphasize the scientific nature of the operation. They also requested that publicity be strictly regulated and that any proposed press releases be passed along to them. Finally, the Canadians requested that

¹⁷² Bercuson, "Continental Defence and Arctic Sovereignty, 1945-1950," 162.

¹⁷³ *Sovereignty in the Canadian Arctic in Relation to Joint Defence Undertakings*, Memorandum from Department of National Defence to Cabinet Defence Committee, 18 May 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1559.

¹⁷⁴ Secretary, Canadian Section, PJBD to Senior United States Army Member, PJBD, 8 June 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1566-1567.

the Marine landing component of the operation be confined to Greenland. If the U.S. needed to land Marines somewhere in the Canadian Arctic, the Canadians requested Dundas Harbour, where an RCMP detachment demonstrated Canadian sovereignty.¹⁷⁵

The Canadian decision to allow the United States to continue to operate certain weather stations in the southern portion of the Canadian North also encouraged the Americans. They had abandoned most of the weather stations established for the Crimson Route following the war, but small numbers of U.S. personnel still operated several sites. On 14 August 1946, Major General Henry requested permission for the United States to continue running weather stations at Padloping and Frobisher Bay on Baffin Island; Indian House Lake, Mingan, Fort Chimo and Mecatina in Quebec; and Cape Harrison in Labrador.¹⁷⁶ In early September the issue came before the Chiefs of Staff Committee, which agreed to allow the U.S. to continue operating the requested stations, as well as one at River Clyde, on a temporary basis. The Chiefs of Staff also wanted the Americans to use Canadian civilian personnel whenever possible. Canada's ultimate goal remained to operate all of these stations itself.¹⁷⁷ In the meantime, the Canadians approved continued American involvement on 24 September.¹⁷⁸

The Canadian military also began to strengthen its capabilities in the Arctic. In the summer of 1946 the RCAF began to undertake more regular flight missions over the

¹⁷⁵ A/Lt. Cdr. J. W. C. Barclay, Secretary Chiefs of Staff Committee (CSC), to Secretary, Canadian Section PJBD, 19 June 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-B-40; SS EA to Canadian Ambassador Washington, No. EX-1583, 20 June 1946, LAC, RG 25, PJBD File 113.

¹⁷⁶ Memo drafted by Macdonnell, for Chiefs of Staff Committee, 29 August 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40. See also Chiefs of Staff Committee papers, brief for CSC on *U.S. Meteorological Installations in Canada and Labrador*, DHH File 112.3M2 (D117); U.S. Army Progress Report, 13 September 1946, DHH File 955.013 (D10), Vol. 5.

¹⁷⁷ Extract from minutes of the 362nd meeting of the CSC, 5 September 1946, DHH File 112.3M2 (D331).

¹⁷⁸ Macdonnell to Henry, 24 September 1946, LAC, RG 85, vol. 823, file 7140.

region. Its previous experience was limited. In 1922 and 1928 representatives from the Canadian air force first travelled to the Arctic islands to investigate the feasibility of air operations. Not until 1943, however, did the RCAF actually fly over the archipelago.¹⁷⁹ In August 1946, an RCAF B29 covered 3,467 nautical miles in twenty hours and explored some of the most remote and inaccessible parts of the Arctic, becoming the first plane to traverse some of the islands in the summer months.¹⁸⁰ The crew noted inaccurate mapping and suggested that Borden Island might be two islands. This revealed how little the Canadians knew about their Arctic, and reaffirmed fears that the Americans or another country might find undiscovered islands in the archipelago.¹⁸¹

Bringing the Canadians to the Table

As fall began the Americans grew more restless for action on the larger continental defence projects. On 19 September 1946 the PJBD amended its 35th Recommendation to better protect the sovereignty of both countries.¹⁸² King, however, still refused to sign off on the recommendation. He hoped to gain a better understanding of American defence plans for the Arctic before he agreed to any defence agreement. The Canadians continued to wonder if their ally planned on constructing the air defences in the Arctic called for by the MCC.

¹⁷⁹ Royal Canadian Air Force Operations in the Arctic Islands, DHH 75-50.

¹⁸⁰ *B 29 Operations, Report on Reconnaissance of the Canadian Archipelago, Made During Flight No. 16, 16-17 August 1946*, K.R Greenway, Liaison Officer, B. 29 Detachment, Edmonton, 29 August 1946, DHH 75-50; Another Canadian operation in June 1946 also travelled throughout the Western Arctic in several small aircraft, Royal Canadian Air Force Operations in the Arctic Islands, DHH 75-50.

¹⁸¹ The Canadian government also approved the establishment of the Joint Services Experimental Testing Station at Fort Churchill for the winter of 1946-1947.

¹⁸² Memorandum for the Cabinet, 21 October 1946, LAC, RG 2, vol. 74, file D-19-2.

By October, Dean Acheson, the acting Secretary of State, suggested to President Truman that the Canadians might require a nudge before they agreed to defence collaboration. “The planning and application of joint defence measures remains the most active of our current relations with Canada,” Acheson explained. “Our military authorities are naturally insistent on closing the gap between Alaska and Greenland and on pushing the defence of our industrial centers north of our border. For this we are dependent on the cooperation of the Canadian government.” Acheson understood that this decision was a matter of great importance to the Canadians, who worried about the political risk and the danger it posed to their sovereignty.¹⁸³ He urged the President to tell King that the civilian members of the U.S. Administration, and not just the military, wanted more defence cooperation.¹⁸⁴

As the State Department grew increasingly anxious, the Canadian government tried to figure out what American defence planners required of Canada. Hume Wrong observed that the Canadians still did not have a very clear understanding of U.S. planning or American conclusions about the Soviet threat. Wrong also commented to King that there “is still...a lot to be learned in Washington about our position and our problems.” Closer military cooperation was necessary, but Wrong did not believe that such a relationship should be based on the current defence appreciation created by the

¹⁸³ Memorandum by the acting secretary of state to president Truman, 1 October 1946, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, vol. 5*, (Washington: USGPO, 1969), 55.

¹⁸⁴ Memorandum by the acting secretary of state to president Truman, 26 October 1946, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, vol. 5*, (Washington: USGPO, 1969), 57.

MCC.¹⁸⁵ He urged King to tell the President that the Canadians wanted high level diplomatic discussions.

During a meeting at the White House on 28 October 1946, Truman attempted to get King on the same page about continental defence. The President stressed the need for cooperation, and brought up the Arctic weather stations and the U.S. plans for a large air base at Goose Bay, Labrador. Truman approached the situation calmly and did not place undue pressure on the Prime Minister. The next day, however, King received an oral communiqué from the President that presented quite a different message. Truman urged the Canadians to quickly approve the defence scheme created by the MCC and to concur to PJBD Recommendation 35 and its principles regulating continental defence.¹⁸⁶

On 12 November 1946, Lester Pearson responded. Any discussion on defence needed to take into consideration the world political situation, and the fact that Canada could not escape a global conflict if one broke out. It would be extremely difficult to work out a tolerable relationship with the Soviet Union as long as it was “governed by ruthless despots” and inhabited by “millions of fighting men to whom life is hard and cheap.” War remained unlikely in the next few years, but “the way the world is now going, there can only be one ultimate result – war.”¹⁸⁷ Canada had obligations in continental defence, Pearson stressed, and had to cooperate with the Americans. It was time to commit.

¹⁸⁵ Memorandum from Ambassador to the United States to Prime Minister, 26 October 1946, *DCER Volume 12, 1946*, 1654-1658.

¹⁸⁶ Jockel, *No Boundaries Upstairs*, 25-26.

¹⁸⁷ Memorandum from the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to the Prime Minister, 12 November 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1670-1672.

American threat assessments remained more alarmist than those prepared by Canadians. Senior American military men publically advocated a large-scale Arctic air defence system. A speech by General Kenney, Commander of Strategic Air Command, in mid-November gave the Canadians a glimpse of American strategic thinking. He envisaged a war beginning with a series of simultaneous attacks in the model of Pearl Harbor designed to knock out the centers of production. Keeney told his audience to:

Turn to the north. There on the other side of the Polar Basin are four-fifths of the people of the world in Europe and Asia. There is where the attack will come from if some future Hitler makes a bid for world dominion...And make no mistake – we will be the primary target for the modern 10,000 mile bomber and its load of atomic bombs or bacteria or incendiaries or whatever weapons of mass destruction are in vogue at that time...It does not take much imagination to see an avalanche of devastation launched across the Polar Basin to take out our centers of industry and population at a single blow.

Four of the bombs used on Hiroshima could destroy all of New York City. With a few hundred the casualty list across the United States could reach 25,000,000.¹⁸⁸ These statements concerned the Canadians, who saw the threat of enemy action as well as an ally potentially interested in establishing massive air defences in Canada's Arctic.

During meetings of the Cabinet Defence Committee on 14 and 15 November, officials debated Canada's next move. They urged that Canada accept Recommendation 35 to give the two countries some principles on cooperation with which to work. Before Canada made any decision on defence collaboration, however, diplomatic negotiations were needed. Air Marshall Robert Leckie vehemently disagreed with Air Vice Marshall Wilfred Curtis, the Canadian chairman of the MCC, who supported more expansive air

¹⁸⁸ Mr. Wrong to Mr. Pearson, 16 November 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3346, file 9061-40.

defence. While most Canadian planners anticipated that any assault on North America would be diversionary, the Americans wanted to prepare for a large-scale attack. Leckie told the assembled senior officials that he could not accept the financial implications of the program envisioned by the MCC, and suggested Canada push for more modest plans. Brooke Claxton, who in a month would become the Minister of National Defence, reminded all present of the fundamental difference between the viewpoints of the Americans and Canadians.¹⁸⁹ In the end, the Canadians wanted to accept the principles of defence cooperation as proposed by the PJBD, but remained wary of American intentions for the Arctic.

On 21 November 1946, senior Canadian and American officials, led by Pearson and Atherton, met to lay the groundwork for high-level defence discussions. The group decided that the discussion would seek to answer Canadian concerns and include topics such as defence estimates of enemy capabilities, global strategy, and details on continental defence planning.¹⁹⁰ The Americans wished to avoid discussing Arctic sovereignty and particularly the sector principle,¹⁹¹ again indicating that this was not a basis upon which they could officially support Canada's claims. By the end of November, R.M. Macdonnell had finished his pivotal report on Soviet intentions, advocating a policy of firmness and cautious anticipation.¹⁹² The Canadians used the paper as the starting point for their discussions with the Americans.

¹⁸⁹ *Cabinet Conclusions*, 15 November 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1686-1695.

¹⁹⁰ Record of Conclusion, Informal Canada-United States Meeting, 21 November 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1699-1702.

¹⁹¹ Joint Defence Discussions, 21 November 1946, NARA, RG 59, PJBD Series, vol. 2, file Basic Papers.

¹⁹² 'Working Paper for use in Discussions with the United States,' 6 December 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1702-1707.

On 16 and 17 December 1946 senior Canadian officials found themselves sitting in the Chateau Laurier in Ottawa with their American counterparts, looking to hammer out a deal on bilateral defence cooperation. Canada, a country that traditionally favoured multilateral or tripartite agreements, had come to the negotiating table prepared to compromise. Of all the defence meetings between the Canadians and Americans following the war, this one stands out as the most important. Over two cold winter days, the allies worked out the principles for a defence relationship that would last for years and had a significant impact on Canadian interests and sovereignty. Out of the meeting emerged an informal relationship, based on careful negotiations and agreement. “In the all important area of joint defence planning, both sides agreed that all the defence plans were ‘somewhat utopian’ and that their implementation had to be ‘decided step by step,’ with the rate of implementation ‘under constant review,’” concluded David Bercuson.¹⁹³ The Canadians also discovered that the Americans had little interest in creating a vast air defence system, which undoubtedly soothed their anxieties.¹⁹⁴

The Americans conducted the meeting in a friendly and informal manner, sending some of their best men for the occasion - including George Keenan, the resident Russian expert.¹⁹⁵ Political scientist Denis Smith has asserted that “as the diplomatic catalyst of the policy of firmness, and the American diplomat most respected by the Canadian Department for his judgement of the Soviet Union, Keenan was an inspired

¹⁹³ Bercuson, “Continental Defence and Arctic Sovereignty, 1945-1950,” 161.

¹⁹⁴ Jockel, *No Boundaries Upstairs*, 28.

¹⁹⁵ Defence Cooperation Between the United States and Canada, Annex I: Copy of a telegram No. 1770 dated 19th December 1946 from Canada to the Dominions Office, Cabinet Defence Committee, 26 December 1946, PRO CAB 131/3 DO (46) 146.

choice for the American delegation.”¹⁹⁶ These men made a reasonable case and allowed the Canadians to draw their own conclusions. They did not attempt to “present demands or to insist on certain things being done.”¹⁹⁷ Indeed, the Americans behaved impeccably.

“So far from being in an excitable or panicky frame of mind, the Americans had shown themselves very cool, level headed and realistic,” a Canadian report on the meeting observed.¹⁹⁸ The American contingent told the Canadians that, while they did not believe a war would break out in the near future, measures should be taken to safeguard the continent. “In their general game of power politics Russians usually carried on with their bludgeoning tactics until ‘A quarter of an hour before midnight,’ and only modified their policy at the last minute.”¹⁹⁹ The North American continent required defences if they decided to go “five minutes past midnight.” The Americans believed that Arctic defences were long-term insurance, and they promised that any defence plan would proceed cautiously and gradually year by year, based on the international situation.²⁰⁰ The Canadians questioned the Americans extensively about their global strategy and were pleased to hear that the U.S. strategic focus remained offensive in

¹⁹⁶ Smith, *Diplomacy of Fear*, 175

¹⁹⁷ Memorandum from Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to the Prime Minister: Defence Discussions with the United States, 23 December 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1721-25.

¹⁹⁸ Defence Cooperation Between the United States and Canada, Annex I: Copy of a telegram No. 1770 dated 19th December 1946 from Canada to the Dominions Office, Cabinet Defence Committee, 26 December 1946, PRO CAB 131/3 DO (46) 146.

¹⁹⁹ Defence Cooperation Between the United States and Canada, Annex II: Copy of a telegram No. 1771 dated 19 December 1946, from Canada to Dominions Office, Cabinet Defence Committee, 26 December 1946, PRO CAB 131/3 DO (46) 146.

²⁰⁰ Defence Cooperation Between the United States and Canada, Annex I: Copy of a telegram No. 1770 dated 19th December 1946 from Canada to the Dominions Office, Cabinet Defence Committee, 26 December 1946, PRO CAB 131/3 DO (46) 146.

nature.²⁰¹ For the most part, Canadian and American officials at the meeting saw eye-to-eye on Soviet intentions and the steps required to counter the communist threat.

The Americans also told the Canadians exactly what they had in mind for the North. They did not want to dash into grandiose proposals, but “seemed as anxious as the Canadians to keep the whole business as modest as possible.”²⁰² The U.S. wanted weather and Loran stations in the Arctic, but Pearson acknowledged that these proposals were moderate and benign. Financing would be discussed for each specific proposal and allotted proportionately. “The general intention,” he explained, “would be that the Canadians should themselves finance in toto any measures which they themselves would have undertaken for their own purposes apart altogether from United States interest.”²⁰³ The American proposals would do little to burden Canada’s budget and they promised to assist in the development of the North.

Pearson felt that this quieter tempo on the part of the Americans resulted largely from six months stalling on the Canadian side.²⁰⁴ The Americans recognized Canadian insecurities about sovereignty and made the price of defence cooperation significantly easier to bear. They agreed on a policy of firmness and patience. Accordingly, Canada finally committed to a joint continental defence agreement. Canada’s *de jure*

²⁰¹ Defence Cooperation Between the United States and Canada, Annex II: Copy of a telegram No. 1771 dated 19 December 1946, from Canada to Dominions Office, Cabinet Defence Committee, 26 December 1946, PRO CAB 131/3 DO (46) 146.

²⁰² Defence Cooperation Between the United States and Canada, Annex I: Copy of a telegram No. 1770 dated 19th December 1946 from Canada to the Dominions Office, Cabinet Defence Committee, 26 December 1946, PRO CAB 131/3 DO (46) 146.

²⁰³ Defence Cooperation Between the United States and Canada, Annex II: Copy of a telegram No. 1771 dated 19 December 1946, from Canada to Dominions Office, Cabinet Defence Committee, 26 December 1946, PRO CAB 131/3 DO (46) 146.

²⁰⁴ Defence Cooperation Between the United States and Canada, Annex I: Copy of a telegram No. 1770 dated 19th December 1946 from Canada to the Dominions Office, Cabinet Defence Committee, 26 December 1946, PRO CAB 131/3 DO (46) 146.

sovereignty would be protected and its rights respected. As the defence relationship between the two countries began to heat up, however, and the Arctic became the scene of more activity, the Canadian government again worried about its *de facto* sovereignty. Paper agreements were important, but Canada still needed to maintain control of developments on the ground.

Chapter 3: Letting the Americans In

Making it Official: Announcing Defence Cooperation

After the Chateau Laurier meeting, the Canadian policy-makers lost some of their reservations about cooperating with the United States in continental defence. Worries about the Americans initiating large scale defence projects in the North of the type envisaged by the Military Cooperation Committee quickly disappeared. The British were also onside. Upon hearing about the Canadian decision to fully participate in continental defence, Lord Arthur Tedder, Chief of the Air Staff in England, argued that “the Chiefs of Staff saw no particular dangers and many advantages in the course which [the Canadians] had taken.” The situation would, of course, have to be watched and the Canadians needed to be careful not to devote too much of their effort and resources in the Arctic.²⁰⁵ Knowing that the British High Command supported a continental orientation, the Canadian government and military certainly felt more at ease embracing the defence relationship with the U.S.

On 16 January 1947 the Canadian Cabinet approved the final version of Recommendation 35 of the PJBD, which laid out regulatory principles for the continental defence projects. Renamed Recommendation 36, the document represented, in the words of historian David Bercuson, “an explicit U.S assurance to Canada that the United States had no wish to violate the de jure sovereignty Canada claimed over the north.”²⁰⁶ All defence projects would remain under the control of the host country, no permanent

²⁰⁵ Defence Committee Minutes, 2 January 1947, PRO CAB 131/5.

²⁰⁶ Bercuson, *Continental Defence and Arctic Sovereignty, 1945-1950*,” 161.

rights would be granted to the visiting forces, and both countries would study each project individually and approve all public statements about the defence projects.²⁰⁷ The Recommendation ensured that the principles of bilateral defence cooperation safeguarded Canada's sovereignty and protected its interests.

The Canadians and Americans had different views about the need to publicize this new defence relationship. This subject elicited more debate than any other topic at the Chateau Laurier meeting. While the Americans only wanted to allude to the Ogdensburg Agreement of 1940 in the press to emphasize the continuing nature of defence cooperation, "the Canadian representatives succeeded in convincing the United States representatives that because of the interest that had been displayed by the public in northern defence problems, it would be impossible to avoid some sort of statement at the forthcoming Session of Parliament."²⁰⁸ The Canadians desired a simple announcement that the two countries cooperated for defence purposes. They hoped that this would avoid provocative press reports calling into question Canada's sovereignty and its inability to withstand pressure from the Americans.

Of course, the press continued to speculate on the Canadian-American relationship. In December 1946 journalist Leslie Roberts claimed that Canada was far more concerned with American 'militarism' than Soviet expansionism. Roberts explained that "pressure has come from the American naval, military, and meteorological authorities who want to go ahead with their own plans without regard for our sovereignty." By January the article fell on the desk of the Acting High Commissioner

²⁰⁷ Memorandum for Cabinet, 21 October 1946, LAC, RG 2, vol. 74, file D-19-2.

²⁰⁸ Memorandum from Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to Prime Minister, 23 December 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1721-1725.

for Canada in Canberra, Australia. In a reply to the Commissioner's queries about the article, R.M. Macdonnell stated that "the attitude of the United States Government towards Canadian sovereignty could not be more reasonable and sympathetic and all our discussions with them on questions of joint defence have been carried on in an atmosphere of complete cordiality and reasonableness." Macdonnell quoted a recent report prepared by External Affairs, which acknowledged that "it is some years since there has been any table pounding in defence discussion between the two countries."²⁰⁹ Despite its inflammatory statements, however, the Canadian government did not believe that the article would do it great harm. Nevertheless, External Affairs recommended that Canada should issue a reasoned and carefully prepared publicity statement on its defence relationship with the United States.²¹⁰

On 12 February 1947 the Prime Minister and the President made joint statements about the general principles of defence cooperation. In his speech to parliament, King avoided controversial subjects like the sector principle, while insisting that Canada's *de jure* sovereignty had been secured. He explained that "as an underlying principle all cooperative arrangements will be without impairment of the control of either country over all activities in its territory." King also noted that the United States had not demanded air bases in the North, nor had they suggested the establishment of an "Arctic Maginot Line." He stressed that both countries simply wished to learn more about the

²⁰⁹ R.M. Macdonnell to the Acting High Commissioner for Canada, Canberra Australia, 16 January 1947, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3346, file 9061-40.

²¹⁰ Memorandum for the Prime Minister, 23 December 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3346, file 9061-40.

Arctic and gain experience in the region.²¹¹ The government maintained that the new northern program was primarily civilian in nature, with the armed forces assuming a supporting role.

After King announced in the House of Commons that sovereignty would be protected, the press started to support defence cooperation. On 14 February 1947 *The Times* wrote an article on North American security that emphasized the growing importance of the North and the interdependence of Canada and the U.S. The author noted that Canadian-American cooperation “is the formal expression of a geographical necessity and is wholly compatible with the United Nations Charter.”²¹² Canadian newspapers such as the *Montreal Star* echoed these sentiments.²¹³ With this support, Canadian decision-makers granted the U.S. permission to undertake more permanent defence programs in the North.

Establishing Control

By most accounts the U.S. military behaved responsibly in carrying out defence projects in the North after the summer of 1946. Relations remained generally positive between personnel on joint missions and the largest American effort, the naval cruise in the Arctic, had accomplished most of its objectives and adhered carefully to Canadian

²¹¹ Comments Made in the House of Commons Following the Agreed Statement on Defence, February 1947, LAC, RG 2, vol. 74, file D-19-2.

²¹² “North American Security,” *The Times*, 14 February 1947, LAC, RG 2, vol. 74, file D-19-2.

²¹³ “British Press Praises New Canada-US Pact,” *Montreal Star*, 14 February 1947; “Our Defence Can’t Wait,” *Montreal Star*, 14 February 1947; “Canada-U.S Defence: French Canadian Press Applauds Arrangement,” *Montreal Star*, 20 February 1947.

guidelines.²¹⁴ Regardless, many Canadian officials worried about Canada's ability to control current U.S. missions. While observers on the naval cruise did not condemn American actions, they noted the unwillingness of low ranking military personnel to wholeheartedly cooperate with the Canadians. Lt. W.E. Widdows revealed that "the Observers were treated with courtesy, but on the whole it was felt that they were considered merely as passengers. Information was never volunteered, and when given as a result of a direct question, seemed to be with reluctance."²¹⁵ Another observer, Lt. Dunn Lantier, complained that the Americans often refused to discuss operational matters with the observers and even forbade the Canadians from entering the navigation bridge. The eyes and ears of the Canadian government were left feeling that the Americans considered them to be "very much in the way."²¹⁶ Any such tendency to disrespect or ignore Canadian participation worried Ottawa.

Despite gaining solid assurances protecting Canada's claims in the Arctic during the defence negotiations of late 1946 and early 1947, and the great attentiveness the Americans had shown to Canada's concerns, Canadian officials feared that their counterpart's sensitivity might fade. As a result, the government carefully crafted out agreements on individual defence projects to ensure the greatest level of Canadian control. Canadian officials continued to monitor all American activities in the region to

²¹⁴ Canadian Ambassador Washington to SSEA, No. WA-3686, 16 October 1946, sending message for Macdonnell from Stone, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-B-40. No press releases were issued without Canadian permission and the Marines had been landed on Devon Island.

²¹⁵ W.E. Widdows, Lt. RCNR, RCN Air Arm Observer, to Captain RES Bidwell, Director of Naval Air Division, 11 October 1946, LAC, RG 24, vol. 8152, file NSS 1660-12, pt.1.

²¹⁶ Lt. Dunn Lantier RCN to Captain H.N Lay, Director of Naval Plans and Intelligence, 3 October 1946, LAC, RG 24, vol. 8152, file NSS 1660-12, pt.1.

ensure nothing happened that called into question Canada's *de facto* sovereignty in the Arctic.

In late 1946, Canadian officials, especially in the Department of Mines and Resources and the Northwest Territories Administration, began to ponder how Canada could best maintain its control of developments in the Arctic. While their counterparts at External Affairs obsessed over Canada's *de jure* sovereignty, these officials focused on *de facto* control. In late November 1946, J. Wright insisted that the Americans be forced to follow NWT Administration's laws and regulations protecting the Natives and wildlife. Other officials asked that RCMP detachments be established around the new stations.²¹⁷ In mid-December, R. A. Gibson recommended that any American scientists working in the North should be required to obtain an Explorers and Scientists Ordinance.²¹⁸ If followed, these actions would cement Canada's *de facto* sovereignty.

In a letter dated 11 March 1947, D.M Johnson informed the U.S Embassy of the specific Northwest Territories rules and regulations that all American personnel involved in Arctic operations would be expected to follow. These included the Game Laws of the Arctic Preserve, the Scientists and Explorers Ordinance, and the Archaeological Sites Ordinance of the Northwest Territories Administration. Section 48 of the Game Laws forbade all but the Inuit from hunting in the Arctic Game Preserve. Section 40 insisted that no auto-loading rifles could be taken into the territories and prohibited automatic pistols. Revolvers required a permit from the RCMP. The Archaeological Sites

²¹⁷ Wright to Gibson, 29 November 1946, LAC, RG 85, vol. 823, file 7140; The Deputy Minister of Mines and Resources to the Acting Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, R.M MacDonnell, 20 December 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40C; Wardle to Jackson 19 December 1946, LAC, RG 88, vol. 19, file SE. 4-1-83.

