

Canadian Public not in favour of Missile Defence Plan

Written by

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Not only don't we want it, but it is preposterous to think that it would ever work. These two AP and CTV stories discuss both the recent failures in the technology and Canadian's growing opposition to participating.

Update: see also the [AFP analysis](#) of the test failures.

-- Space & Technology Editor

U.S. missile shield fails another test

Missile shield

Associated Press Updated: Mon. Feb. 14 2005 11:34 PM ET

http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/1108425151853_18

WASHINGTON ? A test of the national missile defense system failed Monday when an interceptor missile did not launch from its island base in the Pacific Ocean, the military said. It was the second failure in months for the experimental program.

A statement from the Missile Defense Agency said the cause of the failure was under investigation.

A spokesman for the agency, Rick Lehner, said the early indications was that there was a malfunction with the ground support equipment at the test range on Kwajalein Island, not with the interceptor missile itself.

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If verified, that would be a relief for program officials because it would mean no new problems had been discovered with the missile. Previous failures of these high-profile, \$85 million test launches have been regarded as significant setbacks by critics of the program.

In Monday's test, the interceptor missile was to target a mock ICBM fired from Kodiak Island, Alaska. The target missile launched at 1:22 a.m. Monday EST without any problems, but the interceptor did not launch.

The previous test, on Dec. 15, failed under almost identical circumstances. The target missile launched, but the interceptor did not. Military officials later blamed that failure on fault-tolerance software that was oversensitive to small errors in the flow of data between the missile and a flight computer. The software shut down the launch; officials said they would decrease the sensitivity in future launches.

Before the Dec. 15 launch, it had been two years since a test. The program had gone five-for-eight in previous attempts to intercept a target.

No date for the next test has been announced. It is unclear how continued test failures would affect two experimental interceptor bases in Alaska and California.

Those two bases, Fort Greely, Alaska, and Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif., are positioned to oppose the threat of attack from North Korea. Both are still classified as experimental but, officials say, they could fire interceptors in an emergency.

The Pentagon has not declared those bases "operational," but officials say they would work anyway once certain mechanical blocks are removed from the interceptors themselves. Six interceptors are at the Alaska site, with two more in California as a backup. Up to 10 more will go into silos in Alaska this year, officials say.

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Opposition against missile defence growing: poll

Canada US Missiles

CTV.ca News Staff

http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/1108230336054_6

Updated: Sun. Feb. 13 2005 7:55 AM ET

A growing number of Canadians oppose the U.S. missile defence shield, a poll shows.

A new poll conducted for the Toronto Star suggests 54 per cent of Canadians oppose participation, up one percentage point from last October -- a sign that the shield could emerge as an election issue for the federal Liberals, the Star reported.

With a minority government and most Canadians opposing the program, the federal Liberals may feel pressed to reject U.S. President George Bush's proposition that Canada join the program.

The missile defence system should be operational in the United States by later this year. It is designed to defend that country from missiles fired from either rogue states or terrorist groups with access to a missile system.

"For Mr. Martin and the Liberals it's evolved from being a relatively benign issue to one that could be genuinely troubling," EKOS President Frank Graves told the Star.

"Moreover, people tell us that unlike other issues like same-sex (marriage) or ethics, this is an

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issue which may well be worth fighting an election over," he said.

Public support from the program has also decreased, 34 per cent of Canadians now support or strongly support the shield, as compared to 37 per cent last October.

Graves told the Star that public support has dropped by 20 percentage points in the last few years and that the decrease should be seen as an indicator of "deeper anxieties about what the American administration (is) doing."

"A couple of years ago it wasn't a particularly troubling issue. Most Canadians said 'Well, they're going to do it anyway, we might as well get onboard'," he said.

Support for the missile defence shield was highest among Conservatives at 57 per cent; Liberal support was at 33 per cent; and weakest among NDP and Bloc Quebecois voters.

Opposition is highest in Quebec, with 64 per cent of survey respondents against the program; compared to 57 per cent in British Columbia and 52 per cent in Ontario.

Women were more inclined to oppose the issue, with 59 per cent against the program compared to 50 per cent of men.

Earlier this week, Defence Minister Bill Graham said the idea of the missile defence shield is not dead in Canada, despite opposition from the Bloc Quebecois, NDP and within the Liberal caucus.

Critics have called it the first step toward the weaponization of space.

"We're considering exactly what is the appropriate answer to give on ballistic missile defence,"

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Graham said.

"The whole object is to make sure that any participation in ballistic missile defence would be circumscribed by clear understanding that we're not participating in anything that would involve the weaponization of space or the use of Canadian territory."

Canada and the United States have already altered their NORAD agreement to share information with the missile defence authority.

But supporters say the Canadian government should join the program if it wants a say in its future.

"If Canada sits on the sidelines, it is clear that it will not have a voice or any influence over the future direction of the program," said the Conference of Defence Associations.

The matter is expected to be discussed at the Liberal party's Ottawa convention in early March.

EKOS surveyed 1,046 Canadians aged 18 and up from Feb. 7 to 9.

With files from The Canadian Press

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