²¹⁸ Gibson to Jackson, 17 December 1946, LAC, RG 85, vol. 823, file 7140.

Ordinance held that no site could be excavated or relics taken from the territories without a license from the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories. Johnson insisted that this ordinance applied to all personnel at the defence stations and to any visiting scientists. Finally, any scientists attached to Arctic operations would need to attain special permission from the Northwest Territories.²¹⁹

Insisting that the Americans followed Canadian laws, especially rules specific to the North, represented the most effective assertion of Canada's *de facto* control of the region. The games laws, in particular, were a clear indication of sovereignty. Before the Americans could hunt in the Arctic (something they always wished to do), they had to secure the approval of External Affairs or the Department of Mines and Resources. In May 1947, for instance, the American military sought permission for men posted at the desolate weather stations to supplement their diets by hunting caribou. J.P Richard, the Deputy Commissioner of the Eastern Arctic, argued that "if each gets one caribou they will be doing much better than anyone else who will be living in that part of the country – or for that matter anywhere else in the northland. How many families in Canada these days get the amount of food that the army personnel will get in the north, and at that Canada is supposed to be one of the best fed countries in the world."²²⁰ The Canadians rejected this request and the U.S. accepted the decision. Interestingly enough, the original creators of the Arctic Game Preserve hoped it would uphold Canada's sovereignty. As O.D Skelton described in 1926, "Aside from its immediate purpose, this

²¹⁹ D.M. Johnson to Mr. Dow, U.S Embassy, 11 March 1947, LAC, RG 25, Vol. 3841, File 9061-A-40, pt. 2.

²²⁰ J.P. Richard, Deputy Commissioner to Mr. Wright, Re: Hunting and Trapping Privileges Personnel of Meteorological Stations, 12 May 1947, LAC, RG 85, vol. 2084, file 1730.

Preserve should prove of distinct value as an assertion of our sovereignty in the North and it is all the more valuable because apparently arising as a normal active police administration.”²²¹ At the least, the American willingness to follow Canadian laws represented an implicit recognition of Canadian sovereignty in the region.

The Canadian government also asserted its control over the Arctic using the parameters it established for specific projects. In late February, Cabinet finally approved the Arctic weather stations program. On 4 March, C.D Howe announced to the House of Commons that nine weather stations would be built over the next three years in the Canadian archipelago. He described the beneficial role weather stations would play in agriculture, lumber, transportation and the determination of feasible air routes over the polar regions. Howe also noted that Canada’s climate and weather is affected more by the Arctic than any other point on the compass. Furthermore, the Soviet Union established a large number of weather stations on their side of the Arctic, and Canada hoped to work with the USSR and the other polar countries in exchanging meteorological data. This message reaffirmed the theme that this program was not aggressively military, and might actually promote circumpolar cooperation. Finally, Howe commented on the long range forecasting capabilities the stations would give to the United States. As a result, the Americans wanted to assist in the construction of the stations, which would always remain under Canadian control.²²²

²²¹ O.D. Skelton, Under-Secretary of State of External Affairs, to O.S. Finnie, Director Northwest Territories and Yukon Branch, Department of the Interior, 2 September 1926, LAC, RG 25, vol. 4252, file 9057-40, pt. 2.

²²² C.D. Howe, House of Commons *Debates*, 1947: Vol. 2, 4 March 1947, 989-990.

In early February the Canadians began debating the American proposal to initiate a low frequency long range aid to navigation (Loran) program for the North American Arctic. The Cabinet Defence Committee concluded that the stations could significantly improve navigation for ships and aircraft operating in the Arctic. The Loran stations acted as a series of interdependent 'lighthouses' which ships or aircraft could use to pinpoint their position through a triangulation. By sending out a message to an aircraft from a tower and measuring the time of the echo from that tower with the time of an echo from two to three other stations, an aircraft could determine its exact position using measurements running into the millionths of seconds.²²³ If the Canadians decided to operate the stations independently, however, they would cost \$2,670,000 in 1947-1948 and \$900,000 annually thereafter.²²⁴ On 27 February, the Cabinet accepted the financial contribution offered by the U.S. and authorized the construction of three Loran stations in the Canadian North.

The agreements worked out between the Canadians and Americans for the weather stations and Loran project contained stringent guidelines to protect Canada's sovereignty. Most importantly, at least half of the personnel serving at the stations had to be Canadian, as did the commanding officer at each station.²²⁵ External Affairs insisted that Canadians be in charge of the operations in the Arctic, and argued that as soon as qualified Canadian personnel could be trained, they would replace the

²²³ Secretary of State for External Affairs to Canadian Ambassador, Washington, 28 June 1950, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3675, file 5138-40, pt. 2.

²²⁴ Memorandum from Cabinet Defence Committee to Cabinet, 17 February 1947, *DCER Volume 13, 1947*, 1487-88.

²²⁵ Extract from Minutes of Meeting of CDC, 2 April 1947, *DCER Volume 13, 1947*, 1490-91.

Americans.²²⁶ Other provisions ensured that Canada retained title to all permanent installations. The U.S. would pay for all of the special equipment needed at the stations and provide all of the transportation and supply services.²²⁷ Canada would cover other costs. For example, in the Loran program the Canadian government provided all of the materials and equipment except the radio towers, Loran sets and motor transport vehicles. Canada paid for all permanent facilities, and thus ensured its clear title to them.²²⁸

Despite the importance placed on increasing the Canadian presence on these projects, a lack of qualified Canadian personnel was an immediate problem. Canada scrounged for the personnel required to provide half of the staff at the two weather stations established in 1947. Nonetheless, most government officials concluded that a sufficient number of technicians could be trained to staff the stations before the conclusion of a five year period.²²⁹ In January 1947, however, Cabinet approved a three year plan to take over operation of the U.S.-run weather stations in northeastern Canada.²³⁰ A lack of Canadian personnel forced the government to allow the U.S. to operate these stations independently. They required an increased Canadian presence and personnel would take over these stations before they ventured to new facilities. In light

²²⁶ Letter to Ray Atherton, U.S Ambassador from L.B Pearson, Secretary of State, 22 December 1947, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3841, file 9061-A-40, pt.2.; Memorandum to Mr. Rae from D.M Johnson, 25 April 1947, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3841, file 9061-A-40, pt.2.

²²⁷Bercuson, "Continental Defence and Arctic Sovereignty, 1945-1950," 162.

²²⁸ Extract from Minutes of Meeting of CDC, 2 April 1947, *DCER Volume 13, 1947*, 1490-92; At the joint Loran conference, the Americans were told that their personnel had to follow the Northwest Territories regulations and Superintendent Martin of the RCMP discouraged fraternization with the Eskimo and forbade their employment as workers on the stations. Minutes of Combined US-Canadian Meeting in connection with the L.F Loran Program, 13 March 1947, LAC, RG 12, vol. 2399, file 14-12-19.

²²⁹ H.L. Keenleyside to Undersecretary of State for External Affairs, 1 May 1947, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3841, file 9061-A-40c; Memorandum for Under-Secretary of External Affairs, 1 May 1947, LAC, RG 22, vol. 732, file SE-4-1-83.

²³⁰ Grant, *Sovereignty or Security?*, 186.

of this need, the government's desire to fully staff the arctic stations within five years was overly optimistic.

Some Canadian officials looked at the situation more realistically. Mr. Cameron, a member of the Department of Transport (DOT), understood that it would be impossible to replace the American personnel in the near future. In fact, Cameron stressed the advantages of having some Americans at Eureka Sound and Winter Harbour: "after all, the U.S was responsible for supplies and transport and obviously their interest and their ability to obtain appropriations would be greater if American personnel were at these stations."²³¹ Canada's inability to transport supplies in the region made it dependent on American assistance.

The Loran program suffered from a more acute shortage of Canadian personnel. At the 13 March joint Loran conference, the Canadians acknowledged that they could not provide enough personnel in the first 18 months to make a significant contribution to the project. Many of the trained Canadians could not be removed from southern experimental stations. Nevertheless, Canadian control and participation in the project would be enforced through the presence of a Canadian commanding officer at each station. Additionally, although construction of the stations was to be in the hands of the United States Corps of Engineers, Canada remained in charge of all civilian contractors hired out.²³² This still ensured a modicum of Canadian control.

²³¹ Arctic Weather Stations, Memorandum for File from D.M Johnson, 30 April 1947, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3841, file 9061-A-40, pt.2.

²³² Minutes of Combined US-Canadian Meeting in connection with the L.F Loran Program, 13 March 1947, LAC, RG 12, Vol. 2399, File 14-12-19.

Officials also worried about the military nature of the two projects and the public perception that a new wave of American soldiers entered the North. L.E. Coffey, a radio engineer attending the 13 March Loran conference for the DOT, wrote that the Canadians required a way to minimize the role of the U.S. Forces in the program and find a means of “giving the Loran project a Civil appearance also.” Coffey suggested showcasing the project as a joint RCAF and DOT effort to the public, with the understanding that the air force would actually execute the project.²³³ The Minister of National Defence, Brooke Claxton, also worried that the large number of military aircraft used for the weather stations and the Loran program might cause the public to perceive a new American ‘invasion’ of the North. He argued that the planes should not be allowed to fly over heavily populated areas or fly in formation. Whereas before the Americans planned to use fifty C-54’s at a time, the Canadians managed to get them to limit that number to fifteen.²³⁴ Throughout the post war years the government took many such measures to ensure that the public did not begin to think Canada had lost control of its Arctic to the American military.

After working out the overall parameters for the weather stations, the two countries set about drafting a note on the program. The Canadians immediately took issue with the first draft, which seemed to indicate that the Canadians asked permission to take part in an American program. The note required clarification so that it gave a more accurate impression of the cooperative nature of the project and highlighted that

²³³ L.E. Coffey, Radio Engineer, to Mr. Browne, DOT, 13 March 1947, LAC, RG 12, vol. 2399, file 14-12-19.

²³⁴ Extract from Minutes of Meeting of CDC, 2 April 1947, *DCER, Volume 13, 1947*, 1490-92.

Canada had invited the United States onto its territory.²³⁵ As the two countries struggled to formalize a note on the weather stations, an informal agreement with strict guidelines would be enough for 1947.

Work on a formal note for the Loran program also continued. The initial proposal protected Canadian sovereignty and ensured that personnel at the stations would be subject to Canadian law, but one clause stated that if Canada lost interest in the stations the U.S. could take them over at its own expense, as long as they remained under Canadian control. J. Wright of the Northwest Territories Administration worried that this section granted perpetual rights to the United States to operate stations in Canadian territory. He argued that the note should indicate that the Americans could take over the stations, but only after careful review by both countries.²³⁶ The challenges of reaching a formal agreement proved insurmountable for the first year of the Loran project as well, and an informal agreement regulated the stations for the time being.

Maintaining a Dominant Position at Churchill

The Loran program and the Arctic weather installations remained the primary concern of the Canadian government in 1947, but other projects also kept officials busy. In mid-February a PJBD report emphasized the success of the program at Churchill and the importance of the Fort's accessibility, isolation and geographic terrain. The Board noted that "only at Fort Churchill is it at present possible for personnel of the Armed Forces of Canada and the United States to acquire the experience of working together

²³⁵ Memorandum for Under-Secretary of External Affairs, 1 May 1947, LAC, RG 22, vol. 732, file SE-4-1-83.

²³⁶ J.G. Wright to Mr. Gibson, 9 August 1947, LAC, RG 85, vol. 2084, file 1730.

under arctic conditions in a terrain similar to that prevailing throughout a large proportion of the northern approaches to the continent.”²³⁷ The joint testing facility did not cause Canadians the same type of sovereignty concerns as the stations in the high Arctic, and its location far away from the major centers of population in the south avoided raising the ire of the Canadian public over American troops stationed on Canadian soil. Still, the Canadian government did its utmost to retain control at the Fort.

Canadian officials did an admirable job of ensuring that daily life at the Fort did not diminish Canada’s sovereignty. The Canadian High Command ensured that all of the American troops stationed at the Fort understood the chain of command, including the Canadian officers from whom they took orders.²³⁸ Both the Canadian and American commanders at the Fort insisted that U.S personnel follow Canadian rules and regulations.

When the Canadian section of the PJBD visited Churchill on 24 February 1947, they noted the Union Jack and the Stars and Stripes flying side by side at the Fort. The flag issue may seem small and insignificant in retrospect, but the American tendency to fly the stars and stripes at bases on Canadian soil without a Canadian counterpart had caused consternation in Ottawa during the war. General Henry of the PJBD, realizing Canada’s sensitivity about foreign flags flying over its soil, guaranteed the Canadian section that at all installations where “the flag of the United States is flown...the Canadian flag – will also be flown- both flags to be approximately the same size and

²³⁷ Extract From Journal of Discussions and Decisions on the Permanent Joint Board on Defence Meeting Held 18-19 February 1947, LAC, RG 24, vol. 8152, file NSS 1660-15, pt.2.

²³⁸ Charles Foulkes, Chief of the General Staff to Commandant, Fort Churchill, 13 January 1947, LAC, RG 25, Vol. 3346, File 9061-40.

from staffs of equal height under identical conditions and rendered correspondingly appropriate honours.”²³⁹

Although the Americans made good on their promise at Churchill, the Canadian section of the PJBD still believed that the use of the Union Jack did nothing to strengthen Canada’s position. They agreed that it would be best to examine the possibility of flying the red ensign rather than the Union Jack to remind all visitors about who really controlled the Fort.²⁴⁰ The PJBD recalled Order-in-Council P.C 5888 of 5 September 1945, which read in part “that it shall be appropriate to fly the Canadian Red Ensign within and without Canada wherever place or occasion may make it desirable to fly a distinctive Canadian flag.” Given the present situation at Fort Churchill, the Canadian section of the PJBD recommended that the red ensign be flown to provide a distinctive Canadian marking.²⁴¹ This way, none of the American personnel stationed at Churchill would be confused about which country controlled the Fort.

Canadian officials also attempted to control the number of Americans posted at Churchill. By the winter of 1947 the U.S. Army planned to post an additional 500 troops at Churchill. The Americans got ahead of themselves, and the *New York Tribune* ran a story in early March which asserted that the U.S. Army would shortly be sending additional personnel to Churchill. Graham Parsons, the American secretary of the PJBD, commented on the press story, claiming “Tip the Gen’l off – tell him the story is out.

²³⁹ Memorandum for the Board, Major General Guy V. Henry, 14 February 1947, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3346, file 9061-40, pt.1.

²⁴⁰ Memorandum for Mr. Beaudry, Canadian Section, PJBD, 24 February 1947, LAC, RG 24, vol. 8152, file NSS 1660-15, pt.2.

²⁴¹ Canadian Section PJBD to Major General C.C. Mann, Vice Chief of the General Staff, 25 February 1947, LAC, RG 24, vol. 8152, file NSS 1660-15, pt.2.

(This may be quite awkward since we do not yet have permission to get these troops etc. in there).²⁴² Indeed, the Canadian government rejected the proposal. The original agreement for the Joint Services Experimental Station allowed for 450 Canadian servicemen to be posted at the Fort alongside about 100 U.S servicemen. With an additional 500 troops, the US servicemen would outnumber the Canadians on the base: a situation the King government desperately wanted to avoid.²⁴³ Canada carefully defended its dominant position at Churchill, as it would do throughout the early Cold War.

In April 1947 the Canadians and Americans also discussed financial plans for Churchill. The fort was in rough shape and required a water and sewage system, improved barrack accommodations, and married quarters. To meet these new requirements, the United States offered \$350,000 and told the Canadian section of the PJBD that an agreement about the use of the money could be worked out between service personnel at the Fort. The Americans did not want a formal and publicized diplomatic agreement that would inform the public about the amounts of money the U.S. poured into joint defence projects.²⁴⁴ Canada seemed to have everything to gain in accepting the U.S. initiative, especially when the Americans promised to provide the necessary tradesmen to carry out the construction program at Churchill. The Cabinet Defence Committee discussed the American offer at its meeting on 5 May 1947, and

²⁴² Cited in Grant, *Sovereignty or Security?*, 186.

²⁴³ Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada Vol. 3: Peacemaking and Deterrence*, 355. To have reinforced the base to maintain Canada's numerical advantage, however, would have been an unnecessary drain on limited resources and would have given the Soviet Union a legitimate complaint.

²⁴⁴ Submission for Cabinet Defence Committee – Development – Fort Churchill, 25 April 1947, LAC, RG 24, vol. 8152, file NSS 1660-15, pt.2.

assessed that the \$399,000 included in the Canadian budget for additional facilities could not cover all of the construction projects at Churchill. The Chief of the General Staff, Charles Foulkes, recognized the poor living conditions and agreed that the proposed American arrangement offered the best opportunity for improving the fort, as long as care was “taken to ensure that the programme was kept under Canadian control.” The Secretary of State for External Affairs, Louis St. Laurent, noted that the plan “deviated somewhat from the generally accepted principle that Canada should pay for permanent facilities at joint defence establishments.” Nevertheless, the relatively small amount offered and the results seemed to justify accepting the American assistance.²⁴⁵ The CDC noted that the isolated operation at Churchill differed from the large-scale integrated continental systems like weather and Loran stations. A precedent at Churchill would not have the same impact as one established for these stations.

The CDC decided to accept the American funds on 9 May 1947, so long as “no one in Canada, nor the U.S.A, could say that the U.S.A had acquired a vested interest.” If the Americans ever wanted to withdraw any items of equipment purchased with its funds, it could do so.²⁴⁶ Within weeks, the Americans and Canadians began to improve the facilities at Fort Churchill. The U.S. never claimed permanent rights to the Fort, demonstrating that Canadian actions were appropriate.

Establishing the Weather and Loran Stations

²⁴⁵ Extract from the Minutes of the 32nd Meeting of the Cabinet Defence Committee held 5 May 1947, LAC, RG 24, vol. 8152, file NSS 1660-15, pt.2.

²⁴⁶ Extract From the Minutes of the Meeting of the Defence Council held 9 May 1947, LAC, RG 24, vol. 8152, file NSS 1660-15, pt.2.

Canada and the United States agreed to establish two weather stations (one at Winter Harbour, Melville Island and the other at Eureka Sound, Ellesmere Island) in 1947.²⁴⁷ On 7 April representatives of the U.S. Weather Bureau and the Canadian Meteorological Service found an appropriate site at Eureka Sound and American aircraft from Greenland began to deliver materials to the site. By July, station personnel established a temporary airstrip and began weather reporting. That same month, a small convoy of USN ships, consisting of the icebreakers USS *Edisto* and USS *Whitewood* and the transport ship *Wyandot*, brought permanent buildings, additional supplies, and a fuller complement of staff. One American inspecting the Eureka site characterized relations between the American and Canadian personnel during the construction phase as “good.”²⁴⁸ By the time winter approached, the permanent installations were up and running at Eureka Sound.

While the Eureka Sound operation went smoothly, the problems experienced in the establishment of the second weather station highlighted both the difficulties of operating in the Arctic and the limited assistance that Canada could provide in remote regions. The Canadians and Americans hoped to make the proposed station at Winter Harbour the central hub for the whole program. The personnel for this station (eight Canadians, eight Americans and one RCMP constable) travelled on the *Wyandot*, as did most of the equipment. Heavy ice, however, stopped the *Edisto* at 108° West longitude in Barrow Strait. On 15 August the *Edisto* started west to find its way to Winter Harbour

²⁴⁷ Extract from Minutes of Meeting of Cabinet Defence Committee, 2 April 1947, *DCER, Volume 13, 1947*, 1490-1493.

²⁴⁸ Report on Inspection of Eureka Sound and Thule Weather Stations During April 1947, LAC, RG 25 vol. 3841, file 9061-A-40, pt.2.

through the Viscount Melville Sound, but it suffered damage to both propellers. Without a hope of reaching Winter Harbour, Canadian and American officials quickly looked for an alternate site. By the end of August they agreed on Resolute Bay on Cornwallis Island. This spot could accommodate an airstrip, it could be reached by sea, and its central location (compared to an alternate site on Devon Island) allowed it to support future Arctic operations.²⁴⁹ Unfortunately the Canadian government had little presence in this part of the Arctic and could offer little to no information about the ice conditions, so the USN had to learn many things on its own. The inability of the Canadian government to offer assistance in the region diminished its *de facto* sovereignty.

During the initial construction operations Canada found few reasons to complain as the Americans tried to respect Canadian sovereignty. The Americans handled all of the heavy lifting in the Arctic, but they still made decisions on a joint basis. On 13 June, before the naval supply expedition even set out, Colonel J. Donald Cleghorn, eventually the Official in Charge (OIC) of the weather station at Resolute Bay, told J. Wright, “that he gained the impression from the general attitude of certain high-ranking U.S Service personnel (not civilian) that the establishment of these weather stations was largely a U.S matter and that Canadians were being taken along largely as matter of courtesy.”²⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the lack of complaints from the Canadian observers about American conduct reflects that the latter remained on their best behaviour throughout the construction phase.

²⁴⁹ Meteorological Division-Department of Transport-Canada and U.S Weather Bureau-Department of Commerce-United States, *A Review of the Establishment and Operation of the JAWS at Eureka Sound, Resolute, Isachsen, Mould Bay and Alert and a Summary of the Scientific Activities at the Stations, 1946-1951, 1951.*

²⁵⁰ J.G. Wright to R.A. Gibson, 13 June 1947, LAC, RG 85, vol. 2083, file 7140-2.

According to historian Kenneth Eyre, the construction of the Loran stations underlined the difficulties of work in the northern environment and the lack of planning and coordination between the civilian and military agencies involved.²⁵¹ To a certain degree the same problems plagued the establishment of the weather stations and the other northern defence projects of the early post war years. The Americans and Canadians decided to establish the master Loran station at Kittigaziut at the mouth of the Mackenzie River, the slave station at Cambridge Bay, and the monitoring station at Sawmill Bay.²⁵² While the master and monitoring stations proved unproblematic given their relative accessibility, the slave station at Cambridge Bay posed problems. Nasty weather conditions kept the airfield from going operational until late April. The airfield became especially important when no USN or commercial ships could be found for the mission, and the Americans had to airlift all of the material to the remote site. Once the USAF finished its transportation duties, construction crews inexperienced with the arctic environment struggled to get the station up and running. When the RCAF brought in two bulldozers for construction, the Canadians forgot to supply operators and the equipment went unused until a specialist was brought in from southern Canada.²⁵³ Despite these difficulties, the Cambridge Bay Loran station became operational in the fall.

Flying the Flag in the Arctic and Managing Publicity

²⁵¹ Eyre, *Custos Borealis*.

²⁵² Report on the Low Frequency LORAN Program, Privy Council Office, 5 August 1947, DHH 112.3m2 (565). Although all stations were initially planned for the Arctic Coast, a suitable site could not be found for the monitoring station.

²⁵³ Eyre, *Custos Borealis*.

While the USN shuttled in supplies and equipment for the weather stations into the Arctic, the Canadian navy began discussing the possibility of sending its own expedition into the northern waters. The USN operated in the Arctic waters as far west as Melville Sound, an area which no ship of the RCN had ever entered. Canadian sovereignty and control in the Arctic was certainly not strengthened by the American supply missions. At a Naval Staff meeting on 21 April 1947 planners considered a cruise into Hudson Strait and Hudson Bay and concluded that “in light of the present situation in the Canadian Arctic it is considered that such a cruise would be of benefit to the Canadian defence programme.” Naval officers understood that the north was increasing in importance, and the RCN should acquire a capability in the area sooner rather than later.²⁵⁴

After the war the RCN discussed the idea of leasing a U.S. ship capable of operating in the Arctic waters.²⁵⁵ In May 1947, Captain H.N. Lay of naval intelligence insisted that the RCN explore the problems and conditions of Arctic sea travel on its own.²⁵⁶ Canada could neither depend on the occasional observer’s berth on an American ship, nor on a loaner from the USN, to gain essential experience. The RCN would have to be more proactive and create a transport capability if Canada did not want to play a subordinate role in its own Arctic.

The proposed Canadian northern cruise for 1947 was known as Operation *Iceworm*. The Navy, however, experienced a drastic curtailment in its fuel supplies and

²⁵⁴ Memorandum to ACNS, Operation Iceworm, 2 June 1947, LAC, RG 24, vol. 8153, file 1160-18.

²⁵⁵ Northern Cruise Planning Discussions, 17 February 1948, DHH file.

²⁵⁶ Captain H.N. Lay, Director of Naval Plans and Intelligence, to ACNS, Operation Iceworm, 23 May 1947, DHH file.

naval planners noted that the 4,800 miles involved in a round trip between Halifax and Churchill would place a great burden on its logistical capacity.²⁵⁷ Furthermore, the lack of ice capable ships and the problem with fuel consumption led Claxton to reject the proposed plan in late June.²⁵⁸ Although the government scuttled its plans for a northern cruise in 1947, the navy began to make plans for the next summer. On 9 July 1947 Claxton announced the immediate winterization of the tribal class destroyers and of the *Magnificent*, Canada's aircraft carrier.²⁵⁹ The winterization of these vessels would not allow them to truly operate in the northern waters, however, save for a brief period in the summer and only in select areas. Acquiring a true northern naval capability required more resources.

As Canadian officials attempted to lock down their control in the Arctic, they also worried about unwanted publicity on the northern defence projects. The PJBD recommended that "public information in regard to military projects... jointly conducted or conducted by one country in the other country, or in the territory leased by it, should be the primary responsibility of the country whose territory is utilized. All public statements on these subjects shall be made only after mutual agreement between the appropriate authorities of the two countries."²⁶⁰ Canadian officials feared that the press would sensationalize the American activities in the Arctic and mislead the public on the condition of Canada's sovereignty in the region. They also worried about such press reports making ongoing cooperation with the Americans in the Arctic politically

²⁵⁷ Minutes of 370th Naval Staff Meeting, 21 April 1947, LAC, RG 24, vol. 8153, file 1160-18.

²⁵⁸ F.L. Houghton to Admiral Jones, 21 June 1947, LAC, RG 24, vol. 8153, file 1160-18.

²⁵⁹ House of Commons *Debates*, 1947: Vol. VI, 9 July 1947, 5270.

²⁶⁰ Permanent Joint Board on Defence, *Recommendations of 20 November, 1946*, LAC, MG32 B-5, vol. 126, file US- Defence Policy.

untenable. Basically, Canadian officials did not want the wrong ideas put in the public's mind. Bad press could lead certain Americans to doubt Canadian sovereignty and encourage them challenge Canada's claims. The Canadian public could also get the wrong idea and blame the government for giving the Americans the keys to the Arctic free of charge. With all of these risks Canadian officials hoped that the large scale activities carried out in the Arctic could be quietly kept a secret. This hope, however, proved misguided.

In mid-August 1947 the Canadian Ambassador to the United States informed Louis St. Laurent of an article in the *Washington Post* that insisted Canada and the United States were building a network of Arctic air bases and Loran stations. The report claimed that USAAF officials admitted to the existence of a multi-million dollar joint project and predicted the bases would be in operation by October. The author asserted that the Americans provided all of the equipment in the Arctic and that the USAAF Air Transport Command handled the difficult job of supply.²⁶¹ Readers would likely have perceived that Canada had neither the capacity to provide transportation in the Arctic nor the equipment necessary for civil and military aviation. The same day that the Canadian Ambassador sent his report, the U.S. War Department called on the embassy to acknowledge the leak and express its sincere regret. It also admitted to killing a similar story the previous week. Quickly General Henry dropped off a press release he believed would fix the situation.²⁶² St. Laurent, however, insisted that this draft release would not help the situation either, as it also emphasized the role played by the USAAF. "While

²⁶¹ Canadian Ambassador to the United States to Secretary of State for External Affairs, 15 August 1947, LAC, RG 85, vol. 2084, file 1730.

²⁶² Ibid.

we greatly appreciate that contribution, emphasis of this kind in a statement appearing in this country might, as you will understand, be misinterpreted....” St Laurent explained.

“What we really would like is to have the War Department exercise some check on unauthorized disclosures of this kind by members of the United States Army or Air Forces.”²⁶³ The Americans promised to investigate the press leak and others like it.

The Loran story again found its way into the public domain when newspapers began to quote from an article on the program printed in the *Infantry Journal* of October 1947. Once more the press mistook the Loran stations for three massive air bases along the northern coast. Again the Canadians complained and the Americans promised to fix the press release.²⁶⁴ The Canadian government also grew annoyed that month when the Americans released information about the possible establishment of a weather station on Cornwallis Island without first clearing it through diplomatic channels.²⁶⁵

These press leaks reflect the indiscretions of low ranking U.S. officers, not official U.S. government policy. Nevertheless, Canadian officials worried about the possible impact these leaks might have and took steps to keep them from recurring. Despite their best efforts, stories continued to appear in the press, embarrassing the government and worrying the public.

Mechanisms of Control and the Canadian Voice

²⁶³ Secretary of State for External Affairs to Charge D’Affaires, Canadian Embassy, Washington, 16 August 1947, LAC, RG 85, vol. 2084, file 1730.

²⁶⁴ The Canadian Ambassador to The Secretary of State for External Affairs, 7 October 1947, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3675, file 5138-40 pt.1.

²⁶⁵ Memorandum for Mr. Johnson from Political III, 7 October 1947, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3841, file 9061-A-40, pt.2.

The Canadian government also continued to develop mechanisms to protect its interests at the higher levels of defence planning. Of all the diplomatic and military channels connecting Ottawa and Washington, the PJBD remained Canada's strongest tool for protecting its interests. Historian David Beatty had argued that the PJBD continued to serve "in the postwar period as the primary agency for initiation and coordination of joint defence measures."²⁶⁶ Prior to the creation of NORAD, the PJBD dealt with almost every major defence issue and the U.S. and Canadian governments accepted most of its recommendations. Shelagh Grant explained that the PJBD appeared, at times, to function as an executive agency, rather than an advisory committee as originally intended.²⁶⁷

The organization and structure of the PJBD proved conducive to the protection of Canada's interests. R.M. Macdonnell stated that it provided a forum not only for making joint recommendations, but for negotiating, exchanging views, testing ideas, and rejecting bad solutions.²⁶⁸ The membership of the Board included upper echelon military officers and senior officials from External Affairs and the State Department who wielded authority in their respective branches. Furthermore, these men belonged to the small group of decision-makers actually involved in negotiating continental defence initiatives on both sides of the border, and the PJBD helped them to form close relationships that helped resolve debates.²⁶⁹

In this setting, the Canadian members often stood their ground on tough issues.

²⁶⁶ Beatty, *The Canadian-States Permanent Joint Board on Defence*, ii.

²⁶⁷ Grant, *Sovereignty or Security?* 193.

²⁶⁸ Beatty, *The Canadian-States Permanent Joint Board on Defence*, 70.

²⁶⁹ Roger Swanson, "An Analytical Assessment of the United States-Canadian Defence Issue Area," *International Organization*, Vol. 28 No. 4 (1974), 786.

Much of the Canadian section's boldness emanated from its capable chairman, Andrew McNaughton, who took over the position in August 1945. George Ignatieff, a friend and aide to McNaughton, depicted him as a man known for "forthrightness in speech rather than tact, vigour and tenacity in pressing what he believed to be right rather than compromise; a born fighter."²⁷⁰ McNaughton's aggressive personality and strength as a negotiator always held him in good stead at the PJBD.²⁷¹ His background in science and engineering also proved useful due to the technical nature of the Arctic defence projects. In short, McNaughton's personal characteristics made him an ideal fit as Canadian chairman, and he remained vigilant when dealing with American initiatives in the Arctic during his tenure between 1945 and 1959.

In the years following the war the Canadians also established their own strategic voice and security interests. In *Avoiding Armageddon*, Andrew Richter made use of recently declassified documents to prove that, in the early Cold War, the "Canadians identified and articulated strategic interests' independent from those of its allies- in particular the United States."²⁷² Canada's acceptance of certain American ideas did not deafen its own strategic voice. "No country has the luxury of establishing defence policies and interests – and formulating the strategic thinking that supports them – in a

²⁷⁰ George Ignatieff, "A Soldier in Diplomacy," *International Journal* Vol. 22, No. 3 (1968): 402.

²⁷¹ Grant, *Sovereignty or Security?*, 173.

²⁷² Andrew Richter, *Avoiding Armageddon: Canadian Military Strategy and Nuclear Weapons, 1950-1963*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002), 6. Many have argued the exact opposite. According to scholars such as Colin Gray and John Gellner, Canada lacked an "independent capacity to articulate its own interests" and ideas imported from the U.S dominated Canadian strategic thinking in the late 1940's. Colin Gray, "The Need for Independent Canadian Strategic Thought," *Canadian Defence Quarterly* 1, 1 (1971): 6-12. John Gellner, "Strategic Analysis in Canada," *International Journal* 33, 3 (1978): 493-505.

vacuum,” Richter concluded.²⁷³ Canada did a fine job of formulating its strategic interests in the difficult post war period. Lawrence Aronsen also applauded the independent nature of Canadian intelligence estimates in the early post war years. From 1945 to 1947 the government worked through the Cabinet Defence Committee, the Department of External Affairs and the Joint Intelligence Committee of the DND to prepare JIC Final, a detailed report on the scope, direction, and timing of the Soviet military threat to Canada. Although the intelligence agencies of the two countries enjoyed an excellent working relationship, the Canadians carefully separated American assumptions from the facts. If the Americans assumed that enemy troops would attack the Canadian Arctic in a time of crisis, the Canadian Chiefs of Staff asked what the Soviet objective might be.²⁷⁴ Canadian strategists consistently disagreed with the Americans about the nature of the threat the Soviet Union posed to the Arctic. For instance, by the late 1940’s American planners posited that the Soviets could deploy occupying forces to seize outlying positions in Canada and northern Alaska. Canadians argued that the primary threat came from small raiding parties striking targets in western Alaska, the Aleutian Islands, and an air strike on Port Radium.²⁷⁵ While Canada agreed with the Americans on the general threat, it also put its own stamp on defence planning.

As the defence plans became active projects the Canadian government realized it required a mechanism to keep track of all these activities. In the spring of 1947, Hugh Keenleyside proposed the establishment of a Geographical Bureau, attached to the

²⁷³ Richter, *Avoiding Armageddon: Canadian Military Strategy and Nuclear Weapons, 1950-1963*, 12.

²⁷⁴ Lawrence Aronsen, “Preparing for Armageddon: JIC 1 (Final) and the Soviet Attack on Canada,” *Intelligence and National Security* Vol. 19, No. 3 (2004): 499-500.

²⁷⁵ Acceptability of American Revisions, 12 June 1948, LAC, RG 24, Reel 11665.

Department of Mines and Resources,²⁷⁶ which would assist in the coordination of all government activities, including the defence programs in the North.²⁷⁷ Supporters of the concept also hoped the Bureau would address the communication problem that existed between the different Canadian departments, resulting in interdepartmental misunderstandings and annoyance at the Americans for breaches of conduct they did not commit. In early summer 1947, for example, the Americans requested permission to establish three SHORAN (Shore Aid to Navigation) geodetic control stations on Baffin Island.²⁷⁸ These stations would allow the United States Air Force to establish highly effective ground control in Greenland to support their aerial mapping program. On 4 July Air Vice Marshall Curtis acknowledged that the U.S. proposal actually supported the RCAF's own plans.²⁷⁹

In early July, one of the Department of Mines and Resources' senior geodesists, Earl Ross, learned that the Americans planned to send a party of over 100 men to Baffin Island to establish temporary SHORAN stations, the first anyone in the department heard of the project. An internal memorandum on the project explained "the real point... is that this seems to be another case in which the United States authorities are going ahead with an operation on and over Canadian soil for which no prior clearance has been

²⁷⁶ Grant, *Sovereignty or Security?*, 221.

²⁷⁷ Albert Heeney, a supporter of the Bureau, claimed "I am fearful lest the old desire to build up within individual services may result in half hearted cooperation and consequent loss of efficiency in every way.... I am quite sure that there will be a good deal more support from the government for the development of a geographic bureau in Mines and Resources than in any comparable development in National Defence." Heeney to Gill, 6 May 1947, LAC, RG 2/18, vol. 70, file D-17-3.

²⁷⁸ Memorandum from Lt. Col. Arnold, War Plans Division from J.C. Tison, Lt. Col. Air Corp, LAC, RG 24, vol. 5347, file HQS 34-79-5.

²⁷⁹ Memorandum from Air Vice Marshall W.A. Curtis, 4 July 1947, LAC, RG 24, vol. 5347, file HQS 34-79-5.

obtained.²⁸⁰ The SHORAN program did not mark an American transgression, however, but a lack of coordination between the necessary Canadian departments. After the Department of Mines and Resources threw up the red flag on the project, the RCAF admitted that the Chief of the Air Staff and the Canadian Joint Staff Mission already knew of the American activities.²⁸¹ Although the RCAF apologized for not sharing information, this lack of coordination indicated a deeper problem in Canadian defence planning that would lead to problems in the ensuing years.

The idea of an organization that could track all Canadian and foreign activities in the North, and inform all the different government departments involved, appealed to many Canadian officials. The military and the Joint Intelligence Committee, however, objected to the creation of any civilian agency responsible for collecting sensitive strategic information. Nevertheless, after much debate, the Cabinet approved the Bureau in July and it quickly set to work creating a report on all of the American activities going on in the Canadian Arctic.²⁸² It would not be completed until December 1947.

The Calm Before the Storm?

Through most of 1947 the defence relationship between Canada and the United States seemed to function smoothly. By mutual preference the relationship worked without grand projects or extensive commitments, and remained friendly and informal.²⁸³

²⁸⁰ Department of Mines and Resources to Pearson, 4 July 1947, LAC, RG 24, vol. 5347, file HQS 34-79-5.

²⁸¹ Group Captain S.W. Coleman to Mr. S.F. Rae, Secretary PJBD, 11 July 1947, LAC, RG 24, vol. 5347, file HQS 34-79-5.

²⁸² Grant, *Sovereignty or Security?*, 221.

²⁸³ Jockel, *No Boundaries Upstairs*, 119.

The 36th Recommendation of the PJBD called for the investigation of all new defence projects on a case by case basis and the Board reviewed every initiative. “No blanket approvals were given Washington,” Bercuson noted. “The details of each operation were worked out separately.”²⁸⁴ At the meeting of the Cabinet Defence Committee on 16 August 1947, Andrew McNaughton “observed that in discussions in the Joint Defence Board there had been an attitude of complete propriety regarding Canadian rights.”²⁸⁵ While the Americans refused to accept the sector principle, McNaughton optimistically added that “circumstances are such that our claims in the Arctic Archipelago are being progressively strengthened.”²⁸⁶

By early October 1947 the Arctic weather and Loran programs continued to run smoothly. In these first months, the Canadians exercised effective command and control of the stations, and the Americans created few problems. J.D. Cleghorn, the station controller who once angrily wrote about the poor American attitude towards the Canadian contribution, happily commented that:

We have no personnel problems. Everybody is pulling his weight and relations between the Americans and ourselves are on a very cordial basis. There have been minor misunderstandings and some differences of opinion on both sides, but these are to be expected in any normal operation of this kind. I blame the prolonged strain and overwork, rather than any personal animosity, for any small outburst of temperament in the past.²⁸⁷

These harmonious working relations exemplify the cooperative nature of the Arctic defence projects.

²⁸⁴ Bercuson, “Continental Defence and Arctic Sovereignty, 1945-1950,” 162.

²⁸⁵ Minutes of Meeting of Cabinet Defence, August 16, 1947, *DCER, Volume 13, 1947*, 1510.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁷ J.D. Cleghorn, Officer-in-charge, Resolute Bay to Controller, Air Services, Meteorological Division, 1 October 1947, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3841, file 9061-A-40 pt. 2.

Even the complicated issue of financing was slowly worked out to the satisfaction of both countries. As Bercuson pointed out, Canada did not have the ability to pay for all of the continental defence projects on its own, but if the United States paid for most or all of the projects, “Canadian sovereignty existed only in theory, not in substance.”²⁸⁸ Still little desire existed to establish a specific payment strategy or a detailed cost sharing formula. If Canada chose to share half the costs of all projects or based its payment on population size, however, defence expenditures might quickly outstrip the country’s means. Therefore, the Canadians decided its share on a project-by-project basis.²⁸⁹ Even if some American officials resented pouring money into the northern defence projects while Canada refused to grant them long-term rights,²⁹⁰ this issue rarely surfaced at the diplomatic level.

Despite the wave of American development in the Canadian North, which included weather and Loran stations, regular transportation flights, more airfields, a Canadian air photography program, USN cruises and other scientific investigations, Canada’s terrestrial claims were stronger than ever by the end of 1947. Canada also appeared to maintain fairly effective control over the region. “Although it derived as much from ad hoc decisions as from careful planning, the policy served Canada well,” Bercuson concluded. “Canadian participation was ensured, even if token, and each agreement brought another U.S. recognition of Canadian claims to the Arctic.”²⁹¹

Subsequent events tested McNaughton’s optimistic assertions, however, and threatened

²⁸⁸ Bercuson, “Continental Defence and Arctic Sovereignty, 1945-1950,” 161.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Memorandum for Cabinet Defence Committee – Implications of defence co-operation and planning with USA; Sovereignty and Financial Aspects, LAC, RG 2, Vol. 74, File D-19-2.

²⁹¹ Bercuson, “Continental Defence and Arctic Sovereignty, 1945-1950,” 162.

Canada's interests. For the first time since the war, Canada would have to 'go to the mat' with its defence partner.

Chapter 4: Controlling the Arctic

A Coordinating Committee

Although the situation in the Arctic seemed well in hand as 1947 neared an end, Canadian officials saw problems beginning to form. They found it increasingly difficult to keep track of American defence projects and the lack of coordination between Canadian departments and services did not help matters. According to American historian Stanley Dziuban, the key problem that caused many of the misunderstandings and breaches in protocol that upset the Canadians during the war was the disorganization of hemispheric defence planning. Ideally, all projects should have been approved at the governmental level, but in reality approvals came from PJBD recommendations, direct arrangements at the service level, agreements at different diplomatic levels, or some combination of them all.²⁹² In the postwar Arctic, developments also started to progress at a rate that left little time for inter-departmental discussion and consolidation. As Canada attempted to assert its control over the Arctic, the confusion and disorganization on both sides of the border led to American indiscretions and sloppy Canadian mistakes.

On 13 November 1947, a memorandum from the Chiefs of Staff Committee to Albert Heeney, the Secretary of the Cabinet, called for greater control over the northern defence projects and urged greater coordination amongst the different departments

²⁹² Stanley Dziuban, *Military Relations Between the United States and Canada 1939-1945, Military Relations Between the United States and Canada 1939-1945*, (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1959) 139.

involved in the Arctic.²⁹³ The memorandum explicitly mentioned the burgeoning number of airstrips in the Arctic as proof of Canada's lack of control. By late 1947 the USAF still operated wartime airfields at Mingan, Fort Chimo and Frobisher Bay and began building more to support the weather and Loran stations. The Canadians recently learned of U.S. plans to extend the runway at Resolute Bay to 10,000 feet and prepare it for year round operation. The Chiefs of Staff argued that "obviously, unless control is exercised and provided by Canada, the U.S. will just carry on as they please."²⁹⁴ While no Canadian department stepped up to take responsibility for the airstrips, the American desire to create more air bases in the Arctic grew.

The memorandum also highlighted the lack of Canadian transportation capabilities in the North. "Undoubtedly adequate transportation facilities, both air and sea, must also be provided and controlled by Canada if over-all control is to be maintained," it noted. "Control of aerodromes and air strips will be insufficient in itself if we remain dependent on the U.S for transportation."²⁹⁵ The government's inactivity on this dimension suggests an inexcusable lapse in judgement during this period. Although the RCN did plan a summer cruise in the Arctic, the government made no concerted effort to improve Canada's transport capabilities in the region. Instead the entire burden for the resupply of the Canadian Arctic fell on the Americans.

²⁹³ Memorandum for Mr. Heeney: Control of Arctic Projects, 13 November 1947, LAC, RG 2, vol. 57, file A-25-5. The report noted the many different agencies involved in the projects. In control of the civil administration of the North and the production of maps and hydrographic charts was the Department of Mines and Resources. The establishment of the weather stations was run by the Department of Transport, assisted by the U.S Weather Bureau, while the RCAF and USAF controlled the Loran project. The RCAF was also in control of the air photography program in the Arctic. The Defence Research Board, the Department of Transport and the Armed Services all played roles in Arctic research.

²⁹⁴ Memorandum from Secretary, Chiefs of Staff Committee to Secretary to the Cabinet, 13 November 1947, *DCER, Volume 13, 1947*, 1516-1519.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

To address some of these pressing issues the Chiefs of Staff recommended the creation of an Arctic Committee to advise the Cabinet Defence Committee and the Cabinet on all aspects of Arctic defence and development policy.²⁹⁶ “I share with you considerable anxiety in the hap-hazard form in which the Arctic developments are being handled at the present time,” Charles Foulkes, the Chief of the General Staff, wrote to Heeney in November 1947. The northern projects required better coordination and control, especially the airstrips “which have been put in without our knowledge and have only been discovered by accident.”²⁹⁷ Andrew McNaughton also weighed in on the subject of improved coordination. “I fully agree that it is necessary to set up an organization to bring our various activities in the Arctic into focus and in particular to ensure that in our arrangements with the United States, all necessary steps are taken for the protection of Canadian interests and the maintenance of full Canadian control in all respect,” the PJBD chairman told Heeney.²⁹⁸ Backed by these opinions, Heeney wrote to Brooke Claxton asking him to consider the creation of an Advisory Committee on Northern Development to provide advice on the general policies adopted by the government. The lack of coordination could not be blamed on any one department, but “rather to the lack of any machinery to bring them together.”²⁹⁹

In mid-January Claxton informed Minister of Mines and Resources James Glen of his plan to establish a joint coordinating body to manage all government activities in

²⁹⁶ Chiefs of Staff Committee to Secretary to the Cabinet, 13 November 1947, *DCER, Volume 13, 1947*, 1516-1519.

²⁹⁷ Charles Foulkes to Mr. Heeney, 24 November 1947, LAC, RG 2, vol. 57, file A-25-5.

²⁹⁸ A.G.L. McNaughton to A.D.P. Heeney, 27 November 1947, LAC, RG 2, vol. 57, file A-25-5.

²⁹⁹ A.D.P. Heeney to Brooke Claxton, 12 December 1947, LAC, RG 2, vol. 57, file A-25-5.

the North and to advise on policy.³⁰⁰ He lamented Canada's inability to control the Arctic airstrips or provide any transport service to the region, and expressed concern about Canada's inability to supply enough personnel for the weather stations in the northeast, which Canada had promised to take over by 1950.³⁰¹ Claxton hoped that an advisory committee would coordinate action on these pressing issues, and it met in February 1948 for the first time.

The Problem With Operation *Polaris*

As Canadian officials created a new committee to coordinate activities in the North, officials dealt with the one of the first true American challenges to Canada's authority in the postwar years. Although observers attached to Operation *Polaris* reported on all American activities, the Canadian government and military paid little attention to the *Polaris* project until the fall of 1947, when the RCAF suddenly became concerned that the USAAF was performing aerial reconnaissance and photography in the Arctic.³⁰² The Canadian military began asking questions in September 1947 when Air Vice Marshall Wilf Curtis requested from General Henry "certain information regarding

³⁰⁰ Memorandum from the Minister of Defence and Minister of Mines and Resources to Cabinet, 16 January 1948, *DCER, Volume 14, 1948*, 1511-1513. Claxton suggested membership be offered to Mines and Resources, External, Transport, Cabinet, PJBD, Chief of General Staff, Chief of the Air Staff, Health and Welfare, Defence Research Board, Commissioner RCMP, Public Works, Chief of Naval Staff.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*

³⁰² The military was certainly aware of *Polaris* before this time. The Department of National Defence Report of 1947 records that five men were attached to the project throughout the year. Department of National Defence, *Report of the Department of National Defence for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1947*, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1947), 45. The reports of these observers clearly indicated all of the US activities including the fact that the Americans were taking pictures during their flights. It took quite a while for these reports to trigger alarm within the Canadian military. *Operation Polaris* 46/47, DHH 80-574.

the work already done and contemplated work to be done” by the Army Air Force in the Arctic.³⁰³

General William McKee, the Assistant Vice Chief of Staff of the newly formed United States Air Force (USAF), believed all operations over Canadian territory were carried out with the full coordination and concurrence of Canadian officials.³⁰⁴ He maintained that the original *Polaris* project included training, gathering weather information, navigation, and “such visual and photo reconnaissance as weather permitted.”³⁰⁵ According to McKee, the Americans used this “photography of opportunity” to identify shore lines and possible sites for radar and weather stations.³⁰⁶ The general informed the Canadians that the photographs would not be used for mapping or charting purposes.

Although General McKee tried to whitewash the additional activities of the Air Force, Canada approved neither aerial photography nor reconnaissance for the project. When the Americans carried out these activities they violated the newly established model for defence negotiations that Canadian officials thought firmly in place after the Chateau Laurier conference. They bypassed the case by case discussion called for in Recommendation 36 of the PJBD, and showed little respect to their Canadian

³⁰³ Memorandum for Commanding General Army Air Force from Guy Henry, September 16, 1947, NARA, RG 333, PJBD, Entry 17-A, Box 3, file “Top Secret General Correspondence, 1941-1956.”

³⁰⁴ Memorandum for Senior U.S. Army Member, PJBD from General William McKee, 17 October 1947, NARA, RG 333, PJBD, Entry 17-A, Box 3, file “Top Secret General Correspondence, 1941-1956.”

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

counterparts. The unauthorized American photographic activity also violated the PJBD rule for aerial photography.³⁰⁷

Certain Americans regarded air reconnaissance and photography as important enough aspects of the security plan to risk the fragile harmony in the bilateral defence relationship. In May 1946 a PJBD memorandum to the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff listed the completion of mapping and photographic programs as a pressing security requirement.³⁰⁸ On 25 November of that year, General Henry claimed that if the Canadians and Americans accepted the Air Annex portion of the Basic Security Plan, extensive mapping of Northern Canada and the Arctic should begin immediately.³⁰⁹ The Strategic Air Reconnaissance Plan presented on 24 April 1947 emphasized that reconnaissance to detect enemy infiltration, and photography to provide geophysical data, were essential to continental security. The appendix also stated that “economy of force in peace time will require that air reconnaissance be combined with meteorological, photographic, transport, or any other mission moving in the areas under consideration.”³¹⁰ A memorandum attached to this appendix recommended “that Project Polaris be continued in order to facilitate the accomplishment of the peacetime

³⁰⁷ The 36th Recommendation stated that “subject to any special arrangement which may be entered into, each country will be primarily responsible for the mapping of its own territory and for provisions of maps in accordance with agreed needs.” Memorandum of 20 November 1946, NARA, RG 218, Records of the JCS, Entry 943011, Box 019, file CCS 092 (1-10-45), Section 6.

³⁰⁸ Memorandum for Joint Chiefs of Staff from PJBD on Canada-United States Military Cooperation, NARA, RG 218, Entry 943011, Box 018, file CCS 092 (9-10-45), Section 4.

³⁰⁹ Memorandum for Major General Lauris Norstad, Plans and Operations Division from General Guy Henry on the Air Annex and Joint Security Plan, 25 November 1946, NARA, RG 59, State Department Files, PJBD, Box 2, file Basic Papers, 1946-1947.

³¹⁰ Strategic Air Reconnaissance Appendix, NARA, RG 218, Entry 943011, Box 019, file CCS 092 (9-10-45), Section 6.

surveillance of northern areas.”³¹¹ Without Canada’s permission *Polaris* became a reconnaissance and photographic operation.

If the Canadians were completely negligent in their aerial reconnaissance and photography duties, the American actions would have seemed more acceptable. The RCAF, however, was conducting aerial mapping at a good pace.³¹² The DND’s annual report claimed that by 31 March 1947 Canada’s air force surveyed 335,000 square km, and planned to complete 550,000 square km in the next fiscal year.³¹³ Furthermore, the RCAF deployed an air reconnaissance squadron to the North and established an air photography school. Not only did the Americans violate the informal political rules established for the defence relationship, they also ignored the work of their Canadian service colleagues.

On 19 November 1947, Albert Heeney informed Andrew McNaughton that discussions between RCAF and USAF officials revealed regular American reconnaissance flights and air photography in the Canadian Arctic Archipelago.³¹⁴ He worried that the Americans might use these photographs for mapping purposes – despite official denials that the USAF intended to do so.³¹⁵ Heeney argued that the Canadians authorized no regular reconnaissance flights and, unlike General McKee, the Cabinet did not believe that the American activities fell under any established program.³¹⁶ Rather

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Bercuson, “Continental Defence and Arctic Sovereignty, 1945-1950,” 162.

³¹³ *Report of the Department of National Defence for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1947*, 45.

³¹⁴ Secretary to the Cabinet to Chairman, Canadian Section, PJBD, 19 November 1947, *DCER, Volume 13, 1947*, 1518.

³¹⁵ “Secretary to the Cabinet to Chairman, Canadian Section, PJBD, 19 November 1947,” *DCER, Volume 13, 1947*, 1519.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

than raising a formal inquiry into the problem, Canada chose the informal approach offered by the PJBD.

At the next meeting of the Board, McNaughton emphasized that all USAF activity in the Arctic should be in strict accordance with a program already approved by the Canadian government.³¹⁷ He demanded that the USAF turn over all photographs and other materials in its possession. His American counterparts fully agreed with these measures but argued that “any flights which had taken place were either part of the approved Polaris project or were routine training flights which they claimed they thought had been approved in principle.”³¹⁸ Their excuses remained unconvincing. The Canadians maintained that, according to the original terms of the project, the operation had overstepped its bounds. Furthermore, as members of the PJBD they would have known that defence projects were never “approved in principle” -- there was no “blanket approval.”

The Americans made some inquiries. On 26 November 1947, Charles Deerwester wrote to O.P. Weyland, the American Director of Plans and Operations, about Polaris and suggested that the Air Force submit an official request for all desired flights over the Canadian Archipelago in order to gain fresh Canadian approvals.³¹⁹ Although not yet admitting any fault, the Americans indicated that it might be necessary to attain proper Canadian permission for the flights they wanted to undertake.

³¹⁷ Chairman, Canadian Section, PJBD to Secretary to the Cabinet, 26 November 1947, *DCER, Volume 13, 1947*, 1520.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*

³¹⁹ Charles Deerwester to the Director Plans and Operations, Department of the Air, 26 November 1947, NARA, RG 233, Files of International Military Agencies – PJBD, Entry 17-A, Box 3, file “Top Secret General Correspondence, 1941-1956” Folder 14.

Meanwhile, the Canadian section of the Board took issue with the American conclusion that all aerial activities in the Arctic fell under the auspices of *Polaris* and “that no further authorization was necessary.”³²⁰ Canadian officials investigated their records and decided that the project did not include flights such as those carried out by the USAF. David Johnson, Canadian secretary of the PJBD, wrote “it would be most unfortunate if the Board’s Journal gave the impression that once the Canadian government had authorized a particular operation, permission to undertake a similar operation could be assumed.”³²¹ Citing the initial purposes of the *Polaris* project laid out by General Henry in April 1946, the Canadian section proved that the Americans strayed from the original agreement. Weak American assertions that U.S. activities in the Arctic were proper and acceptable did not sway Canadian opinion.

As the Canadians continued to investigate Operation *Polaris*, they found more evidence of American transgressions. On 3 July 1946, General Henry told the Canadians that initial experimental flights would start in the Arctic by 1 August. The Americans delayed the flights, however, and told the Canadians they rescheduled them for early October. Johnson, however, found an article from the *New York Times* dated 20 October 1947, which revealed that the 46th Reconnaissance Squadron flew its first mission over the Arctic on 21 July 1946, in advance of the dates given by General Henry.³²² Did the Americans consider these flights part of *Polaris*, or did they belong to a separate, unauthorized project? Either way, the Americans disregarded protocol and

³²⁰ Secretary, Canadian Section, PJB to Secretary, U.S. Section, PJB, 5 December 1947, *DCER, Volume 13, 1947*, 1521.

³²¹ *Ibid.*

³²² Secretary, Canadian Section, PJB to Secretary, U.S. Section, PJB, 5 December 1947, *DCER, Volume 13, 1947*, 1522.

misinformed the Canadians. Another unauthorized article about the American overflights appeared in the *New York Times* a week later.³²³

The two *New York Times* stories, coupled with the Canadian investigation, proved that the Americans had violated the terms of the *Polaris* project, leaked publicity about the operation, and started another project before *Polaris* even started. Worst of all, the press articles raised the possibility that the Americans acquired the photographs of the Arctic for mapping purposes. Anthony Leviero's article "All Arctic is Open to the Air Force" stated that "in the year of experimentation and research, the squadron criss-crossed the Arctic in 5000 hours and 1,000,000 miles of flight."³²⁴ Besides testing men and materials in the Arctic, the journalist claimed that the American project mapped many unknown regions and made many new discoveries.³²⁵ Leviero's next report also hailed the activities of the 46th squadron and claimed that the photos taken facilitated the design of new defence installations.³²⁶ These violations were tantamount to a breach of Canada's sovereignty and rights.

The Americans had to salvage the excellent defence relations that existed before the *Polaris* incident. On 12 December, Charles Deerwester resumed his correspondence with O.P. Weyland to work through the problems arising from *Polaris*. Weyland proclaimed that the ultimate objective of the USAF program involved training the

³²³ Anthony Leviero, "Top of the World Open for a New Air Strategy," *New York Times*, sec. E, 26 October 1947.

³²⁴ Anthony Leviero, "All Arctic is Open to the Air Force," *New York Times*, sec. A, 20 October 1947.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Anthony Leviero, "Top of the World Open for a New Air Strategy," *New York Times*, sec. E, 26 October 1947.

maximum number of air crews in arctic conditions, not air photography.³²⁷ It made sense to engage in some surveillance and check for signs of enemy infiltration during these flights. Based on these assumptions, Weyland laid out a new plan, calling for two flights a week over the Arctic for “navigational training and necessary air surveillance.”³²⁸

Weyland stated that Canadian observers would be welcome and made no attempt to include aerial photography in the mission’s mandate.

Deerwester gave Weyland’s new project proposal to Andrew Foster, the Assistant Chief of British Commonwealth Affairs and member of the PJBD, on 19 December so that it could be presented to the Canadians. The Americans recognized that they made mistakes and conducted unauthorized activities in the Arctic, and the American secretary offered to his Canadian counterpart what amounted to a tentative apology. Foster advised that:

In view of the doubt which has arisen concerning the precise nature of the authority granted by the Canadian Government for the ‘Polaris’ program and in view of the questions that have come up concerning certain individual flights during recent months, it seems to me that the sensible thing to do, from the point of view of both government’s, would be to adopt Colonel Deerwester’s letter... as the basis for the program in future.³²⁹

He also assured Johnson that he did not want to evade Canadian complaints about American aerial transgressions. In fact, he took “some pains to try and find out about these flights and the authority for them.”³³⁰ His investigation found that General Henry thought of the Polaris project as “a continuing one...of general scope” and that the

³²⁷ Memorandum for Charles Deerwester from O.P. Weyland on Flights of U.S Aircraft Over Canadian Archipelago, NARA, RG 233, Files of International Military Agencies – PJBD, Entry 17-A, Box 3, file “Top Secret General Correspondence, 1941-1956” Folder 14.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Secretary of the American Section, PJBD, to Secretary of the Canadian Section, PJBD, 23 December 1947, *DCER, Volume 13, 1947*, 1523.

³³⁰ Ibid.

Americans believed their flights fell under this program.³³¹ Foster suggested starting fresh with a new American proposal, rather than dwelling on the Polaris project and its problems, since the Americans never considered the flights “a serious violation of the original Polaris authority.”³³²

Although Foster made excuses, he also informed the Canadians that if they did not wish to move on quickly he would continue his inquiries with the USAF. The Americans never formally apologized, but they allowed the Canadians to decide whether they wanted to launch a more formal inquiry. Foster did, however, apologize for the publicity about Polaris and aerial activities leaked to the press. Nonetheless, he attempted to excuse the American actions, saying that the American officer responsible had acted in “good faith.” The soldier talked to two Canadian officers attached to the Joint Staff Mission in Washington, and thought that they had cleared the release. “Subsequent investigation showed that they had not done so,” Foster explained, “but I was satisfied that we could not altogether blame the USAF officer.”³³³

In the end, the Americans took steps to correct their mistakes and listened to Canadian concerns about sovereignty and national rights. The Canadians could gracefully accept this attempt to fix the situation, or they could push for a formal investigation and inquiry. In a letter to Air Vice Marshall Morfee on 31 December 1947, David Johnson proposed that a fresh start be made by presenting the new American

³³¹ Secretary of the American Section, PJBD, to Secretary of the Canadian Section, PJBD, 23 December 1947, *DCER, Volume 13, 1947*, 1523.

³³² Secretary of the American Section, PJBD, to Secretary of the Canadian Section, PJBD, 23 December 1947, 1524.

³³³ *Ibid.*

proposal to the Canadian government.³³⁴ Morfee, the Canadian Air Member on the Board, agreed and the PJBD sent off their informal recommendation to the Canadian government. The military and government adopted the plan. In February 1948, the CDC approved the new American project which included the original goals of Operation *Polaris* as well as limited surveillance duties.³³⁵ Any photographs taken during the flights would immediately be made available to the Canadian government, and the U.S. welcomed Canadian observers. The Chiefs of Staff reminded the Americans of the need to gain the approval of the Canadian government before they engaged in aerial activities over the Arctic, especially on a “regular basis.”³³⁶ With these stipulations the new project began and the *Polaris* incident ended.

The Canadians viewed the *Polaris* incident as a violation of their country’s sovereignty and rights. Not only did unauthorized American activities resurrect sovereignty concerns, they also reinforced fears that Canada was losing control of its defence relationship with the United States. The incident forced the Canadians to do more to ensure that the Americans stopped overstepping the bounds of approved projects and played a role in Albert Heeney’s proposal for a regulatory committee for the Arctic. The episode also led to greater Canadian activity in the Arctic. Elements of the USAF exceeded the parameters of Operation *Polaris* because they considered aerial photography so important. Thus, in late June 1948 the Canadian government authorized

³³⁴ Secretary, Canadian Section, PJBD to Senior RCAF Member, PJBD, 31 December 1947, *DCER, Volume 13, 1947*, 1524.

³³⁵ Memorandum from Chiefs of Staff Committee to the Cabinet Defence Committee, 7 February 1947, *DCER, Volume 14, 1948*, 1559.

³³⁶ Memorandum from Chiefs of Staff Committee to the Cabinet Defence Committee, 7 February 1947, *DCER, Volume 14, 1948*, 1560.

the immediate establishment of an additional RCAF photography squadron for service in the North.³³⁷ Bercuson observed that this “was an indication of the increased urgency being felt in Ottawa to devote more resources to the North.”³³⁸

The episode also proved the effectiveness of the PJBD as the central forum in the Canadian-American defence relationship. The controversy surrounding *Polaris* was not sorted out by the embassies or key Canadian diplomats, but worked out almost exclusively through the PJBD. On the Canadian side, McNaughton ensured that his men always defended Canada’s national interests and was not easily deterred by American intransigence.³³⁹ The American section understood Canadian needs and sensibilities and attempted to accommodate their demands. Andrew Foster reiterated several times that the Americans did not believe the problems with the *Polaris* project were severe, but he took Canadian complaints seriously. Both sides of the PJBD operated from a position of mutual understanding and compromise, and worked out an acceptable solution.

Trevor Lloyd and the Advisory Committee on Northern Development

The *Polaris* incident coincided with the release of a report by the geographer Trevor Lloyd, the Chief of the newly formed Geographic Bureau. Lloyd had always worried about the protection of Canada’s sovereignty in the Arctic, and actively lobbied the government to take more effective control of the northern defence projects during the war. In April 1947 Lloyd wrote an article for the *International Journal*, entitled

³³⁷ Bercuson, “Continental Defence and Arctic Sovereignty, 1945-1950,” 164.

³³⁸ Bercuson, “Continental Defence and Arctic Sovereignty, 1945-1950,” 165.

³³⁹ Christopher Conliffe, “The Permanent Joint Board on Defence: 1940-1988,” in *The U.S.-Canada Security Relationship* eds. David Haglund and Joel Sokolsky, (London: Westview Press, 1989) 157.

“Canada’s Strategic North,” in which he lambasted the Canadian government for its failure to effectively develop and control the North. He noted that some Americans disputed Canada’s claims and feared that they might attempt to take control of the Arctic.³⁴⁰ Although Shelagh Grant has attempted to make something of a hero out of Lloyd as a defender of Canadian sovereignty,³⁴¹ the man clearly had an axe to grind against the Americans.

His Geographic Bureau report, released on 22 December 1947, insisted that the United States repeatedly violated Canada’s authority in the region. He insinuated that, in the case of the Arctic weather stations, the U.S. Weather Bureau attempted to make all of the important decisions independently. He also criticized the Americans for disregarding the rules for publicity established by the PJBD and for building airfields in the Arctic without permission.³⁴² Furthermore, the report noted that U.S. forces often ignored Canadian wishes and refused to accept its ally’s control and authority. Lloyd chastised the Canadian government for not doing enough to regulate particular American activities in the region. All in all, it offered a dismal, even conspiratorial, view of American activities in the North.

Canadian officials did not accept Lloyd’s report as complete truth. Group Captain W.W Bean asserted that “this memorandum seems to consist mainly of an

³⁴⁰ Trevor Lloyd, “Canada’s Strategic North,” *International Journal*, April 1947, LAC, RG 2, vol. 56, file A-25.

³⁴¹ Shelagh Grant, “Northern Nationalist: Visions of a ‘New North,’ 1940-1950,” in *For Purposes of Dominion: Essays in the Honour of Morris Zaslow*, eds. Ken Coates and William Morrison (North York: Captus University Publications, 1989).

³⁴² Memorandum to the Advisory Committee on Northern Development: Revised Summary of US Military Activities in Canada, Trevor Lloyd, LAC, RG 2, vol. 57, file A-25-5. Heeney also agreed that the scientific investigation of Operation Nanook should have been explored more thoroughly. In the 1948 operation, this was assured. Memorandum for Advisory Committee on Northern Development, 28 January 1948, *DCER, Volume 14, 1948*, 1514-1519.

attempt to show that the US is, in some clandestine fashion, attempting to carry out a lot of projects in Canadian territory without obtaining proper authority.” Bean effectively countered or disproved most of Lloyd’s accusations. He argued that the report exaggerated the U.S. role in picking sites for weather stations and the number of personnel it posted to these stations. Although the Americans wanted to establish more airfields in the Arctic, these sites fell under the original weather stations agreement and the U.S. did not want to “put one over” on the Canadians. While Bean agreed with Lloyd that the situation called for “closer liaison all around,” he argued that “the proper channel is probably through the Services not between Mines and Resources and the U.S. Service Departments, which I am sure is Trevor Lloyd’s objective.”³⁴³ Bean concluded that all of the projects mentioned in Lloyd’s report had some kind of authorization.

Other Canadian officials also criticized Lloyd’s report. At the first meeting of the newly formed Advisory Committee on Northern Development on 2 February 1948, most of the committee members labelled Lloyd’s report an “attack” on the United States. Both Heeney and Pearson commented that there did not seem to be any underlying American design to carry out activities in the Arctic without the approval of the Canadian government.³⁴⁴ Problems arose in the Arctic due to a lack of coordination and communication in Ottawa and Washington, not an American conspiracy.

Although all Canadian officials agreed that the Arctic projects required better coordination, Pearson complained at the second meeting of the ACND in June that

³⁴³ W.W. Bean, Group Captain RCAF, to Albert Heeney, 31 January 1948, LAC, RG 2, vol. 57, file A-25-5.

³⁴⁴ Extract From Minutes of First Meeting of Advisory Committee on Northern Development, 2 February 1948, *DCER, Volume 14, 1948*, 1519-1522.

difficulties continued to arise due to loosely worded authorizations and inadequate bilateral dialogue. Others on the council noted that the Canadians still struggled to attain accurate information on United States activities in Canada. On the American side, breaches of protocol often occurred when projects were undertaken on the authority of lower ranking military officers unfamiliar with the proper procedures. To fix this problem the “U.S. authorities needed constant reminding that, when operating in Canadian territory, proper authority must be obtained for every project undertaken and the Canadian authorities kept fully informed at all times.”³⁴⁵ In the end, the committee agreed that the government should keep a detailed record of all U.S. activities in Canada and ensure that it gave the Americans strongly worded authorizations for their defence projects.

The committee formed to foster improved interdepartmental coordination had its own communication problems. Disputes arose between the military representatives on the committee and their civilian colleagues over the regulation of Arctic defence projects. “To the liberal reformers, protection of sovereignty was of paramount importance; to the military, the issue threatened to interfere with their plans for North American defence,” explained Shelagh Grant.³⁴⁶ Although the two opposing groups agreed on many important issues, such as the need for an improved Canadian transport capability in the Arctic, the military members grew annoyed when sovereignty concerns hindered operations. This created tensions on the council and impeded its effectiveness.

Through 1948, the Canadian and American militaries, and even civilian agencies,

³⁴⁵ Minutes of Second Meeting of Advisory Committee on Northern Development 1 June 1948, *DCER, Volume 14, 1948*, 1525.

³⁴⁶ Grant, “Northern Nationalist: Visions of a ‘New North,’ 1940-1950,” 64.

grew increasingly annoyed with Trevor Lloyd. The geographer first managed to alienate himself from many officers in the Canadian services when he persisted in asking for information about the Canadian-American defence arrangements not required by the Geographic Bureau.³⁴⁷ He even attracted the ire of External Affairs when he “endangered the machinery for the exchange of reports and other material between the Services of the two countries by going himself or sending assistants to the U.S. Service Departments in Washington to ask for copies of various reports, etc., only part of the contents of which was relevant to his work.” The military’s dislike of Lloyd became so intense that a rift formed between the Department of National Defence and the Department of Mines and Resources, the Geographic Bureau’s parent organization.³⁴⁸ While the senior officials at the DMR continued to support Lloyd’s actions, the military grew more distrustful of his entire organization.

This atmosphere led to conflict between the military and the DMR. An especially hostile dispute broke out when the DND attempted stop the DMR from obtaining copies of the USN’s report on the Arctic operations of 1947. Even worse, the military’s distrust for the department actually permeated the U.S. services. While the Canadian observers prepared for the summer supply mission of 1948, the USN singled out the DMR personnel for security checks and “special going over.”³⁴⁹ External Affairs ordered the Canadian ambassador to tell the Americans that the RCMP fully examined

³⁴⁷ The Secretary of State for External Affairs to the Canadian Ambassador, Washington, 28 June 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3842, file 9061-J-40 pt.1.

³⁴⁸ The Secretary of State for External Affairs to the Canadian Ambassador, Washington, 28 June 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3842, file 9061-J-40 pt.1.

³⁴⁹ Undersecretary of State for External Affairs to G.L Magann, 15 September 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3842, file 9061-J-40 pt.1.

and cleared Lloyd. “Our feeling in this Department,” noted St. Laurent, “is that the explanation of Lloyd’s interest in joint defence matters is that his zeal as a geographer has carried him a bit too far in a Department which, of course, has always kept a cautious eye on U.S. activities in the Northwest Territories and especially in the Arctic Archipelago where our claims to sovereignty have not all been formally acknowledged by the United States.”³⁵⁰

Throughout the summer of 1948, Trevor Lloyd followed the annual Arctic sea supply mission like a hound dog, trying to sniff out American indiscretions. Lloyd, however, could find few people who shared his level of concern about American activities in the Arctic. “I am disappointed that no one else in town seems to know much about what is going on in the Task Force, or if they do, that they are keeping it to themselves,” Lloyd complained in August. “I have checked with Jim Wright who has no information, with the Navy and the Department of Transport, but none of them have been much help.”³⁵¹ He remained in contact with his Bureau’s observers on the mission, and presented their reports to whoever would listen.³⁵² By September, however, Lloyd grew discouraged with the entire situation and with his continued alienation from those who held important information on the Arctic defence projects.

In the middle of September rumours began to circulate about Lloyd’s imminent resignation. This helped to alleviate the strained relations. G.L Magann, the Canadian ambassador in Washington, informed his superiors at External Affairs that “it will at

³⁵⁰ The Secretary of State for External Affairs to the Canadian Ambassador, Washington, 28 June 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3842, file 9061-J-40 pt.1.

³⁵¹ Trevor Lloyd to H.L. Keenleyside, 24 August 1948, LAC, RG 85, vol. 302, file 1009-5-1.

³⁵² Trevor Lloyd to H.L. Keenleyside, 24 August 1948, LAC, RG 85, vol. 302, file 1009-5-1.

least be of some comfort to you to know that Lloyd is understood to be returning in a very few weeks to his academic pursuits at Dartmouth College (if he can get a U.S. visa, I suppose). Only this sort of a change will really get us over the long-standing Geographical Bureau-Services conflict.”³⁵³ Lloyd’s retirement represented a welcome relief for many in the military and External Affairs.

A few supporters appreciated Lloyd’s efforts to keep an eye on the Americans in the North. When Commander T. Fife, an observer on the resupply mission, heard about Lloyd’s resignation he wrote a letter to the embattled head of the Geographic Bureau. “Up North we caught a story that you were getting fed up with your job and were going to quit,” Fife stated. “I, and many others particularly those we meet in the North sincerely hope it isn’t so, we all feel that this great and growing country of ours needs you.” The sea supply mission gave Fife “a strong conviction that if we don’t get busy and vein the N.W.T. as an all Canadian show we shall have some one doing it for us, and not ‘By the powers vested therein’ but by right of ‘Dollars invested therein.’”³⁵⁴ To avoid this tragedy, men like Lloyd would need to keep pressuring the government to pay attention to the Arctic.

Despite Fife’s wishes, Lloyd returned to Dartmouth in October. He remains one of the most interesting people from this time period. Was he a defender of Canadian sovereignty betrayed by his government or a man beset by anti-Americanism who saw dark intentions where none existed? Although genuinely concerned with American actions in the Arctic, his approach was inappropriate. Instead of improving the situation,

³⁵³ Undersecretary of State for External Affairs to G.L. Magann, 15 September 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3842, file 9061-J-40 pt.1.

³⁵⁴ T. Fife to Trevor Lloyd, 17 September 1948, LAC, RG 85, vol. 302, file 1009-5-1.

he simply alienated himself from all of the people who could have helped him in his quest to strengthen Canada's control over the Arctic.

Life at the Permanent Stations

While Lloyd saw American indiscretions everywhere, the Canadians and Americans continued to get along well at the semi-permanent Loran and weather stations. The agreement for the Loran program stipulated that the commanding officer at each station and most of the administrative officers for the program come from the RCAF.³⁵⁵ At the higher level, therefore, the Canadians remained in control of the stations. Technical control, however, remained in the hands of the senior U.S. technical officer. Canadian commanding officers expressed occasional annoyance at visiting American officers who bypassed them and went straight to the American technical officer. According to historian Kenneth Eyre:

This phenomenon may be partially attributable to the fact that visiting officers were usually on a technical inspection and hence their interest would primarily lie with the Loran operation itself. On the other hand, the blithe assumption by individual American servicemen in the late 1940s and 1950s that the Canadian Arctic was really the American Arctic was a common occurrence in the North.³⁵⁶

Despite the occasional American indiscretion, the working relationships at the Loran sites usually proved to be cooperative and friendly.

The Canadians could not train enough personnel to replace the U.S. servicemen at the Loran stations in 1948. The Canadians trained RCAF personnel in the

³⁵⁵ Report on the Low Frequency LORAN Program, Privy Council Office, 5 August 1947, DHH 112.3m2 (565).

³⁵⁶ Eyre, *Custos Borealis*.

experimental chain and slowly gathered enough men to take over full responsibility for the stations. Meanwhile, the Americans continued to offer technical supervision at the sites.³⁵⁷ By the time the Canadians actually took over the Loran stations in October 1948, however, the program was already being phased out. The Loran's method of obtaining fixes of rotation worked well in places further south, but the difficult ionospheric conditions of the Arctic did not allow the stations to send out signals strong enough to determine the exact position of aircraft.³⁵⁸ By the end of 1948 the stations were practically abandoned save for skeleton crews performing housekeeping duties. Critics labelled the project a 'white elephant' after reports surfaced that it cost Canadian and American taxpayers over 50 million dollars.³⁵⁹ Although a brilliant idea, in the end the Loran stations simply could not cope with the northern environment.

With the weather stations, as in most joint ventures, the relationship between the Canadians and the Americans differed from station to station. Throughout the joint enterprise, however, the Canadians continuously worked to improve their control. In the spring of 1948 two more stations were established at Isachsen, Ellef Ringnes Island and Mould Bay, Prince Patrick Island.³⁶⁰ In the summer of 1950, the Canadians and Americans successfully established a fifth weather station at Alert, Ellesmere Island, which became the northernmost settled point in the Canadian Arctic.

³⁵⁷ Memorandum for Advisory Committee on Northern Development, 28 January 1948, *DCER, Volume 14, 1948*, 1514-1518.

³⁵⁸ Secretary of State for External Affairs to Canadian Ambassador, Washington, 28 June 1950, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3675, file 5138-40, pt.2.

³⁵⁹ Eyre, *Custos Borealis*.

³⁶⁰ *Weather Station Five Year Report*. Besides the control station at Resolute Bay, which had a larger staff, the weather stations typically had a crew of eight that included weather observers, radiosonde operators, general maintenance personnel, and a cook.

By 1948 the responsibilities of the Canadian official in charge (OIC) and his American executive officer were well established. The Canadian in charge was responsible for the overall administration of the station, for the safety and security of its personnel, its scientific programme, the preparation of official reports and for the maintenance of morale and discipline. The American executive officer remained in charge of the administration and welfare of U.S. personnel and property, and supervised the technical work at the station, including all mechanical maintenance. He was also “responsible for the amicable international relationship of his US subordinates with Canadians and Canadian authorities.”³⁶¹ Peter Inglis, a reporter permitted to visit some of the stations in the early 1950’s, wrote: “For the sake of Canadian sovereignty, the official-in-charge at each station is Canadian. But anything he does is subject to appeal to Ottawa and Washington by his executive officer, who is American. This gives the executive officer something very close to veto power.”³⁶²

In April 1952, External Affairs sent its first observer into the Canadian Arctic to tour the weather stations and to study some of the problems involved in their operation. The entire tour lasted only a week, hardly enough time to make impressions and draw up conclusions. R.A.J. Phillips noted that, on paper, the command and control arrangements at the weather stations seemed a “good means of protecting Canadian sovereignty with a minimum expenditure of manpower.” The greater pay the Americans received, however, caused tension as did the lack of control the Canadian official in charge retained over U.S. personnel. Furthermore, when disagreements erupted between

³⁶¹ *Weather Station Five Year Report.*

³⁶² Peter Inglis, “The Unknown Canada Chapter 6: Whose Arctic?,” LAC, RG 25, vol. 3842, file 9061-H-40 pt.2.

the OIC and his executive, they were often sent to Ottawa or Washington for arbitration. These situations occurred because the American second-in-command was not clearly subordinate to the Canadian in charge. When this system did not work correctly, the consequences could be serious. In one unfortunate case at Resolute Bay an OIC troubled with melancholy slowly lost his control to the U.S. executive officer and committed suicide.³⁶³

According to Phillips, the central problem with the weather station program rested in recruitment. On some of these remote stations, the Canadian government chose to put 21 or 22 year old students in charge. Suddenly these young men found themselves “responsible for perhaps a million dollars worth of equipment” and sometimes they became “the senior Canadian official in thousands of square miles of Canadian territory.” Obviously the ideal solution for Canada would be to take over the stations completely. Phillips noted, however, that some government officials disagreed with this option, lest the Americans withdraw their financial support for the program. In lieu of this, Phillips suggested that the Canadians provide an authoritative senior officer and supply essential personnel for the operation of the stations – advice that the Canadian tried to take in subsequent years.³⁶⁴

Individual personality, not nationality, created most of the tension at the stations. The hardship of isolation and the boredom either brought out the best or worst in the personnel. The weather stations, however, had a yearly turnover rate, and the Canadian and American meteorological services could not effectively screen fifty replacements

³⁶³ Arctic Operations, 9 May 1952, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3351, file 9061-G-40 pt.3.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

annually.³⁶⁵ When Captain A.C Chouinard, a Canadian naval observer with the 1948 resupply mission, visited the central weather station at Resolute Bay he “found a very poor set-up ashore. After a few enquiries we found that they had trouble during the winter. The people on the station are not congenial, housing is poorly situated and very badly kept. One of the Department of Transport Radio Operators who is stationed at Resolute Bay, is a Union man and this has created ill feeling amongst the others.”³⁶⁶ Relations at the stations still remained quite good. A 1948 report on the construction phase at Isachsen noted that no nationalistic tensions existed and described morale as ‘first class.’³⁶⁷ When Chouinard visited Eureka Sound he found everything under perfect control and clean, complete with well dressed weather bureau personnel in splendid spirits. No complaints existed between the Canadians and Americans, only “good cooperation and feelings.”³⁶⁸ Such a system could not have worked without a spirit of co-operation between Canadian and American forces. The Americans at these stations did not want to challenge Canada’s *de facto* sovereignty over the Arctic. They simply sought to get along with their allies.

Canada strengthened its control in the region by making American personnel at the stations adhere to Canadian regulations. In the summer of 1947 the Northwest Territories Council decided to allow the army and scientific stations in the Canadian

³⁶⁵ *Weather Station Five Year Report.*

³⁶⁶ Report of Captain A.C. Chouinard, RCN Retired, DOT, Remarks and Recommendations of Observer, Comments on Canadian Stations Visited During the Trip, 22 September 1948, LAC, RG 85, vol. 828, file 87-2-1, pt.2.

³⁶⁷ Memorandum on Isachsen Island Operation As Observed on 13 April 1948, LAC RG 25, vol. 6298, file 9061-A-40, pt.3-1, 2.

³⁶⁸ Report of Captain A.C. Chouinard, RCN Retired, DOT, Remarks and Recommendations of Observer, Comments on Canadian Stations Visited During the Trip, 22 September 1948, LAC, RG 85, vol. 828, file 87-2-1, pt.2.

Arctic to shoot two caribou per person each year for food purposes. By the beginning of 1948, however, the number of caribou plummeted rapidly throughout the Territories. The Council revoked the hunting permit, and Canadians and Americans complied.³⁶⁹ In March, Commander Reichelderfer of the U.S. Weather Bureau informed the Canadians that there would be no fresh meat for the stations at Isachsen and Prince Patrick in the coming year. He asked the Canadians if they would allow the two stations to take two muskox, two caribou and ten geese for the year.³⁷⁰ The Canadians informed Reichelderfer, however, that his request could not be received favourably by the Department of Mines and Resources, who considered any infraction of the Game Preserve regulations a serious matter.³⁷¹

Accordingly, Canadian officials enforced game laws throughout the Arctic. In February 1949, R.A Gibson, the Deputy Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, informed the Americans that due to a scarcity of meat no hunting permits could be issued to station personnel. If an emergency developed, the personnel could approach the local RCMP officer to plead their case and he could authorize the taking of caribou meat.³⁷² The American government, the U.S. Weather Bureau, the military and the personnel on the ground all acknowledged Canada's right to make and enforce these regulations. In addition, the Americans proved compliant in ordering their scientists visiting the Arctic

³⁶⁹ Precis – Northwest Territories Council, Re: Hunting Privileges Personnel at Arctic Stations, 6 January 1948, LAC, RG 85, Vol. 2084, File 1730.

³⁷⁰ Memorandum – U.S. Government, Fresh Meat at Isachsen and Patrick, 1948, LAC, RG 12, vol. 2797, file 6754-1291, pt.1.

³⁷¹ Andrew Thomson, Controller, to Commander Reichelderfer, Chief, U.S. Weather Bureau, 2 March 1948, LAC, RG 12, vol. 2797, file 6754-1291, pt.1.

³⁷² R.A. Gibson, Deputy Commissioner to the Commissioner, RCMP, Ottawa Re: Hunting Privileges Personnel at Arctic Stations, 14 February 1949, LAC, RG 85, Vol. 2084, File 1730.

to seek proper Canadian authorization.³⁷³ American acceptance of these regulations translated into acceptance of Canada's control and sovereignty over the Arctic islands. Gradual acquisition seemed to be working on the ground.

Canada still lacked control over the customs privileges enjoyed by U.S. personnel deployed at the stations in 1948. Although Canadian and American personnel were supposed to obtain a permit from the Northwest Territories Council to purchase and consume alcohol, few actually did. Rather, a habit formed of personnel smuggling liquor into the stations in their luggage, in direct contravention of Canadian customs laws for the Arctic.³⁷⁴ Although the DMR knew this, they believed that External Affairs implicitly approved actions and did not take measures to stop the practice.³⁷⁵ At Frobisher Bay and other sites, the Americans actually opened canteens and sold American liquor. Section 91 of the Northwest Territories Act prohibited the importation of liquor for sale or possession without the special permission of the Commissioner. Additionally, Section 92 of the Act prohibited the importation of liquor into the territories from any place outside Canada.³⁷⁶ These actions by U.S. personnel challenged Canadian authority, but the unwillingness of the government to crack down on these illegal practices was the primary cause.

In early March 1948, the government attempted to improve its enforcement of customs regulations. At a conference on the weather station program, the Canadians

³⁷³ J.G. Wright, Chief of the Arctic Division, Department of Mines and Resource to Group Captain Bean, Secretary, ACND, 18 March 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3841, file 9061-A-40, pt.2.

³⁷⁴ Minutes of Canada-United States Meeting to Discuss Plans for Arctic Weather Station Programme for 1948, 11 March 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3841, file 9061-A-40, pt.2.

³⁷⁵ Keenleyside to Pearson, 18 June 1948, LAC, RG 85, vol. 2083, file 7140-2.; Gibson to Thomson, 8 July 1948, LAC, RG 85, vol. 2083, file 7140-2.

³⁷⁶ J.G. Wright to Mr. Gibson, 23 July 1948, LAC, RG 85, vol. 2083, file 7140-3.

finally brought up the issue of liquor permits. Charles Hubbard suggested that liquor for the weather stations be supplied and relegated by the Canadians, but the Americans could be allowed to continue bringing in their yearly supply of cigarettes direct from U.S. sources.³⁷⁷ Rather than settle the issue, however, both the Canadians and Americans decided it required further study. In the meantime, the U.S. Weather Bureau applied for permits to legalize the possession of liquor by their personnel and sought permission to operate a canteen at Resolute Bay. On its own accord the Northwest Territories Council had issued the Americans Class C liquor permits and authorized the Canadian official in charge at Resolute to purchase and sell liquor. At a meeting on 23 July, diplomats agreed that officials in charge of Arctic installations could sell liquor, so long as they purchased it in Canada or from the Northwest Territories Council. In addition, the only cigarettes that could be sold at these posts would be those purchased in Canada or imported after proper customs declarations and payment of duties.³⁷⁸ The allies resolved the customs issue by July 1948, with no harm done to Canada's sovereignty.

By late 1948 the Loran program and the weather stations project continued to operate in absence of a formal note. The USAF had become less enthusiastic about making written agreements for the weather or Loran stations because of the need to register any such arrangement under Article 102 of the United Nations Charter. This surprised the Canadians who thought the USAF required formal notification to justify its expenditures. The complexity of the programs also seemed to demand an agreement

³⁷⁷ Minutes of Canada-United States Meeting to Discuss Plans for Arctic Weather Station Programme for 1948, 11 March 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3841, file 9061-A-40, pt.2.

³⁷⁸ J.G. Wright to Mr. Gibson, 23 July 1948, LAC, RG 85, vol. 2083, file 7140-3.

setting forth respective responsibilities, ownership of materials, the possibility of Canadians taking over posts, and the problem of transport and supply. Some Canadian officials also wanted to show the note to the public as proof of the strict regulations the Americans followed while serving in the Canadian North. Without such an agreement, however, politicians could stand up in Parliament and say that the United States retained no rights in Canada and remained in the Arctic at the government's pleasure.³⁷⁹ Accordingly, both countries deemed the need for a formal note laying out the Loran and weather stations programs unnecessary. The two countries engaged in these large scale projects without any official agreement. This highlights the cooperative and informal working relationship that developed between the U.S. and Canada.

Kilt and Cane at Fort Churchill

The ongoing relationship at Fort Churchill also reflected the respect of U.S. personnel for Canadian control and authority. An American report from the end of 1948 stressed the difficult conditions at the Fort, which included complete isolation from the amenities of civilization, crowded and inadequate living quarters, and severe weather. Nevertheless, the morale of the U.S. personnel remained high and they never registered a complaint against the Canadians,³⁸⁰ even though their hosts could have provided better facilities. Another American report emphasized the excellent working relationship that

³⁷⁹ Minute Sheet, 9 December 1948, Exchange of Notes on Weather Stations and LORAN Stations, LAC, RG 25, vol. 2127, file Defence – Weather Stations, pt.2.

³⁸⁰ Headquarters, 7099th Area Service Unit, First Arctic Test Detachment, US Army, Fort Churchill, 14 December 1948, Subject: Leave of Absence, NARA, RG 338, Entry 37042, file "HQ First Arctic Test Detachment, Organization and Planning."

developed between the technical staff of each nation.³⁸¹ Canadian reports echoed these sentiments.

In August of 1948 two member of External Affairs, Jerry Riddell and Jim George, visited Churchill to investigate relations on the ground. The two men reported that everything they saw and everything they heard indicated that Canadian military authorities remained “firmly in control of the camp, and that the Americans were there for specific and limited purposes only, by grace rather than by right.” Both the Canadian and American personnel seemed to recognize this situation and accepted it in a “casual and informal way that made emphasis on the letter of the agreement unnecessary.” Relations between personnel remained natural, friendly and informal, and the Canadian military authorities in the camp carried out their responsibilities in such a manner that “their position was accepted as a matter of course.”³⁸²

From the very beginning of the visit Riddell understood that the Canadians remained the dominant force at Churchill:

When we arrived at Churchill, we were met at the airport by a small party which took us to our quarters. Of three drivers, two were American soldiers and one a Canadian. The party was in charge of a Canadian regimental sergeant-major complete in every detail according to the pattern which is familiar to us, even to waxed mustache and leather covered cane. The officer who met us was a major of the Seaforth Highlanders, in kilts. In spite of the presence of United States soldiers, the environment could not possibly have been less American in character.³⁸³

³⁸¹ An Introduction to Churchill and Surrounding Area, by 7099th ASU, NARA, RG 156, Entry 646-A, Box A764.

³⁸² Memorandum for the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Jerry Riddell, 23 August 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3346, file 9061-40.

³⁸³ Memorandum for the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Jerry Riddell, 23 August 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3346, file 9061-40.

The base looked Canadian (or at least British), acted Canadian, and was controlled by Canadians. There was no apparent threat to Canada's *de facto* sovereignty. Riddell also underlined the importance of the Fort, which acted a giant scientific laboratory geared towards improving northern transportation and communication.³⁸⁴ Brooke Claxton wholeheartedly agreed with the report from External Affairs. When he visited the Fort, the relationship between the Americans and Canadians also struck him as "pretty well ideal." According to Claxton, the trick to these good relations rested in the assumption by the Canadians of full responsibility for the housekeeping duties at the Fort. This relieved the Americans of a lot of routine work and "psychologically compensate[d] them for their lack of control."³⁸⁵

Fort Churchill was a prime example of relationship between Canadians and Americans at most permanent installations. While the Americans could have been bitter at their lack of control, particularly given the money that they invested, they remained ideal guests. Churchill remained a distinctly Canadian post.

American Respect

The *Polaris* incident and the conditions at the permanent installations highlight the cooperative nature of the defence relationship in the post war years. Unauthorized activities and American indiscretions did occur in the Arctic, but these were relatively few and far between and senior American officials always fixed these mistakes. Clearly, American transgressions did not represent a conspiracy by the American government to

³⁸⁴ Memorandum for the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, RG Riddell, 23 August 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3346, file 9061-40.

³⁸⁵ Brooke Claxton to L.B. Pearson, 27 August 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3346, file 9061-40.

steal the Canadian Arctic. As historian Whitney Lackenbauer described, “indiscretions by lower level American officials (usually military) were always met by loud Canadian protests and were not indicative of the regard for Canadian sovereignty among high level U.S. decision makers.”³⁸⁶ The American government accepted the Canadian right to control events in the Arctic and took action to see its people followed suit.

In resolving the Polaris incident, the Canadians won a diplomatic victory and strengthened their role in the defence relationship with the United States. The controversy represented a breach of the bilateral protocols so painstakingly constructed in 1946 and 1947, and the Canadians realized that they could not ignore this violation. They took a stand, deciding to “go to the mat” with the Americans and let the PJBD work out a mutually satisfactory solution. Mutual accommodation of interests solidified a relationship built on cooperation and respect.

With a solid defence relationship in place, the Canadian decision to adopt a policy of gradual acquisition in the Arctic makes a great deal of sense. The Americans did not wish to undermine Canada’s terrestrial claims in the region. They just wanted the relationship to function smoothly, and recognized Canada’s sovereignty and control accordingly.

³⁸⁶ Lackenbauer, “Right and Honourable: Mackenzie King, Canadian-American Bilateral Relations, and Canadian Sovereignty in the Northwest, 1943-1948,” 162.

Chapter 5: Naval Missions and Airstrips

While the more permanent installations posed no significant threat to Canada's control over the Arctic by mid-1948, worries persisted over northern naval expeditions and airstrips. Canada remained completely dependent on the United States for the resupply of the Arctic stations and desperately attempted to find competent ways to exert some control over these activities. This posed problems, given that the only Canadian presence on these naval missions came from observers the Americans allowed onboard their ships. The Arctic airstrips placed Canada in an equally difficult position. The Americans wanted these airbases for strategic purposes and planned for expanded operations, while Canada worried about their implications for sovereignty and authority in the region. Between 1948 and 1949 these became the two most pressing issues on the Canadian agenda.

The resupply mission of the summer of 1948 caused difficulties for Canadian officials, although it got off to a promising start. In planning for the mission, the United States carefully took Canadian sensitivities into consideration. The operation plan for *Task Force 80* noted the difficulties that defence operations created for the Canadian government, given the serious division that still existed inside the government and the public about Canada's participation in continental defence.³⁸⁷ The two most pressing matters emerging from the U.S. naval expedition and the other Arctic defence projects centred on the question of sovereignty and control of the projects and publicity. The

³⁸⁷ Report of Arctic Summer Op. 1948 2 - US Atlantic Commander Task Force, Arctic Operation Summer 1948, Operation Plan No. 1-48, 16 June 1948, NARA, RG 218, Entry 7, Box 4. The report highlighted the divisions within the cabinet, especially between St. Laurent and Claxton over defence matters.

report noted that “these issues, after numerous difficulties and altercations, finally have found effective answers through the efforts of the Permanent Joint Board on Defense, Canada-United States. Care must still be taken to insure that small oversights do not occur to mar present friendly relations.”³⁸⁸ The Americans in command of the naval expedition understood the need to respect Canada’s interests.

The Canadians also understood the need to better direct and watch over American naval activities. Few complaints emerged from the two previous naval cruises to the Arctic, but Canada did not regulate the operations as extensively as it could have. For instance, the Canadians never asked the Americans to disclose the routes they would take or to provide information on the additional studies they would perform. In March 1948 G.L. Magann, the Canadian ambassador in Washington, suggested that in reply to the American request to send a task force into the Arctic in the coming summer, the Canadians should demand an outline of all activities in which the expedition would engage. The government required a “full picture” of what would happen during the expedition “so as to avoid the repetition of the confusion that arose in connection with the previous naval expeditions as a result of their engaging in activities without an entirely clear authorization having been given for them in all cases.” Magann also expressed concern about American planners’ lack of knowledge of the directives outlining joint defence publicity.³⁸⁹ Past events proved that the Americans did not control

³⁸⁸ Report of Arctic Summer Op. 1948 2 - US Atlantic Commander Task Force, Arctic Operation Summer 1948, Operation Plan No. 1-48, 16 June 1948, NARA, RG 218, Entry 7, Box 4.

³⁸⁹ The Canadian Ambassador to The Secretary of State for External Affairs, 27 March 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3841, file 9061-H-40.

publicity as carefully as their Canadian counterparts. Magann hoped their attitude would change in preparation for the upcoming naval mission.

Canadian officials also set about assuring that they could send more observers on the 1948 mission than in previous years. In mid-June, Hume Wrong asked Andrew Foster that the ten spots offered by the United States Navy be increased to eighteen. He argued that the work done by the observers would benefit all involved and that he could not “overestimate to you the importance which is attached to this matter by my Government.” Wrong also admitted that the Department of Transport planned to bring two to three icebreakers into line over the next few years to assume a greater share of the supply responsibility. The Department required experience in the far north and was “most anxious to acquire the necessary navigation and construction picture through Chouinard who has had much icebreaker experience in waters to the south of those to be visited by the Sea Supply Mission.”³⁹⁰ Hume Wrong suggested that the Canadian observers would be willing to sleep on the floors of the crowded U.S. ships.³⁹¹ This idea did not sit well with Canadian officials who never wanted to give the Americans the upper hand while carrying out defence activities on Canadian territory. As one report stated “the Americans are very conscious of creature-comforts, and it has been brought home to me in talks even with people normally as good-natured as Mr. Foster and Miss Tibbetts that we have lost face by making this offer. I am so sorry this one slipped past

³⁹⁰ H.H. Wrong to Mr. Andrew Foster, Assistant Chief, Division of British Commonwealth Affairs, 17 June 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3841, file 9061-H-40. Captain Chouinard was one of the Department of Transport’s senior icebreaker captains. From today’s perspective it is hard to imagine the Canadians so nonchalantly allowing a large number of US navy ships to transit what are now considered to be internal waters, let alone admitting their lack of experience in the region. Nevertheless, few Canadian officials contemplated claiming the northern waters at the time.

³⁹¹ H.H. Wrong to Mr. Andrew Foster, Assistant Chief, Division of British Commonwealth Affairs, 17 June 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3841, file 9061-H-40.

me this year, but it just did not register, somehow (one of the flaws of a militaristic training, no doubt).”³⁹² The Canadians would never again suggest that their observers could sleep on the floor, below the Americans in their comfortable cots.

Eighteen Canadian observers from several different departments accompanied *Task Force 80*. By the time the ships left Boston everything appeared in order and the Canadians seemed in firm control of the situation. In their hands they held operation plans for the expedition, including details of all the experiments that the Americans hoped to carry out. Nevertheless, the observers began to send worrisome reports back to their departments and agencies. On 8 August 1948, Tom Weir from Mines and Resources informed Trevor Lloyd that an icebreaker, the USS *Edisto*, broke a record by pushing to a position beyond Cape Sheridan on Ellesmere Island. Weir noted that even in the age of atomic power, a ship could only make only it slightly further North than the explorer Robert Peary did in 1908. The *Edisto* had nonetheless ventured further into the Arctic ice than any ship before her. Weir understood the implications of the accomplishment, telling Lloyd “it is really atomic isn’t it? It is really something to do for Canadians in the near future, and it is in my opinion good news for Dr. Keenleyside and for you in their efforts to get full support of [the] Canadian Government for Arctic projects.”³⁹³ Weir hoped the American success would embarrass his government into deploying its own ships into the Arctic.

The Canadian government also understood the implications of the *Edisto*’s accomplishment. A report on the sea supply mission explained that “this event is, you

³⁹² Minute Sheet, Arctic Weather Station Programme, Summer, 1948, 23 June 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 2127, file Defence: Weather Stations, pt.1.

³⁹³ Tom Weir to Trevor Lloyd, 8 August 1948, LAC, RG 85, vol. 302, file 1009-5-1.

will see, partly ‘buried’ in the draft release simply because it appears dangerous, from the sovereignty point of view, to make an official announcement to the effect that the ships went further afield than did that of the British explorer Nares (who went much further himself by sled).”³⁹⁴ D.M. Johnson suggested that the press statement on the expedition not mention the journey of the *Edisto*. He argued that those in the United States who still toyed with the idea of claiming territory in the Canadian North often focused on the northern part of Ellesmere Island and any admission of the *Edisto*’s accomplishment would likely encourage them.³⁹⁵ Although this would be the ideal solution, avoiding any sovereignty fallout and averting embarrassment, officials realistically feared one of the 700 U.S. navy personnel assigned to the mission would leak the accomplishment.³⁹⁶ As a result, the government chose to release the news to the press, but made the rather extraordinary feat as ordinary as possible.

Another event transpired during the mission that irritated the Canadian government much more than *Edisto*’s voyage past Cape Sheridan. Prior to giving approval for the expedition, the Canadian government insisted that the USN provide the proposed route of the Task Force and required the U.S. commanders to seek Canadian approval before they took any alternate routes.³⁹⁷ The government did not want the Americans to feel as though they could sail anywhere in the Arctic at their own

³⁹⁴ Memorandum for Secretary of State for External Affairs, 23 September 1948, Press Release on the Sea Supply Mission to the Arctic Weather Stations, *DCER, Volume 14, 1948*, 1538; Draft Press Release, 27 September 1948, *DCER, Volume 14, 1948*, 1540; Admiral George Nares was a British naval officer who avidly explored the Arctic in the 1870’s, including a voyage in search of the North Pole on board the *Alert*.

³⁹⁵ D.M Johnson to Mr. Magann, Canadian Ambassador, 24 September 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3841, file 9061-G-40.

³⁹⁶ Memorandum for Secretary of State for External Affairs, 23 September 1948, Press Release on the Sea Supply Mission to the Arctic Weather Stations, *DCER, Volume 14, 1948*, 1538.

³⁹⁷ Counsellor, Embassy United States, to Assistant Chief, Commonwealth Affairs Division, Department of State of United States, 27 September 1948, *DCER, Volume 14, 1948*, 1539-1540.

discretion. Unfortunately, the Americans decided to use the Fury and Hecla Strait on the return trip to Boston. Captain Dufek, the Task Force commander, notified the senior Canadian observer, but it remained his responsibility to inform the Canadian government. He failed to do so.³⁹⁸ Since the USS *Wyandot*, a transport ship attached to the expedition, returned via the proposed original route, Canadian officials later concluded that “it is plain from the information already available that the change was made not for operational reasons but because Captain Dufek wished to do so and because he had forgotten the instruction which said he was not to change his route without permission.”³⁹⁹ Dufek’s actions also annoyed the Canadians because the two U.S. icebreakers became the first ships to successfully transit the Fury and Hecla Strait.

This breach of protocol challenged Canada’s control over what happened in the Arctic, and Canadian officials set about correcting the situation. They wanted to ensure the Americans understood that in future naval operations in the northern waters “there must be no further excursions into areas that are quite irrelevant to the weather station programme.”⁴⁰⁰ The Canadians also informed USN authorities that deviation from previously agreed upon plans would greatly impede the ability of the U.S. to secure approval from Canada for its defence proposals.⁴⁰¹ Several Canadian officials wanted to launch a complaint against the unauthorized use of the Fury and Hecla Strait, but G.L. Magann doubted the validity of Canada’s case. Once before the ambassador had made a

³⁹⁸ ACND-General, Vol. 1, memo by C. C. Eberts, 19 November 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 5912, file 50197-40.

³⁹⁹ Magann to Johnson, 13 October 1948, LAC RG 25, vol. 3841, file 9061-G-40.

⁴⁰⁰ Memorandum by Defence Liaison Division for Acting Head, Defence Liaison Division, November 19, 1948, *DCER, Volume 14, 1948*, 1544-1555.

⁴⁰¹ Counsellor, Embassy United States, to Assistant Chief, Commonwealth Affairs Division, Department of State of United States, 27 September 1948, *DCER, Volume 14, 1948*, 1540.

protest to the State Department about something already approved by the Canadian Joint Staff, and he did not want to make the same mistake. He decided to ensure that some section of the RCN had indeed informed the USN of the need to seek the government's approval before travelling through the Strait.⁴⁰² He discovered that Commander Fife, an observer on the *Edisto*, telephoned Ottawa to ask Naval Headquarters for charts of the Strait. The Chief of the Naval Staff quickly called the Canadian Joint Staff with instructions to find out why the task force required these charts. The Joint Staff started asking questions around Washington and found that, while the USN did not plan to enter the strait, if these plans changed the Chief of Naval Operations would be consulted. Magann could not tell if anyone involved cared that the Chief of Naval Operations was an American, not Canadian.⁴⁰³ Either way the Canadians soon dropped the matter.

Magann's investigation revealed some troubling issues that required clarification. All of the conversations that Magann discovered took place over the telephone, leaving him with no documentary evidence. In addition, Lieutenant Russel, the Joint Staff man who actually looked into the matter, took his leave in Mexico. The story given to Magann came from another officer who overheard the conversation. According to this officer, Russell never indicated to the Americans that they would have to seek Canadian permission before changing course. "If, of course, it turns out that there is some usable evidence that Russell told the United States Navy that the approval of the Canadian Government must be obtained," Magann noted, "our hand in taking this up with the State

⁴⁰² G.L. Magann to Mr. Johnson, 27 September 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3841, file 9061-H-40.

⁴⁰³ G.L. Magann to Mr. Johnson, 27 September 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3841, file 9061-H-40.

Department would be greatly strengthened.”⁴⁰⁴ The ambassador never found any.

Indeed, Russell may have approved the changing of the route through his silence, making the whole issue at least partially Canada’s fault.

Magann’s investigation revealed that a lack of effective coordination in continental defence planning played a role in the USN’s decision to use the Fury and Hecla Strait. While the American commander understood that he had to consult a Canadian authority figure if he changed the mission’s route (and he failed to do this) a lack of concerted effort on the Canadian side also contributed to the confusion. With the results of this investigation fresh in his mind, Magann wrote a far gentler and less accusatory letter to William Snow, his contact at the State Department, than originally intended. He inquired as to what happened and reminded the State Department of the need to inform the Canadian government before deviating from approved plans.⁴⁰⁵

The Americans did not accept the gentle criticism of their actions. Snow replied that prior to the voyage the Canadian government only insisted that it be told the probable routes and left the USN with the impression that the actual routes need not be rigidly followed. Even if the Canadian government asked for the specific routes the USN would take, the commander required some operational latitude given the hazards of travel in the Arctic waters. In addition, one of the Canadian observers on the mission sponsored the decision to use the Fury and Hecla Strait.⁴⁰⁶ Snow had certainly raised some valid points, and Magann saw “a great deal of merit in Mr. Snow’s implied

⁴⁰⁴ G.L. Magann to Mr. Johnson, 27 September 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3841, file 9061-H-40.

⁴⁰⁵ G.L. Magann to Mr. Johnson, 27 September 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3841, file 9061-H-40.

⁴⁰⁶ William P. Snow, Division of British Commonwealth Affairs, to Mr. Magann, Canadian Embassy, 11 October 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3841, file 9061-G-40.

criticism of the relatively loose way we tie up affairs of this nature.”⁴⁰⁷ Magann argued that a formal exchange of letters should lay out the conditions that the Canadian government wanted followed prior to the next mission to the Arctic.

Magann still believed that Canada could complain about Dufek’s ‘operational decision’ to change routes. The ambassador argued that it would have been “only common sense on the part of Captain Dufek to send telegraphic notice that he had found it necessary to change the route for operational reasons.”⁴⁰⁸ Furthermore, since the *Wyandot* returned to Boston using the accepted route, Dufek did not change the route for operational reasons. He simply wanted to do so. The Canadians, satisfied that the USN would take disciplinary action against Dufek, made no formal complaint. The Canadians later found out that the Commander was “in very hot water” for his mistake.⁴⁰⁹

A third event during the resupply mission of *Task Force 80* also caused the Canadian government consternation. In early August, Charles Hubbard, who accompanied the mission, reconnoitred Ellesmere Island. He came across a whiskey bottle full of papers in a cairn on Cape Sheridan. The documents came from Captain R.E Peary’s USN expedition of 1905 and from the voyage of G.S. Nares in 1876. On 4 August, Captain Chouinard, the senior Canadian observer, viewed the documents in Dufek’s cabin. The commander told the Canadian that he wanted to take these relics to the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis and asked him to make copies of the documents.

⁴⁰⁷ Mr. Magaan, Canadian Embassy, to Mr. Johnson, 13 October 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3841, file 9061-G-40.

⁴⁰⁸ Mr. Magaan, Canadian Embassy to Mr. Johnson, 13 October 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3841, file 9061-G-40.

⁴⁰⁹ Memorandum of a Conversation With Lieutenant J.H MacLean, a Canadian who was on the sea supply mission of 1948, 1 October 1948, LAC, RG 85, vol. 2083, file 7140-3.

As Chouinard set about making the copies, the other observers insisted that he demand the Americans place the documents in his custody. According to the old seaman, “the opinions voiced had all the makings of a very unpleasant situation which was averted when I advised them that due thought had been given to such action and I had decided that it would be neither polite or politic to many any such demands at the moment.” He feared that if the Canadians made an issue over custody of these documents, the Americans might ignore them the next time U.S. personnel made a discovery.⁴¹⁰ Again both the Americans and Canadians erred. Hubbard, involved in weather station planning since the start, and the other U.S. officers should have been aware of the Northwest Territories Administration regulations that forbade anyone from taking archaeological material from the Canadian Arctic. The Canadian observers also should have known about this regulation, chastised Hubbard for removing the whiskey bottle without a permit, and confiscated the materials. The Canadians had much to learn. An occurrence at Slidre Fiord also annoyed the Canadians. Two American servicemen went ashore and shot four hares in violation of the Canadian Game Laws for the Arctic Preserve. John P. Kelsall, an observer from the Dominion Wildlife Service, understood that the men did not know of the Game Laws, but he informed an American officer that he had to tell Ottawa. The Americans took the offense seriously and publicly punished both men. Besides this one case, Kelsall concluded that “all game laws have been adhered to in the most gratifying manner and ...there can be no doubt in the mind of

⁴¹⁰ Observers Narrative of USN *Task Force 80*, 15th July to 19th September, 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3841, file 9061-G-40.; Afterwards, Deputy Minister of Mines and Resources Hugh Keenleyside explained that in removing the originals and replacing them with exact copies, Dufek had simply been following the “usual custom” in such matters. Keenleyside to Lloyd, 30 August 1948, LAC, RG 85, vol. 302, file 1009-5, pt.1.

anyone that Canadian Game laws will be respected at all times.”⁴¹¹ In this case Canadian observers proved sharp enough to note and reprimand an American violation of approved conduct. In other situations the observers made careless errors.

In an incredible lapse in judgement, Captain Chouinard informed his American hosts of his desire to name points in the Arctic after Captain Dufek and the other American officers on the expedition. Obviously, the Canadian government did not want points in the Arctic where Canadians rarely set foot named after Americans. While Ottawa officials managed to avoid an awkward situation by claiming Canada did not name places after living people, a wiser Canadian observer would never have created such a situation.⁴¹² Chouinard did not even realize his error when the Canadian government rejected his request and he was upset by the stipulation that land could only be named after a deceased person.⁴¹³ In the future, Canadian observers would require better training to avoid such mistakes.

Accompanying these problems was a wave of complaints from the Canadian observers lamenting their treatment on the mission and the general situation in the Arctic. Lt. MacLean, a Canadian observer on loan from the RCN, explained that “with the exception of a few of the highest officers on the mission, none of the United States personnel aboard was aware that the mission was a joint enterprise.” Most of the

⁴¹¹ John P. Kelsall to Lewis, 31 August 1948. LAC, RG 85, vol. 302, file 1009-5, pt.1. See also Gordon Smith’s report on the Arctic Weather Stations.

⁴¹² Memorandum by Defence Liaison Division for Acting Head, Defence Liaison Division, 19 November 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3346, file 9061-40, pt.1.

⁴¹³ “I think this practice is ridiculous, especially as it is a well-known fact that they did not kill General Eisenhower before naming a mountain after him, and Canadian charts, of the St. Lawrence, contain many names of living persons,” Chouinard commented. Report of Captain A.C Chouinard, RCN Retired, DOT Remarks and Recommendations of Observer: Recommendation for a Future Trip to the Arctic, LAC, RG 85, vol. 828, file 87-2-1, pt.2.

Americana did not realize the Canadians contributed to the resupply mission and commanded the weather stations. To MacLean it seemed as though everyone thought Hubbard, who “palpably kept himself in the limelight,” controlled everything. The lieutenant argued that Canada must provide physical evidence of its participation in the Arctic projects. Ideally, either RCN ships should accompany the next mission or RCAF aircraft make an appearance overhead. Without some kind of symbol representing Canada “the United States personnel were left with the firm impression (not altogether unfounded) that they were the only people taking an interest in that part of the Arctic.”⁴¹⁴ MacLean considered the Canadian presence in the Arctic inadequate.

The other observers on the mission echoed MacLean’s criticisms and suggestions. Kelsall complained about the USN’s tendency to treat the Canadian civilian scientists as an “unavoidable nuisance.”⁴¹⁵ Captain Chouinard lamented that Canada did not have a ship capable of operating in the Arctic waters. “While waiting to have a proper ship to be built for this region, it is felt that steps must be taken now to show the Canadian flag in one of the most important parts of the world due to its nearness to the Pole,” he advised. “This importance is stressed by other foreign countries who have operated in the area for the last three seasons.” Chouinard also wanted Canada to do more to investigate the potential geological and meteorological value of Ellesmere Island.⁴¹⁶ Commander Fife explained that Canada would need to strengthen its

⁴¹⁴ Memorandum of a Conversation With Lieutenant J.H MacLean, a Canadian who was on the sea supply mission of 1948, 1 October 1948, LAC, RG 85, vol. 2083, file 7140-3.

⁴¹⁵ T. Fife, Commander (E.) RCN, to Superintendent, HMC Dockyard, Halifax, N.S, Observers Narrative of USN Task Force 80, 15 July to 19 September 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3841, file 9061-G-40.

⁴¹⁶ Report of Captain A.C Chouinard, RCN Retired, DOT Remarks and Recommendations of Observer: Recommendation for a Future Trip to the Arctic, LAC, RG 85, vol. 828, file 87-2-1, pt.2.

sovereignty in the Arctic before the U.S started to “consider it hers by reason of investment made.” He wanted Canadian capabilities in the region built up, for “it is better to be self-reliant than wait for the crumbs which fall from the rich man’s table.”⁴¹⁷

The observers also wanted more training the next year and asked that an official Canadian leader be assigned to the observer party.⁴¹⁸ The government chose its observers at the “eleventh hour last summer and there was no attempt to brief even the leaders of the two Canadian parties in their responsibilities.”⁴¹⁹ The lack of training given to the observers showed throughout the mission. Although the Canadians considered the sea supply missions to be a civilian undertaking in which the USN gave a helping hand, the naval personnel on the voyage refused to talk as freely to a civilian as they would a member of the armed forces. MacLean suggested that the leader of the Canadian party and most of the observers come from the military.⁴²⁰ Other observers commented that their hosts gave them little access on the voyage and did not let them see everything they wanted.⁴²¹ The same complaints had surfaced in 1946. The Canadians would have to fix the problem for the next mission.

Prior to *Task Force 80*, Canada insisted that only joint press releases be issued at the beginning and end of the mission. As soon as the expedition returned to Boston, however, leaked information began to find its way into the newspapers, and U.S.

⁴¹⁷ T. Fife, Commander (E.) RCN, to Superintendent, HMC Dockyard, Halifax, N.S, Observers Narrative of U.S.N Task Force 80, 15 July to 19 September 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3841, file 9061-G-40.

⁴¹⁸ J.G. Wright to Mr. Gibson, 22 November 1948; Memorandum of a Conversation With Lieutenant J.H. MacLean, a Canadian who was on the sea supply mission of 1948, 1 October 1948, LAC, RG 85, vol. 2083, file 7140-3.

⁴¹⁹ J.G. Wright to Mr. Gibson, 22 November 1948, LAC, RG 85, vol. 2083, file 7140-3.

⁴²⁰ Memorandum of a Conversation With Lieutenant J.H. MacLean, a Canadian who was on the sea supply mission of 1948, 1 October 1948, LAC, RG 85, vol. 2083, file 7140-3.

⁴²¹ Memorandum by Defence Liaison Division for Acting Head, Defence Liaison Division, 19 November 1948, *DCER, Volume 14, 1948*, 1543-1544.

government sources alluded to the fact that the Truman administration wanted to release more details on the expedition but the Canadians would not allow it.⁴²² Charles Hubbard, enjoying his position in the limelight a little too much, became one of the main sources of these leaks. William Snow actually sat him down and told him that the rules on publicity prohibited him from making any statement without approval from both governments. Quotes from Hubbard nevertheless appeared in the news, and a photo of him in his office, looking every bit the part of the Arctic explorer with a roll of maps on his lap, appeared in *The Times*. Snow believed that Hubbard, with his “mania for publicity,” spoke to the press before their talk.⁴²³ He was as angered by this blatant breach of protocol as the Canadians.⁴²⁴

The Canadians showed more restraint. When the Deputy Minister of Transport, Jean Lessard, visited the expedition at Ellesmere Island, Captain Chouinard picked up a can of potatoes left by Nares or Perry and presented it to the Minister as a photographer took their picture. After the expedition’s completion Lessard “wished to know whether this touching ceremony should be recorded in the deathless pages of the newspapers.”⁴²⁵

The Under-Secretary for External Affairs insisted that:

⁴²² Memorandum by Defence Liaison Division for Acting Head, Defence Liaison Division, *DCER, Volume 14, 1948*, 1543-1544.; *New York Times* published a front-page story describing Hubbard’s discovery of the Peary cairn in minute detail. The article also described the Task Force’s voyage through “straits and channels believed never to have been navigated before.” Murray Schumach, “U.S. Vessels Find 1906 Peary Cache,” 28 September 1948, *New York Times*, 1.

⁴²³ Canadian Ambassador to the U.S. to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, 29 September 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3841, file 9061-H-40.

⁴²⁴ In late October, Hubbard requested permission to appear on the radio program *We the People* to discuss the 1948 supply mission, but was rejected by External Affairs. G.L. Magann to Mr. Snow, 21 October 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 2127, file Weather Stations Supply Mission, 1949.

⁴²⁵ Minute Sheet, Sea Supply Mission of 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 2127, file Weather Stations Supply Mission, 1949.

its release might involve us in some embarrassment since, after the recent Washington leakages regarding the Sea Supply Mission which led to widespread interest in the activities of the Mission, we not only took the U.S. authorities to task for the leakages but informed them that, in accordance with the decisions reached at an interdepartmental meeting at which your Department was represented, the authorities here wanted the Mission to drop into obscurity.⁴²⁶

This conclusion fell in line with the repeated instructions from Claxton that “everyone... forget about the Sea Supply Mission.”⁴²⁷ The Canadians wanted to draw attention away from defence projects in the North. This would have the dual benefit of not raising public anxiety about the extent of U.S. activities in the region, and of avoiding any further strain in Canada’s relations with the USSR.⁴²⁸

The Canadians did make their dissatisfaction with the American press leakages known. When they decided to release six photos of the voyage along with attached captions to the press, External Affairs asked George Magann to point out “that the Canadian Government authorized the issue of both the release and photographs only with the greatest reluctance and as a result of the fact that the press has been informed that the documents and the photographs were available but were being held up by the Canadian Government.”⁴²⁹ External Affairs thought that the State Department and U.S. military handled the joint directive on press irresponsibly.⁴³⁰ Leaked publicity remained a source of tension in the Canadian-American defence relationship.

⁴²⁶ Johnson to Lessard, 1 November 1948, LAC RG 25, vol. 3841, file 9061-H-40.

⁴²⁷ Minute Sheet, Sea Supply Mission of 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 2127, file Weather Stations Supply Mission, 1949.

⁴²⁸ G.L. Magann to Mr. Snow, 21 October 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 2127, file Weather Stations Supply Mission, 1949.

⁴²⁹ G.L. Magann to Mr. Snow, 29 September 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 2127, file Weather Stations Supply Mission, 1949.

⁴³⁰ Memorandum of Telephone Conversation With Mr. Eberts, 3:20 p.m, 29 September 1948, LAC, RG 25, vol. 2127, file Weather Stations Supply Mission, 1949.

Winter Cruises in the Arctic

The winter months usually offered a respite from the heightened tempo of defence activities that occurred in the Arctic during the summer. In early December 1948, however, the USN sought permission for the USS *Edisto* to operate in the waters off Baffin, Devon and Bylot islands the following January and February. The purposes of the operation reflected the American military's overall goal of gaining more experience in the Arctic region.⁴³¹ The Americans made a point of asking for permission to enter Canadian territorial waters, asked the Canadians to send observers, promised to provide Canada with copies of all reports made on the voyage, and obtained all of the proper permits and licences.⁴³² Canadian officials understood the operation would provide useful data and wanted to accept the American request, but they had also learned from their past mistakes. They decided that before approving the American request they wanted to know of all the projects the U.S. wished to undertake, all the aircraft involved, any additional investigations contemplated, and the type of training that would be undertaken.⁴³³

When the project went before the Chiefs of Staff, they argued that in the future they wanted proposals for the movement of U.S. ships in Canadian waters to be as

⁴³¹ Specifically, the purposes of the project were: investigating ice conditions and practicability of operations in the area under winter conditions, operational limitations of Arctic type vessels, test practicability of unloading cargo over the ice, train personnel and test equipment, record ice conditions, observe geographic, navigational and aviation conditions, and record hydrographic, meteorological and electromagnetic propagation data.

⁴³² Memorandum from Acting Head of Defence Liaison Division to Acting Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, 3 December 1948, LAC, RG 85, vol. 2083, file 7140-3.

⁴³³ Memorandum from Acting Head of Defence Liaison Division to Acting Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, 3 December 1948, LAC, RG 85, vol. 2083, file 7140-3; The Canadians especially wanted to know if the training would include any firing practice, munitions or military exercises.

specific as possible.⁴³⁴ On 11 January the Canadians decided to allow the *Edisto* to operate in the Arctic in February, as long as the Americans provided a detailed operation plan.⁴³⁵ Before External Affairs gave Canada's approval to the State Department, the Americans informed the Canadian embassy that the USN planned to take photographers from the *National Geographic*, *Life* and the *Evening Star* on the voyage. The State Department assured the Canadians that the newsmen would not join the ship until it docked in Greenland after leaving Canadian waters. This provided little solace to the Canadians who replied that after joining the ship the newsmen would no doubt learn many details about the Canadian portion of the voyage.⁴³⁶ Why would a service expedition collecting confidential data even allow the reporters to tag along? In previous expeditions, Canadian and American civilian scientists had to go through security checks to gain 'Secret' clearance.

The publicity directives called for intergovernmental consultation before either country allowed journalists to go north. Given that these journalists would undoubtedly write about the Canadian portion of the journey, the USN should have consulted with Ottawa. Now the only way to avoid unwanted publicity was to cancel the Canadian portion of the journey. Although such a course would demonstrate how seriously the Canadians took publicity matters, it would also invite criticism that they allowed concerns about bad press to impede continental security preparations. Furthermore, any

⁴³⁴ Extract from Minutes of Meeting of Chiefs of Staff Committee, 7 December 1948, *DCER, Volume 14, 1948*, 1547-1548.

⁴³⁵ Memorandum by Department of External Affairs, 11 January 1949, *DCER, Volume 15, 1949*, 1496-1498.

⁴³⁶ Memorandum from Acting Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to Secretary of State for External Affairs, 15 January 1949, Proposed Winter Arctic Expedition of USS "Edisto," *DCER, Volume 15, 1949*, 1498-1500.

denial of access to journalists might itself stir up bad press. It would also be difficult for the Canadians to forbid the Americans from picking up journalists in a foreign port if that is what they wanted to do. The only real solution was to pick up the journalists only after the ship left the Canadian Arctic, and then request that any mention of the Canadian portion of the voyage be reviewed.⁴³⁷ The Americans put the Canadians in a tough position with few desirable options.

While the Canadians did not launch a formal protest, G.L. Magann reminded William Snow of the need for closer consultation on publicity and the difficulties created by arrangements made with the press without Canadian knowledge. On another note, the ambassador suggested that a press release be issued at the beginning of the expedition, or both governments would be swamped with numerous media inquiries.⁴³⁸ The Americans, however, did not come to a quick decision and the voyage left for the Arctic with no publicity. The matter came to a head when one of the helicopters attached to the *Edisto* crashed, and one crew member was killed. G.L. Magann “took advantage of the occasion to point out to the State Department that had the United States authorities reached a decision earlier about a press release they would not be in their present embarrassing position.”⁴³⁹ The Canadians hoped that the incident would force the Americans to make quicker decisions about publicity in ensuing missions.

⁴³⁷ Memorandum from Acting Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to Secretary of State for External Affairs, 15 January 1949, Proposed Winter Arctic Expedition of USS “Edisto,” *DCER, Volume 15, 1949*, 1498-1500.

⁴³⁸ G.L. Magann to Mr. Snow, Assistant Chief, Division of British Commonwealth Affairs, 21 January 1949, LAC, RG 25, vol. 5737, file 17 E(s).

⁴³⁹ Canadian Ambassador to Secretary of State for External Affairs, 24 February 1949, LAC, RG 25, vol. 5737, file 17 E(s).

While the publicity problems surrounding the *Edisto* were bothersome, the voyage remained an overall success. It gathered new information, reporters consulted the Canadians before they released their stories, and the Americans treated the Canadian observers in a respectful manner. Captain F.A. Germain noted that “the cordial relations between the Officers of the ship and the Canadian party established on the first day of joining, continued throughout the voyage. Every effort was made for the comfort and convenience of the party insofar as the facilities of the ship would permit, and the fullest co-operation was received to carry out the duties of observers.”⁴⁴⁰ The success of the operation and the Canadian participation encouraged Canadian officials planning for the annual resupply mission of 1949.

Canadian Capabilities, Sovereignty, and the Resupply Missions of 1949-1950

In the previous resupply missions the Americans asked for little Canadian assistance beyond the occasional chart or map. This changed as planning began for the summer mission of 1949. In early March 1949 the State Department indicated that, owing to the demands of the Berlin airlift, the USAF would be unable to carry supplies to Alert, the proposed site for a new weather station on the northern tip of Ellesmere Island. As the Soviets blockaded Berlin, the U.S. needed to use its resources, including most of its heavy transport aircraft, to keep the city supplied. Another complication arose after the U.S. icebreaker *Eastwind* collided with a merchant ship and suffered damage from the resulting fire, barring it from participation in that summer’s naval

⁴⁴⁰ Captain F.A Germain, Leader of Canadian Group on Edisto, 4 April 1949, LAC, RG 25, vol. 5737, file 17 E(s).

mission to the Arctic. The State Department reminded the Canadians that at a joint meeting on 6 January, all agreed on the importance of establishing Alert as soon as possible. To meet this goal, the State Department asked if the Canadian icebreaker *N.B. MacLean* could participate in the supply expedition for the first two and half weeks of August and carry materials to Alert.⁴⁴¹

As the only powerful icebreaker owned by the Department of Transport, the *N.B. McLean* was heavily booked providing escort assistance to vessels entering Hudson Bay in the summer months and delivering supplies to posts along its shores. Transport simply could not spare the ship for the weeks it would take to deliver supplies to Alert. In responding to inquiries from External Affairs about the American request, J.C. Lessard remarked that “the Department of Transport regrets very much having to take this decision. It would certainly give me great pleasure to have the Canadian flag carried to the north of Ellesmere Island, but we cannot sacrifice the other important commitments which fall upon Transport in order that this may be achieved.”⁴⁴² Simply put, the other tasks were more important than the establishment of Alert. The Americans were told that the *McLean* could not be used, although the Canadians did promise to hasten the construction of an RCN icebreaker.⁴⁴³

⁴⁴¹ Acting Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to the Deputy Minister of Transport and the Deputy Minister of Transport for Air Services, 3 March 1949, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3841, file 9061-G-1-40.

⁴⁴² J.C. Lessard, Deputy Minister of Transport to Acting Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, 1 March 1949, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3841, file 9061-G-1-40.

⁴⁴³ The Secretary of State for External Affairs to the Canadian Ambassador, 11 March 1949, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3841, file 9061-G-1-40.; The Canadians assured the Americans that if any accident should occurred during the mission, the *N.B. MACLEAN* would be diverted to deal with the emergency. The Canadians stressed that this assistance would only be available in case of emergency. F.L. Houghton, Rear Admiral, RCN, Senior RCN PJBD to Admiral Libby, Senior USN Member, 23 March 1949, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3841, file 9061-G-1-40.

While the Canadians worried about their inability to provide transport assistance during the sea supply mission, they set about preparing the observers who would be attached to the voyage. In April 1949 the Northwest Territories Administration chose J.W. Burton, a former commander in the RCAF and a Deputy Director of Intelligence during the war, to act as the senior observer.⁴⁴⁴ Burton threw himself into the task with a whole hearted commitment to study all aspects of the upcoming voyage. Notably, Burton began to ask questions about Canada's sovereignty that few in the government had ever seriously explored.

Canadian officials understood that Canada's claims in the Arctic required protection as American interest in the region grew, but few explored the contentious legal issues surrounding sovereignty, especially in relation to the waters and ice of the Arctic Archipelago. When Canadian officials pondered sovereignty questions they usually focused on terrestrial claims or the sector principle. When in mid-April 1948 the Department of Mines and Resources received a request that it prepare an article on Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic for inclusion in an Arctic Encyclopaedia prepared by Vilhjalmur Stefansson, the Deputy Minister sought a qualified person to write the article in his department or in External Affairs. The Minister, however, concluded "that no person with adequate qualifications or who could be spared for the purpose is available in either department."⁴⁴⁵ Although both departments thought that an authoritative paper should be produced for the Encyclopaedia, neither could provide someone with the

⁴⁴⁴ Gibson to D/M, 4 April 1949, LAC, RG 85, vol. 302, file 1009-5.

⁴⁴⁵ Memorandum to ACND, Canadian Sovereignty in the Arctic, W.W. Bean, Secretary, ACND, April 1948, LAC, RG 2, vol. 56, file A-25; By October the Canadians had found someone outside the government to write the report, a Colonel Bovey. W.W. Bean to E.R. Hopkins, 18 October 1948, LAC, RG 2, vol. 56, file A-25.

necessary expertise. After spending the previous two years worrying about sovereignty and trying to protect it, the government still lacked an expert on the subject.

The latest Canadian attempt to investigate the legal aspects of sovereignty in the Arctic also focused on the sector principle and effective occupation. The report remained hopeful that recent events in the Arctic actually strengthened Canada's claim to the region. The report argued "it is generally agreed in international law, that, should no foreign state oppose your claim to a certain territory and this condition last during a sufficient period of time, your claim may be implicitly recognized." It also mentioned that all over the world "every time there is need to refer to the Canadian Arctic Archipelago, it is done without implying any doubt as to Canadian sovereignty."⁴⁴⁶ Still, the Canadian sovereignty file did not deal with any other pressing legal issues in the Arctic that Burton began exploring, such as the contentious questions surrounding territorial waters and permanent ice. He requested that Wright learn the government's opinion on the following problems, which are worth quoting in full:

- (a) Does the Canadian Government consider that, "the waters lying within the Islands of the Canadian Arctic Archipelago to be under Canadian Sovereignty?"
- (b) At what distance seaward from the outer Islands of the Canadian Arctic Archipelago does the Canadian Government consider that, "the Canadian Territorial waters extend?" (Low water mark, 3 miles, 12 miles, or?)
- (c) Regarding a permanent surface of ice extending from the coast out to sea; does the Canadian Government consider that,
 - (1) "A permanent surface of ice extending from the coast outward to sea a continuation of the land and that such a area should be subject to the same sovereignty as the land itself,"
 - (2) "A permanent ice surface should be assimilated to water and not subject to national sovereignty beyond the Territorial water limits?"⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁶ Legal Aspects of Sovereignty in the Canadian Arctic, Department of External Affairs, 22 January 1949, LAC, RG 2, vol. 56, file A-25.

⁴⁴⁷ J.W. Burton to J.G. Wright, 11 May 1949, LAC, RG 85, vol. 304, file 1009-5, pt.1c.

These were relevant questions, but the Canadian government had never formulated a strong opinion on any of them.

Burton, however, performed a lot of research on the issues, examining multiple works on territorial waters and permanent ice. In a letter to J.G. Wright, he discussed the opinions on territorial waters expressed by Shawcross and Beaumont in their treatise on International Law published in 1945. The book held that territorial waters, over which a nation has complete sovereignty, usually extend three miles from the coast. In some cases, like bays, straits, and estuaries, this three miles limit could be expanded. Burton understood that this opinion on bays and straits could be of great importance to Canada's Arctic and suggested that the Legal Division of External Affairs develop an opinion on Canada's claims.⁴⁴⁸

In another letter to Wright, Burton explored the prospect of claiming sovereignty over the permanent ice in the Arctic and outlined the views of leading experts on the subject. Several scholars postulated that a permanent surface of ice extending from the coast outward to sea should be considered a continuation of land and become subject to a state's sovereignty. In the 1920's S.V. Sigrist wrote that no difference existed between frozen land and immobile ice, given that transportation was equally possible on both. Other experts disagreed. Gustav Smedal associated the ice in the Arctic with the high seas and thought that no nation could assume sovereignty over it. L. Oppenheim believed that since occupation of the ice on a permanent basis was impossible, no effective sovereignty could be exercised over the area, an opinion held by several

⁴⁴⁸ J.W. Burton to J.G. Wright, 16 May 1949, LAC, RG 85, vol. 304, file 1009-5, pt.1c.

others.⁴⁴⁹ Burton assumed that the government would accept the view that permanent ice in the Arctic within the territorial limit fell under Canada's sovereignty, but there is no indication in the documentary evidence that the government prepared decisive answers to his questions.

Burton's deep interest in his duties mirrored the Canadian government's new interest in training its observers, who received three full days of instruction from specialists on topics such as the Northwest Territories, Tides and Currents, Ice, Geology and the RCMP.⁴⁵⁰ This training prepared them to deal with any violations of Canadian ordinances that might occur. Hugh Keenleyside gave the closing address to the observers at the end of the training and remarked:

As you know, Sovereignty over the Canadian Arctic carries with it duties and obligations. We must make our administration of the area active and complete. This not only involves vigorous administration and supervision of all activities carried on in the area but it also means a continuous, close study of the territory from every aspect likely to lead to its greater development or usefulness. Your activities, of course, being primarily devoted to scientific observation and investigation, would come under the second category. Your aim, in brief, is to extend our field of scientific knowledge.⁴⁵¹

The observers were told that Burton was in charge, to bring all problems to him, and he would make representations to the American Commanding Officer.

The Canadian government still suffered from a lack of coordination and communication. After External Affairs pressured the State Department to accept all of

⁴⁴⁹ J.W. Burton to J.G. Wright, Subject: Sovereignty, Permanent Ice Surface extending from Shore Line out to Sea, LAC, RG 85, vol. 304, file 1009-5, pt.1c.

⁴⁵⁰ Briefing: Canadian Observers, accompanying the Arctic Weather Station Re-Supply Mission, Summer 1949, 27 June 1949, LAC, RG 85, vol. 302, file 1009-5-1.; R.A. Gibson to Mr. Gaskell, 8 August 1949, LAC, RG 85, vol. 2083, file 7140-C.

⁴⁵¹ Notes for Dr. Keenleyside's Closing Address, Canadian Observers, Accompanying the Arctic Weather Station Re-Supply Mission, Summer, 1949, LAC, RG 85, vol. 2083, file 7140-C.

the Canadian observers nominated for the mission, by the beginning of July some security checks remained outstanding.⁴⁵² After the expedition, complaints also arose over the Canadian failure to properly coordinate requirements for air and ground reconnaissance with the USN's Chief of Operations, the commander of the resupply mission, and the Arctic Projects section of the U.S. Weather Bureau.⁴⁵³ These Canadian requests should have been organized and relayed to the American in the early stages of planning for the operation.

Once again, the actual expedition went smoothly. The Americans took steps to ensure that they did not repeat previous mistakes, and only one minor breach of conduct occurred during the entire operation. As the mission travelled in the waters of Radstock Bay, Charles Hubbard went ashore and discovered two wooden mallet heads.⁴⁵⁴ Apparently no one rebuked Hubbard for his violation of the Northwest Territories Archaeological Ordinance the previous summer. After his discovery, Hubbard showed the artefacts to J.W. Burton and explained that he hoped to take them home as souvenirs. Unlike Chouinard, who allowed the Americans to take artefacts from the Arctic in 1948, Burton explained to Hubbard that no one could disturb any site of historical importance or remove any artefact without a permit from the Northwest Territories. Hubbard denied any knowledge of the ordinance, insisted that he did not want to breach any Canadian regulation, and immediately gave the mallets to Burton, who in turn brought them home for analysis. When Burton recounted the event he explained that "Canadian Sovereignty

⁴⁵² Memorandum from the D.M. Johnson, Department of External Affairs to Interested Departments, 6 July 1949, LAC, RG 85, vol. 2083, file 7140-2.

⁴⁵³ H.L. Keenleyside to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, 21 March 1950, LAC, RG 85, Vol. 303, File 1009-5 pt.1.

⁴⁵⁴ Burton to Wright, 30 September 1949, LAC RG 85, vol. 2083, file 7140-C.

has been recognized by an Official of the United States Government.”⁴⁵⁵ A few months later, after the Canadians found little of historical value in the mallets, they gave the artefacts back to Hubbard.⁴⁵⁶ Although it seems somewhat odd to create a fuss about two mallet heads, Hubbard’s actions represented an American concession of the Canadian right to command in the Arctic.

The Canadians continued to carefully review defence plans through 1949. In December, the U.S. embassy requested permission for the *Edisto* to enter Canadian waters in the Hudson Strait, Davis Strait and Baffin Bay during the course of another winter cruise to be held in January and February 1950. The Canadians approved the request by the end of December.⁴⁵⁷ J.C. Lessard sent one of his most experienced icebreaker officers on the voyage as an observer with specific instructions to obtain information on icebreaking in the Arctic and to write a daily report on the mission’s activities.⁴⁵⁸

Despite Lessard’s careful instructions to his observer, the Americans conducted unauthorized activities in Canada’s northern waters. The USS *Edisto* visited Hamilton Inlet, an action outside the parameters agreed upon by External Affairs and the State Department. Approval to carry out this side project should have been formally requested through diplomatic channels. Instead the USN attempted to go through service

⁴⁵⁵ Burton to Wright, 30 September 1949, LAC, RG, RG 85, vol. 2083, file 7140-C.

⁴⁵⁶ Gibson to Hubbard, 14 November 1949, LAC, RG, RG 85, vol. 2083, file 7140-C.

⁴⁵⁷ Brigadier J.D.B. Smith, Secretary, Canadian Joint Staff, Cruise in Canadian Arctic Waters USS *Edisto*, LAC, RG 25, Vol. 5737, File 17 E(s).

⁴⁵⁸ W.J. Matthews, Deputy Minister J.C. Lessard to Paul Fournier, First Officer CCS Saurel, January 1950, LAC, RG 12, Vol. 651, File 14-8-17.

channels.⁴⁵⁹ Brigadier J.D.B. Smith of the Canadian Joint Staff commented that “I should think that it would be abundantly clear to the U.S. authorities that we only intended that matters coming within the framework of the proposal that was approved by Mr. Claxton should be worked out through Service Channels and that we were not suggesting that proposals to extend the scope of the cruise in Canadian waters be raised through those channels.”⁴⁶⁰ Although the use of Hamilton Inlet did not overly concern the Canadian government (which saw this area as secure from a sovereignty standpoint), the Americans had again violated the principle of consultation and coordination established for joint defence operations. The Canadians informally approached the Americans with the problem and insisted that before using service channels they should consider whether the Canadian government actually gave them permission to do so.⁴⁶¹

The Canadians remained diligent as they entered into planning for the summer supply mission of 1950. In a memorandum to J.G. Wright, Burton again asked for information relating to sovereignty over the Arctic waters and ice. He noted that his request in 1949 went unanswered and he hoped for some response before the 1950 expedition began.⁴⁶² In late 1949 the ACND met to discuss the Prime Minister’s intent to make the Gulf of St. Lawrence inland waters, as well as the need for a coherent policy on Canada’s territorial waters. The addition of Newfoundland to Canada surrounded the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and the committee noted that to secure Canada’s sovereignty over

⁴⁵⁹ Brigadier J.D.S. Smith, Secretary Chiefs of Staff Committee, to the Secretary, Canadian Joint Staff, 14 February 1950, LAC, RG 25, vol. 5737, file 17E-1, pt.1.

⁴⁶⁰ A.D.P. Heeney, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, to Brigadier Smith, 8 February 1950, LAC, RG 25, vol. 5737, file 17E-1, pt.1.

⁴⁶¹ Brigadier J.D.B. Smith, Secretary, Canadian Joint Staff, Cruise in Canadian Arctic Waters USS Edisto, LAC, RG 25, vol. 5737, file 17E-1, pt.1.

⁴⁶² Burton to Wright, 29 May 1950, LAC, RG 85, vol. 304, file 1009-5, pt.1c.

these waters the government should employ the headland to headland theory it used in 1937 to claim the Hudson Strait as territorial waters. The committee, however, cautioned that if the International Court rejected this theory in the Gulf of St. Lawrence case, any future Canadian attempt to use this method to secure the Arctic waters would be weakened.⁴⁶³ This seems to be the extent of Canadian discussion on the Arctic waters during this period, and once again Burton's questions did not receive a formal reply from the government.

As the planning for the mission continued through the spring, the close relationship between the Canadian and American planners became more evident. Many of these men worked together for years and they handled the planning in an efficient and friendly manner. In May, Hubbard spoke to Burton privately about retrieving some old meteorological instruments from Fort Conger on Northeastern Ellesmere Island.⁴⁶⁴ Hubbard clearly learned his lesson after the events involving the mallet heads, and now sought Canadian permission before he tampered with another historical site in the Arctic. In the end of May Hubbard received his Archaeological Sites Ordinance permit.⁴⁶⁵

One again the government expanded and refined the role of the Canadian observers. The Northwest Territories Administration informed Burton that he would be

⁴⁶³ N.A. Robertson to P.M., Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Convention, 17 November 1949, LAC, RG 2, vol. 103, file T-30.

⁴⁶⁴ J.W. Burton to Mr. Wright, 5 May 1950, LAC, RG 85, vol. 303, file 1009-5 pt.1a.; In reply to Hubbard, Burton explained that "Canada had no intention of playing dog in the manger in connection with relics left behind in the Canadian Arctic, by Nationals of other countries, while engaged in early exploratory operations, and that, the ordinance referred to at the meeting had been made a law of Canada to protect such relics and to ensure that archaeological and historic sites were not destroyed and articles of value taken for private use by unqualified persons, through which action such would lose both their importance and historical value."

⁴⁶⁵ C.W. Jackson, Acting Deputy Minister to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, to C.J. Hubbard, 27 May 1950, LAC, RG 85, vol. 303, file 1009-5 pt.1a. Hubbard actually died in a plane crash at Alert during the 1950 operations.

the official Canadian representative on the mission and that he needed to “ensure that while travelling within the Canadian Arctic Sector and its territorial waters adjacent thereto, that Canada’s sovereignty is respected and her laws and ordinances are enforced. Further, you will ensure that Canada’s prestige is maintained in every respect during the entire Mission.” To accomplish this, Burton was made into a Game Officer, a notary public, a coroner, and given the authority to issue licenses to scientists, explorers, archaeologists and ethnologists.⁴⁶⁶ The government also clearly defined its expectations for the other observers. They would examine sites for the establishment of ground control fixations, engage in geological reconnaissance of coal deposits on Ellesmere and Melville Islands, and conduct biological, hydrographical, topographical, geological, geographical and wild life land reconnaissance studies, particularly of those areas close to stations and those areas of strategic and economic importance. They would also study icebreaker designs and operation, seek out future RCMP detachment sites, and investigate ice, navigation, living and working conditions.⁴⁶⁷ More and more the observers’ role was to assist Canada in learning about its Arctic, an essential element in establishing control. With such explicit instructions the sea supply mission was a success with no infractions against Canada’s sovereignty.

The Arctic Airfields

By 1948 the Canadian government became aware of the American desire to increase the number of airstrips in the Arctic. Canadian officials constantly worried

⁴⁶⁶ R.A. Gibson to Mr. J.W. Burton, 29 June 1950, LAC, RG 85, vol. 303, file 1009-5 pt. 1a.

⁴⁶⁷ R.A. Gibson to Mr. J.W. Burton, 29 June 1950, LAC, RG 85, vol. 303, file 1009-5 pt. 1a.

about the size of these airfields and American intentions to develop and enlarge them. Already in 22 October 1947 Air Vice Marshal Morfee learned from Colonel C.H. Deerwester that the United States planned to improve the airstrip at Eureka Sound to make it usable all year round by C-47's and expand the airstrip at Resolute from 6400 feet to 10,000 feet in length making it usable by the heaviest of aircraft.⁴⁶⁸ In his astonished reply Morfee claimed that:

plans for the development of extensive facilities at Resolute Bay came to me as a complete surprise. You will recall that the present establishment is one of those covered by joint agreement between the Canadian and U.S. Governments, that it relates to weather only...Any development at this point or elsewhere in Canada of the kind and significance mentioned by General Gaffney would, of course, be one for consideration of the highest government level.⁴⁶⁹

Deerwester seemed annoyed by the Canadian sensitivity towards expanded air facilities at the weather stations. He noted that he never used the word 'extensive' to describe the planned facility at Resolute Bay and pointed out that if the American military ever planned such facilities the Canadian government would be informed. Deerwester argued that there was a real need for suitable runways because the two stations required a supply lift every month. He concluded that he did not see how the extension of the Resolute airstrip constituted extensive and inappropriate development.⁴⁷⁰

Deerwester's letter did nothing to alleviate Canadian concerns. The Chief of the Air Staff recognized the important policy questions raised by the American request. Air Vice Marshal Curtis wanted to know the motivation behind the American desire to expand the airstrip at Resolute Bay. Would the strips simply be used for supply

⁴⁶⁸ Col. Deerwester to Morfee, 22 October 1947, LAC, RG 24, vol. 6169, file S-15-24-56, pt.1.

⁴⁶⁹ Morfee to Deerwester, 30 October 1947, LAC, RG 24, vol. 6169, file S-15-24-56, pt.1.

⁴⁷⁰ Deerwester to Morfee, 6 November 1947, LAC, RG 24, vol. 6169, file S-15-24-56, pt.1.

purposes? He also wanted to know who would be responsible for their maintenance and control, and whether the government's policy of retaining title to all installations built in the Arctic actually worked if the Americans paid for all of the costs associated with the airstrips?⁴⁷¹ The Chiefs of Staff Committee discussed the proposed airfield extension on 7 January 1948, and explored whether the program proposed by the Americans fell within plans already approved by the Canadian government - a cornerstone of the Canadian-American defence relationship.⁴⁷² The original guidelines established for the weather stations recognized the need for an air strip to shuttle in supplies, but the new American plans seemed excessive.

The Chiefs of Staff assessed that, because sea transportation north and east of the Mackenzie River Delta remained unreliable, a centrally located supply centre was needed to serve the weather stations in the Canadian Arctic. Resolute Bay was an ideal choice, given the strategic potential of the base and the interest of the U.S. Strategic Air Force in it. Should a hostile force attack the continent by way of the Arctic, a base at Resolute Bay would provide an operating position within 1500 miles of any enemy installations situated in Franz Josef Land or Spitsbergen, thus facilitating offensive action. The committee also speculated that the Americans might be interested in turning Resolute into the apex of an outer triangular early warning system.⁴⁷³ Above all else, the Chiefs of Staff worried about establishing a negative precedent for the situation in the

⁴⁷¹ Air Marshall Curtis to Chiefs of Staff Committee, 10 December 1947, LAC, RG 24, vol. 6169, file S-15-24-56, pt.1.

⁴⁷² Bercuson, "Continental Defence and Arctic Sovereignty, 1945-1950," 164.

⁴⁷³ Extracts from Minutes of 410th Meeting Chiefs of Staff, 7 January 1948, DHH 112-009, File D44.

Arctic.⁴⁷⁴ They recognized that if one northern base had all of this potential, any of them could be similarly developed - at great cost to Canada financially and in terms of its sovereignty.

The Chiefs of Staff Committee recognized that Canada retained only three options, given the importance the Americans placed on the airstrips. It could proceed with the development of an airstrip at Resolute Bay on a joint Canada-U.S. basis, allow the base to be developed as an American project, or provide the necessary transportation services and establish the airstrips independently. The Committee recommended that the CDC accept the first option.⁴⁷⁵ At its next meeting, the CDC accepted the recommendation but demanded that the national responsibilities should be the same as the ones accepted for the weather and Loran stations, with the air facilities under Canadian command.⁴⁷⁶ The Canadians thus approved plans to expand the airstrip in February. In the 1948 construction season, however, the Americans decided to expand the runway to 10,000 feet without any of the additional facilities that Deerwester had proposed. The Americans informed the Canadians that they required no assistance and would handle construction on their own.⁴⁷⁷ The Cabinet Defence Committee, however, refused to accept this proposal, fearing that it would give the Americans too much control of the project. It wanted Canada to participate in establishing the new facilities at the station.⁴⁷⁸ The American plans for Resolute eventually fizzled out, however, and by

⁴⁷⁴ Chiefs of Staff Committee to the Cabinet Defence Committee, re: Arctic Air Facilities – Resolute Bay, LAC, RG 24, vol. 6169, file S-15-24-56, pt.1.

⁴⁷⁵ Extract from Chiefs of Staff Committee, meeting no. 410, 7 January 1948, LAC, RG 24, vol. 6169, file S-15-24-56, pt.1.

⁴⁷⁶ Mitchell to AMAP and AMOT, 21 January 1948, LAC, RG 24, vol. 6169, file S-15-24-56, pt.1.

⁴⁷⁷ Deerwester to Morfee, 12 March 1948, LAC, RG 24, vol. 6169, file S-15-24-56, pt.1.

⁴⁷⁸ Memorandum from Morfee, 25 March 1948, LAC, RG 24, vol. 6169, file S-15-24-56, pt.1.

1950 both countries wanted to Canadianize all the airstrips.⁴⁷⁹ That year, the RCAF took responsibility for the airbase at Resolute Bay and the facilities at Frobisher Bay.⁴⁸⁰

The Canadians desperately sought to avoid negative publicity about the airstrips. When one proposed press release about the weather stations noted that small airstrips would be established at the stations, Pearson objected. He suggested that “it would be preferable not to designate any particular airstrip as “small” since that immediately raised the question as to which of the air strips were large.”⁴⁸¹ Eventually the Canadians and Americans decided that details on airstrips, including the length of runways, plans for expansion, and new installations, should be classified.⁴⁸² The Canadians did not want the public or the Soviets to perceive that bomber bases were being built in the Arctic.

Neutralizing the Threat

By 1950, Canadian officials neutralized the greatest threat to Canada’s control over the Arctic: the naval resupply missions. The Canadians refined their approach to the missions, remained vigilant, and taught the Americans to respect Canada’s needs and sensitivities. Although American plans for more Arctic airstrips concerned the government, control of the airbases fell into the hands of the Canadians. The American military always considered continental defence to be its foremost priority, but it also respected Canada’s sovereignty concerns, reflecting the attitude adopted by Washington.

⁴⁷⁹ C.C. Eberts, Defence Liaison Division, to Mr. Heeney, 19 December 1949, LAC, RG 25, vol. 6298, file 9061-A-40, pt.3.1.

⁴⁸⁰ Bercuson, “Continental Defence and Arctic Sovereignty, 1945-1950,” 166.

⁴⁸¹ Extract from Chiefs of Staff Committee Minutes, 421st Meeting, 27 April 1948, DHH 112-3M2 File D118.

⁴⁸² Ibid.

In August 1948 the American attitude was encapsulated in a memorandum from the U.S. section of the PJBD to James Forrestal:

Bearing in mind that the Canadians are extraordinarily sensitive about their sovereignty and independence and as they live, so to speak, under the constant shadow of the 'Colossus to the South' such Canadian apprehensions have been inevitable. It has therefore behoved the United States to act with the utmost circumspection and restraint...On the whole, the U.S. record...is good.⁴⁸³

When the Americans misbehaved, the Canadians promptly rebuked them. At the end of the 1940s, the bilateral defence relationship functioned well, and Canada reaffirmed its sovereignty and strengthened its authority in the Arctic. All that remained was to begin Canadianizing the different defence activities.

⁴⁸³ U.S., Office of the Secretary of Defence, Memorandum for Secretary Forrestal, 13 August 1948, cited in Bercuson, "Continental Defence and Arctic Sovereignty, 1945-1950," 165.

Chapter 6: Re-Canadianization

Between 1946 and 1949 Canada's policy of gradual acquisition accomplished a great deal. The government secured *de jure* sovereignty in the Arctic, and in every defence agreement the Americans accepted Canada's right to control activities in the Arctic Archipelago. While the Canadian government continued to scrutinize American indiscretions on the ground, the higher levels of the U.S. government consistently respected Canada's rights and interests. Canadian officials, however, recognized that all of the American concessions meant little if Canada could not effectively operate in the Arctic, and they sought a functional approach towards sovereignty that would support their allies' interests but not to the detriment of Canada's own.

In 1949 the St. Laurent government launched a policy of re-Canadianizing the Arctic. To ensure its sovereignty, Canada had to improve its capabilities in the region and assume a larger role in defence projects. No Canadian ships had participated in the Arctic resupply missions and the RCAF continued to play a small role in airlifts. Sovereignty required that Canada take on more of the transportation responsibilities and establish an independent transport capability. It also demanded that Canada at least try and take over the Arctic stations and replace American personnel with Canadians where possible. The government successfully implemented a similar policy in the Northwest during the last years of the Second World War, and they hoped it would work again.

The Canadians had slowly improved their operational capability in the Arctic after the war. In 1946 the RCAF engaged in its first independent flights in the area and

the army undertook several field exercises to test its own capabilities. In subsequent years the RCAF expanded its role in the Arctic to include aerial photography and magnetic observations. It was also given primary responsibility for search and rescue in the Archipelago and evacuated sick and wounded residents, including a dramatic Christmas day rescue of an ailing Department of Transport meteorologist from Nottingham Island.⁴⁸⁴ In 1950, the small meteorological post at Ennadai Lake, the only government presence for hundreds of miles, organized the evacuation of a starving band of Inuit.⁴⁸⁵ Functional roles such as search and rescue and assisting the native population represented strong assertions of Canada's sovereignty. Canada's transport capability was less impressive.

Establishing an Independent Transport Capability

Since 1946 the RCN had also strived to get involved in the Arctic. Certain naval officers wanted Canada's ships and their crews to attain operational capability in the strategic region.⁴⁸⁶ The Navy, however, continued to focus on its anti-submarine duties in the North Atlantic, and its shrinking resources did not permit large-scale Arctic activities. Nevertheless, in 1948 the RCN decided to send a small task force to Hudson Bay. On 2 September, the HMCS *Magnificent*, the destroyers *Nootka* and *Haida* and the tanker *Dundalk* left Halifax with American observers onboard. Within days the ships reached the Hudson Strait and travelled to Wakeham Bay. Eventually the *Magnificent*

⁴⁸⁴ Royal Canadian Air Force Operations in the Arctic Islands, DHH 75-50.

⁴⁸⁵ Eyre, *Custos Borealis*.

⁴⁸⁶ Captain H.N. Lay, Director of Naval Plans and Intelligence, to ACNS, Operation Iceworm, 23 May 1947, DHH file.

went as far as the northern coast of Ungava peninsula, while the destroyers made it to Coral Harbour, Southampton Island. During the cruise the ships carried out hydrographic, bathythermographic and magnetic observations and checked radio and Loran reception conditions. Throughout the expedition, the RCAF carried out shadowing and interception exercises.⁴⁸⁷

On 11 September 1948, the destroyers docked at Churchill, the first RCN ships to ever visit the Fort. The military ran a four day publicity campaign trumpeting the success of the mission, even though the waters it traversed were neither challenging nor in areas where Canada's sovereignty was contested. As historian Kenneth Eyre explained, "the ships were simply following an established shipping route that had been in existence for three centuries and which had been marked with modern aids to navigation for twenty years."⁴⁸⁸ The ships did not ferry supplies to any of the weather stations or airstrips in the High Arctic – it was purely symbolic. Nevertheless, the navy took a great deal of pride in its accomplishment. It highlighted Canada's interest in improving its limited naval capabilities and acted as a visual display of the country's authority in the North.

The following year, the RCN sent the HMCS *Swansea* into the northern waters for training exercises around southern Baffin Island. Once again the Canadians carried out the mission during the Arctic's shipping season, when ice conditions were at their best. The *Swansea* anchored off Frobisher Bay and made its way to Clyde River, before

⁴⁸⁷ Elliot-Meisel, *Arctic Diplomacy*, 100-101.

⁴⁸⁸ Eyre, *Custos Borealis*.

returning to Halifax.⁴⁸⁹ Unfortunately the RCN ships sent to the Arctic in 1948 and 1949 could do little to assist the Arctic military projects. As soon as they faced any ice, the thin-hulled vessels had to retreat. Almost as soon as its activities in the Arctic began, the navy took a break while it constructed an icebreaker capable of challenging the ice.

The RCN seriously considered constructing an icebreaker in 1948. At a meeting of the Chiefs of Staff Committee in early January, Air Marshall Wilf Curtis insisted that Canada could only maintain effective long-term control in the Arctic if it possessed air and sea transport to supply, operate and maintain Arctic installations. This would entail more Air Force and Navy commitments.⁴⁹⁰ The Chief of the Naval Staff, however, argued that it was too early to develop dedicated Arctic units “because of the continuing RCN responsibility for protecting vital lines of communication in coastal waters and possibly further afield.”⁴⁹¹ The Chiefs of Staff concluded that the possibility of Canada taking more responsibility for the naval resupply missions required further study.

In early February, the CDC explored the construction of an RCN icebreaker to assist in the northern supply cruises. The committee noted that the Department of Transport operated four icebreakers, but only one, the *N.B. McLean*, was seagoing. Even the *McLean* had limited Arctic capabilities. Although the committee understood that the construction of an RCN icebreaker would be costly and personnel might be difficult to

⁴⁸⁹ Eyre, *Custos Borealis*.

⁴⁹⁰ Extracts from Minutes of 410th Meeting Chiefs of Staff, 7 January 1948, DHH 112-009 File D44.

⁴⁹¹ Extract from Minutes of Meeting of Cabinet Defence Committee, 8 January 1948, *DCER, Volume 14, 1948*, 1532.

find and train, it proposed plans for a Canadian ship modelled after the American *Edisto* or *Northwind* class.⁴⁹²

At the second meeting of the ACND, the members discussed the construction of the two proposed icebreakers. The Department of Transport anticipated that its new ship would be completed by September 1949 for use in the 1950 supply season, although the shortage of steel might lengthen the construction phase. The RCN also indicated that it had commenced work on an icebreaker similar to the *Edisto*. Again, the steel shortage was slowing construction of the ship and the navy estimated that it would not be finished until 1951. The long period likely to elapse before suitable Canadian ships could be made available for Arctic transport duties worried the ACND, which made the acquisition of an icebreaker a government priority.⁴⁹³

At the meeting, Andrew McNaughton “pointed out the importance to Canada, in maintaining control over Canadian Arctic areas and supporting claims for sovereignty, of being in a position to provide access to these areas independently of the U.S. In view of the importance of these considerations, it would appear reasonable that the government should allocate a priority for the steel required in the construction of the two ships.”⁴⁹⁴ McNaughton brought the issue to the attention of C.D. Howe, the Minister of Trade and Commerce, who responded that the required steel would be supplied as soon as possible. There was a shortage because of the restrictions Washington put on the export of

⁴⁹² Memorandum to Cabinet Defence Committee: Provision of Icebreakers, Minister of National Defence, 2 February 1948, LAC, RG 2, vol. 56, file A-25-1.

⁴⁹³ Extract from Minutes of Second Meeting of Advisory Committee on Northern Development 1 June 1948, *DCER, Volume 14, 1948*, 1523.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

American steel plates, and Howe suggested that McNaughton talk to the U.S. section of the PJBD to see if steel could be provided given the importance the Americans placed on northern transport.⁴⁹⁵ Despite the efforts of these men, steel remained in short supply and the construction of the ships slowed considerably.

By the end of December, the ACND's Transportation Subcommittee encouraged accelerated construction so that the RCN could participate in the supply mission of 1951. Most on the committee believed that both icebreakers would be completed by 1952, allowing Canada to assume full responsibility for the resupply of the Arctic. To provide an immediate capability the committee considered the possibility of purchasing an old icebreaker from the French government. She would require a complete refit, including all new wiring, new generators and boilers, which would cost \$ 1,600,000. Accordingly, the committee decided against purchasing the vessel.⁴⁹⁶ Even a band-aid solution for Canada's transportation problems in the Arctic proved impractical.

In early 1949 the DND concluded that Canada should assume supply duties for the weather station program to further the Canadianization program. The report argued that the earliest practical date was the summer of 1951, "although the lack of icebreakers might introduce a delay of a further year in taking over one important phase of the task, namely, the early provisioning of the northern distribution centre at Resolute Bay."⁴⁹⁷ At the 10 March 1949 meeting of the ACND, the committee stressed the need for two

⁴⁹⁵ W.W. Bean, Group Captain, RCAF to Mr. Lessard, Deputy Minister of Transport, Construction of Supply Ship – Steel Priorities, 18 June 1948, LAC, RG 2, vol. 57, file A-25-5-T.

⁴⁹⁶ Minutes of the 7th Meeting of the Transportation Sub-committee of the Advisory Committee on northern Development, 3 December 1948, LAC, RG 2, vol. 57, file A-25-5-T.

⁴⁹⁷ Department of National Defence to Cabinet Defence Committee, January 1949, LAC, RG 24, vol. 6169, file HQ 15-25-56.

serviceable icebreakers on the northern supply missions for safety purposes. In 1948, one of the U.S icebreakers became stuck in the ice north of Ellesmere Island and had to be saved by its partner. Thus, the committee recommended that both the Department of Transport and the RCN complete their proposed icebreakers.⁴⁹⁸ By late 1949, however, only the RCN seemed to be making progress on its project. Marine Industries Limited at Sorel, Quebec laid the ship's keel in November. Work proceeded slowly due to design changes and material shortages, but the ship was launched in December 1951. The vessel, named the HMCS *Labrador*, officially began its service with the RCN in July 1954.⁴⁹⁹

As Canada awaited the construction of its new icebreakers, the ACND advocated the construction of a new Eastern Arctic Patrol vessel to provide some sealift capability to parts of the Arctic.⁵⁰⁰ At the end of December 1949 a new vessel, the *C.D. Howe*, replaced the *Nascopie* as the flagship of the annual summer supply mission to Hudson's Bay. Debate quickly broke out between different departments about the possibility of using the *Howe* to supply the Arctic defence posts. The Northwest Territories Administration suggested that to strengthen Canada's sovereignty, a "token visit" to Resolute Bay should be included in the ship's mission. The Department of Transport questioned why the Canadians would do this, when the *C.D. Howe* had such a small cargo capacity and the Americans easily supplied the stations. Why risk the ship in the

⁴⁹⁸ Extract from Minutes of Meeting of Advisory Committee on Northern Development, 10 March 1949, *DCER, Volume 15, 1949*, 1475-1480.

⁴⁹⁹ Eyre, *Custos Borealis*.

⁵⁰⁰ Extract from Minutes of Meeting of Advisory Committee on Northern Development, 10 March 1949, *DCER, Volume 15, 1949*, 1475-1480.

dangerous conditions of the area? After much discussion, the Committee “agreed that in 1950 no attempt should be made to have the ‘C.D Howe’ visit Resolute Bay but that, in view of the national importance of maintaining all evidences and acts of Canadian sovereignty, the question should again be considered as soon as the Transport icebreaker is available to accompany the ‘C.D Howe.’”⁵⁰¹ By 1950, the Canadian authorities still plodded towards the Canadianization of the naval resupply missions to the Arctic. While steps were taken in the right direction, only in 1954 did a Canadian ship participate in the supply cruise.

The RCAF managed to fare better in assuming more responsibility for the air supply of the Arctic installations. In February 1949, the Air Force took over full responsibility for supplying the northern Loran stations.⁵⁰² Bercuson argued that the RCAF did not have the ability to participate meaningfully during the construction phase of the JAWS program because it lacked large transport aircraft. When the weather station at Isachsen was established, for instance, the USAF flew in 84 tons of supplies in ten days.⁵⁰³ After the construction phase, however, the supplies required by the stations dropped dramatically and the RCAF began to take on a larger role in the airlifts. In the spring of 1949 the Air Services Branch, Department of Mines and Resources, claimed that “the RCAF with their organization and equipment are the most suited to efficiently operate, maintain and supply these bases. In so doing, the Air Force can show the flag continuously, and, equally important, acquire the Arctic experience and knowledge

⁵⁰¹ Extract from Minutes of meeting of Advisory Committee on Northern Development, 20 December 1949, *DCER, Volume 15, 1949*, 1489-1492.

⁵⁰² Memorandum to Advisory Committee on Northern Development, March 2, 1949, Re-Canadianization of Northern Canada, *DCER, Volume 15, 1949*, 1474.

⁵⁰³ Bercuson, “Continental Defence and Arctic Sovereignty, 1945-1950,” 165.

necessary to defence.”⁵⁰⁴ In 1950 the RCAF instituted a regular northern supply service out of Montreal, largely achieving the Canadianization of airlift responsibilities.

The Weather Stations and Airfields

Critics, both in the 1940’s and in modern scholarship, have taken aim at the Canadian government’s inability to Canadianize the Arctic weather stations within the first few years of their existence.⁵⁰⁵ They blame the Canadian government for its unwillingness to devote the time and money needed to assume control of the stations. Several factors, however, contributed to the government’s slow response. First of all, the Canadians lacked the personnel to operate the stations independently. The government considered it far more important to continue operating its stations along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts and wanted to assume control of the northeastern sites, which completely lacked a Canadian presence, before the jointly-run Arctic stations.⁵⁰⁶ As it took over stations in the northeast from 1948-50,⁵⁰⁷ it simply did not have the personnel to Canadianize the Arctic weather stations.

The Canadian government felt little urgency to Canadianize the Arctic stations.

By 1948, the Americans had recognized Canada’s sovereignty in the region, the stations

⁵⁰⁴ Memorandum for the Air Services Branch, Department of Transport to ACND, 24 August 1949, *DCER, Volume 15, 1949*, 1480-1481.

⁵⁰⁵ Lajeunesse, “The True North As Long As It’s Free: The Canadian Policy Deficit 1945-1985,”; Grant, *Sovereignty or Security?*

⁵⁰⁶ Political III for file, re: Arctic Weather Stations, 30 April 1947, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3841, file 9061-A-40 pt.2.

⁵⁰⁷ During 1948, the Canadians took over two northeastern stations, at Mecatina, Quebec and Clyde River, Baffin Island. By 1949, however, the Americans still operated the stations at Padloping, Cape Harrison, Indianhouse Lake, Mingan, Frobisher and Chimo, although Canada promised to assume control of these sites by 1950. Memorandum to Advisory Committee on Northern Development, 2 March 1949, Re-Canadianization of Northern Canada, *DCER, Volume 15, 1949*, 1471-1475. Unfortunately, personnel could not be found for the Padloping station until the RCN took it over in 1953. Extract from Minutes of Joint Planning Committee, 6 April 1954, LAC, RG 24, vol. 8148, file NSS 1616-9, pt.8.

ran well under joint staffs, and Canadians commanded them. American personnel rarely misbehaved. Furthermore, the U.S. provided sophisticated equipment that Canada could not.⁵⁰⁸ By the 1950's the situation was so comfortable that the impetus for Canadianizing the stations had disappeared. In 1946, only a few short years before, the Canadians desperately attempted to think of ways they could run the stations independently. By the 1950's they seemed disinterested. American personnel no longer represented a perceived threat to Canada's terrestrial sovereignty, and the weather stations were not Canadianized until the 1970's as a result.

⁵⁰⁸ Reichelderfer to Chief, USAF, 17 June 1949, NARA, RG 27, Entry 5, Box 5, File Annual Ottawa Meeting, 1947-1952.

Conclusion

By 1952 the Canadian government rest assured that it had protected its country's interests and sovereignty over the past six years. Although worries about the American presence in the region persisted, Canadian officials had weathered the first sustained challenge to their sovereignty in the Arctic. The U.S. retained no long term rights to defence installations on Canadian territory, all projects undertaken remained joint enterprises as far as this was possible, and Canada retained effective command and control.⁵⁰⁹ For their part, the Americans consistently worked to improve defence coordination with Canada. They accepted their ally's difficult position and at the senior level - the level that truly mattered - they took realistic action to respect this position. By 1952, the State Department could claim that a "tradition of friendly relations" built upon the "frank discussion of difficulties as they arose" had been established between the two countries since 1946.⁵¹⁰ Although a few American servicemen continued to misbehave and make brash statements about Canada's sovereignty, the general U.S. attitude towards the relationship remained respectful.

Canadian officials' approach to the early Cold War relationship with the Americans reflected valuable lessons that they had learned from the northern defence projects during the Second World War. They realized that they needed to control American proposals and activities from the start by setting careful parameters and

⁵⁰⁹ Memorandum from Defence Liaison Division to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, 9 July 1952, *DCER, Volume 18, 1952*, 1112-1118.

⁵¹⁰ Memorandum of a Discussion with Mr. Hayden Raynor of the State Department held November 20, 1952," 22 November 1952, *DCER, Volume 18, 1952*, 1119.

guidelines. Officials also learned how to deal with American intransigence and their occasionally domineering approach.

In 1946 the Canadians adopted a different attitude towards their defence relationship with the Americans than they had early in the war. They tried to be more assertive and defensive in handling their close ally, and they succeeded by continuing to learn from their mistakes and improving their efforts to control activities. For instance, when the observers on the 1948 sea supply mission failed to stop a number of American indiscretions, the Canadian government ensured that these men received proper training before the next mission. These mistakes did not recur.

Though wartime experiences caused Canadian officials to distrust American intentions, they also realized that their southern neighbour would be their most intimate ally in the Cold War world. Defence against help is another theme that underpinned the Canadian approach during this period. The Canadians understood that the Americans worried about the undefended northern approaches to the continent and wanted to prepare defences accordingly. Not wanting the U.S. to take unilateral action on Canadian territory, Canadians participated in continental defence activities as much as they felt their budget would allow. Furthermore, they used the negotiations over defence activities in the region to strengthen Canada's claims. Involvement in continental defence planning allowed the Canadians to exercise modest control in defence planning. Defending against help was not a dramatic strategy, but it allowed the Canadians to secure their sovereignty effectively while leaving the primary financial burden for defence on their key ally.

Canadian officials also used the tactic of delaying decisions to useful effect. In 1946 the Canadians realized that they could delay decisions without the Americans taking unilateral action. The government worked to slow defence planning, allowing time to ponder problems and formulate appropriate responses. Prime Minister King proved a master of delay tactics in the summer of 1946, when American defence plans piled up on his desk and the parameters he wanted in place to protect Canada's sovereignty failed to materialize. By delaying decisions, the Canadians forced the Americans to make concessions and to re-evaluate their defence plans and their respect for Canadian sensitivities. Rather than rushing to fill the Arctic with defence projects desired by the United States, Canadian decision-makers dictated the pace at which security planning progressed to suit their own interests.

Once they actually accepted American proposals, Canadian officials focused on establishing control over defence activities in their Arctic. The government continuously strengthened Canada's *de facto* sovereignty through its careful attention to detail. Seemingly minor American transgressions caused the Canadians to vividly remember their powerless position during the war. History, however, would not be repeated. Canadian officials proved far more willing to "go to the mat" with the U.S. on indiscretions than they had in the past. Employing control mechanisms such as observers, membership in the PJBD, and the ACND, the Canadians monitored activities in the Arctic. Whenever a defence project strayed from its approved guidelines, the Canadians complained and asked the Americans to rectify the situation. They usually

complied. Despite a growing sense of trust, Canadian officials remained ever vigilant to ensure that the sovereignty gains were not lost.

The Canadians were able to delay decisions and establish effective control in the Arctic because of the constant willingness of the Americans to accommodate their ally's concerns and interests. Arctic experts Gordon Smith and Graham Rowley told historian Elizabeth Elliot-Meisel that "some Canadians like Trevor Lloyd, 'always a hawk on sovereignty,' did 'see [American] ulterior motives everywhere.'" Both men considered this belief utter nonsense.⁵¹¹ A sombre appraisal of U.S. actions during the late 1940s dispels the myth that the Americans had a hidden agenda to undermine Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic. As the Canadians pushed for stronger regulatory guidelines for the defence projects, the Americans accepted them even when they disagreed with the measures adopted. While some low ranking Americans, usually in the military, challenged Canada's authority, the majority complied with it. Senior U.S. officials took action to address these indiscretions and resolve Canadian concerns. Though Hubbard probably thought it was ridiculous that he had to give up the mallet heads he found in the Arctic because of NWT regulations, he did so without complaint. His action embodies the American attitude towards the early Cold War defence projects. They wanted to sign on the Canadians as faithful allies, and while they considered continental security of primary importance, they also respected Canada's sovereignty. In the end, the Americans could not give Canada a formal recognition of its sovereignty on the basis of the sector principle without prejudicing their own position in the Antarctic. Still, the

⁵¹¹ Gordon Smith and Graham Rowley interviewed 17 October 1991 and 21 October 1991 by Elizabeth Elliot-Meisel. Elliot-Meisel, *Arctic Diplomacy*, 34.

U.S. informally guaranteed Canada's terrestrial sovereignty and signed defence agreements that explicitly recognized Canadian control over the region.

Together the two countries established a precedent of compromise. The Canadians became tougher and more assertive during this period, but they also conceded on issues when it was appropriate. At the Chateau Laurier conference the Canadians signed on to a bilateral defence relationship when they would have preferred a multilateral commitment. Similarly, the Americans sacrificed some of their defence plans out of respect for Canada's interests. Both countries built a relationship based on compromise, respect, informal negotiations, and mutually beneficial solutions. The U.S. and Canada experienced problems, as many countries in such a close relationship would, but they worked through them to the betterment of both their respective positions.

While Pearson noted the indiscretions of the United States, he also stated, "I am not so critical of United States action as I am of our own inaction."⁵¹² Canada could have done more to improve its capabilities in the Arctic or to simply learn more about its territory. In the end, however, it successfully accomplished its overall objective. Despite the assertions of Grant and Lajeunesse, Canada could not have acted more aggressively and better protected its sovereignty through more forceful negotiations. The government was constrained by security concerns, international law, and the strategic interests of the U.S. In the context of the time, the Canadians adopted the only realistic policy available to them: gradual acquisition. An activist assertion attempting to trade defence rights for a public recognition of Canada's sovereignty would have been

⁵¹² Memorandum from Secretary of State for External Affairs to Clerk of Privy Council, 15 January 1953, *DCER, Volume 19, 1953*, 1203.

rejected by the Americans. By the end of the 1940's, Canada's quiet diplomacy had secured *de jure* sovereignty over its terrestrial claims in the Arctic, even though neither country abandoned its respective legal position. Agreements also bolstered Canada's *de facto* sovereignty in the region.

The defence relationship between the Americans and Canadians grew closer in the 1950s. Fear of Soviet bombers carrying nuclear weapons across the Pole sparked the creation of a massive network of radar stations across the Arctic, the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line. Though the American presence in the high North increased dramatically during the construction phase of the radar line, Canadian decision-makers protected their rights in the region using the precedents and parameters established for the earlier projects.⁵¹³ When E.B Wang, an international lawyer attached to the Defence Department, described the relationship that developed on the DEW Line, he stated that evidence of sovereignty encroachments had been overblown:

American policy towards the DEW Line appears to be based on a desire to accommodate themselves as harmoniously and as constructively as possible into the Canadian setting which they have to operate....Perhaps it may be possible to detect some sour notes by diligent searching. I wonder, however, whether any such problems would weigh very heavily against the important benefits which accrue to Canada from this project in the development of the North, not to speak of its essential contribution to our security. Indeed we might be tempted to congratulate ourselves...for enjoying a "free ride" at least in this area of our defense activities on our own soil, without any unpleasant side effects.⁵¹⁴

⁵¹³ Bercuson, "Continental Defence and Arctic Sovereignty, 1945-1950," 166.

⁵¹⁴ Quoted in P.W. Lackenbauer and Peter Kikkert, "Sovereignty and Security: The Department of External Affairs, the United States, and Arctic Sovereignty, 1945-68," in *Serving the National Interest: Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 1909-2009*, ed. Greg Donaghy (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, out to peer review).

The same statement could be applied to the defence projects that occurred in the Arctic between 1946 and the early 1950's. During these formative years the two countries established the model for harmonious bilateral relations. Though the DEW Line continues to represent one of the largest development projects ever undertaken in the Arctic, its impact on sovereignty was minimal due to the precedents previously established.⁵¹⁵

These precedents proved pervasive. In August 1985 the United States Coast Guard icebreaker *Polar Sea* transited the Northwest Passage on a simple resupply mission to the American airbase at Thule, Greenland. As the ship wound its way through the ice-laden Passage that Canada claimed as internal waters, another sovereignty crisis swept the country. Prior to the voyage, the American government suggested that the two countries should agree to disagree on the divisive legal issues involving the Arctic and argued that the transit in no way weakened either country's juridical position.⁵¹⁶ While the Canadians initially agreed to cooperate with the American initiative, the Mulroney government chose to take a much firmer stance when faced with a public uproar. In the ensuing diplomatic storm, Ottawa insisted the United States ask for permission before entering the Passage and applied straight baselines to the archipelago on 1 January 1986, effectively enclosing the waters of the Canadian Arctic. Mulroney also announced a range of defence plans for the Arctic, from increased surveillance to nuclear submarines, to safeguard Canada's claims in the region. It appeared that cooperation with the United States in the Arctic was a thing of the past.

⁵¹⁵ This argument will be advanced by Whitney Lackenbauer and Matthew Farish in their forthcoming history of the DEW Line.

⁵¹⁶ Coates et al, *Arctic Front*, 113.

Despite its nationalistic sovereignty assertions, the Mulroney government still sought some kind of compromise with its close ally. By the spring of 1987 President Reagan and Prime Minister Mulroney decided to negotiate a working compromise over the Northwest Passage issue. On 11 January 1988, External Affairs Minister Joe Clark and Secretary of State George Shultz announced an agreement on Arctic cooperation. The U.S. agreed to disagree with Canada on the contentious legal status of the Northwest Passage. “While we and the United States have not changed our legal position,” Mulroney explained, “we have come to a practical agreement that is fully consistent with the requirements of Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic.”⁵¹⁷ This pragmatic solution satisfied both countries and did not set any unwanted precedents.

This policy of agreeing to disagree did not appear out of thin air. Mulroney and Regan adopted an old and familiar position that had roots in the defence negotiations of 1946. After the Second World War, Canada and the United States found space to coexist in the name of continental defence, creating a solution to Canada’s sovereignty woes that both governments could accept, while continuing to disagree on the finer legal issues. Franklyn Griffiths and other commentators continue to suggest that a functional Canadian approach to managing and controlling its internal waters, based on “agreeing to disagree” with the Americans on the legal status of the Northwest Passage, remains a feasible and realistic option. Such a policy has proven effective before and it might remain the key to the future of Canada’s Arctic.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁷ Cited in Coates et al, *Arctic Front*, 120-122.

⁵¹⁸ Whitney Lackenbauer, “From Polar Race to Polar Saga: An Integrated Strategy for Canada and the Circumpolar World,” paper for the Canadian International Council, July 2009.

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