Antarctica
A Military Connection?

Australian Associated Press reported on 11 February 1985 that monitoring facilities "in Australia" were being used to improve the accuracy of the United States' first-strike nuclear weapons. Reports quoted Dr Des Ball, Head of the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre at the Australian National University in Canberra, as saying that the main aim of the programme at present was to improve the accuracy of MX, Cruise and Trident nuclear missiles. The report went on to name Casey and Mawson, in the Australian-claimed sector of the Antarctic, as two locations where the portable receivers had been stationed.

ECO understands that the purpose of the receivers is to enable accurate calculations of the position of the pole and of the amount of polar "wobble" to be made, this being essential targeting information. ECO further understands that, although receivers are no longer based at Casey or Mawson, last summer there was a similar receiver in operation at the American McMurdo Station.

The Antarctic Treaty itself is quite clear and unambiguous on the question of military activities in the Antarctic. The very first sentence of Article I states that Antarctica should be used for peaceful purposes only. There is no possible way that improving the accuracy of a weapons system could be described as a "peaceful purpose".

Further, the Treaty prohibits any measures of a military nature, and specifically mentions the testing of new weapons systems as an example of an activity that would be prohibited. It would be inconceivable that the drafters of the Treaty intended to prohibit the testing of weapons in the Antarctic, but to allow the Antarctic to be an integral part of a programme to collect secret military data which would then be used to improve the already lethal accuracy of the most destructive weapons known to humankind.

There are, as a consequence, some very serious questions to be asked. Who owns the receivers in the Antarctic? If they are "civilian-owned and operated", is all the information that is gained available to any scientist from any nation, as required by the Treaty? If the receivers in the Antarctic are civilian, how does this tally with the fact that those in Australia, receivers which were part of the same programme, were claimed by the Australian Defence Department to be so secret that even their locations were classified? And why is Dr Ball no longer willing to talk about the subject?

Further, are any other nations also conducting research of a military nature under the guise of a civilian programme? ECO does not mean to suggest that the United States may be the only country whose research is questionable.

These particular reports, however, specifically concern the United States. ECO feels that since the original information came from such a credible source (Dr Ball), there should be a full response from the United States Government. ECO looks forward to any comments that delegates to the ATCM may have.
Whither Antarctica?

From time to time ECO provides NGOs who are working on Antarctic issues the opportunity to express their personal views. ECO is pleased to print the first part of an article by Lee Kimball in this edition. Lee works at the International Institute of Environment and Development in Washington, DC and has served as the US NGO representative to the minerals negotiation for the past three years. She recently returned from the Rio minerals meeting.

PARTICIPATION AND CREDIBILITY

The Antarctic minerals negotiation reflects in a microcosm the two themes currently dominating Antarctic affairs: broadening international participation in Antarctic activities and balancing varying Antarctic uses. These themes find expression in debates over Antarctic policies within and among countries party to the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS), the wider international community in general, and its environmental component in particular.

Parties to the debate have raised questions about broader participation in Antarctic decision-making, in minerals activities per se and in the benefits from any minerals activities that might take place.

The development of a role for Non-Consultative Parties (NCPs) within Antarctic meetings is already well under way. ECO readers are aware that the 16 NCPs participated for the first time in the minerals negotiation at the session in Rio de Janeiro, from February 26 to March 12. Their participation was remarkable for its smoothness, in contrast to the Canberra consultative meeting a year ago where the observers were neither as well-prepared nor drawn so much into the nitty gritty discussions.

The observers' toughest challenge, however, is not comprehension of the technical side, but rather how technical concerns are considered and resolved in the legal/political reality of Antarctica, where both claimants and non-claimants are committed to agreement on a minerals regime that does not prejudice their respective positions on the territorial status of the region.

It could still be possible for the minerals regime being negotiated to provide the observers with limited decision-making rights, with respect to certain specific issues that directly affect their interests. These include environmental matters and benefits for the wider international community. The ATS in general could evolve to expand the activities criterion for participation in decision-making to include ship-based activities or supply and logistics support work, as well as jointly sponsored and conducted research programs.

Increased interest by developing nations has led to proposals such as that made by Chile, for the creation of a Fund, financed partly by minerals development, to help interested Antarctic Treaty nations lacking financial resources to take part in and benefit from Antarctic scientific research activities. During the 1984 UN debate, Zimbabwe proposed that international research stations be established, where scientists from Third World countries would be encouraged to work. Mexico suggested that it would be most worthwhile to undertake an exhaustive study of the various mechanisms that could be used to extend the benefits of international cooperation in the field of science and technology to the international community as a whole.

More recently, at the workshop sponsored by the non-governmental US National Academy of Sciences, which took place in Antarctica in January, 1985, Hassan El-Ghouayel of Tunisia noted, "There won't be any profit from mineral exploitation for many decades. It will be much more valuable for us to share the rewards of science in Antarctica."

Thus, while providing for the possibility of increasing access by developing countries to information relevant to carrying out exploitation activities or for their participation in various types of joint ventures in minerals activities, should they occur, the ATCPS need to consider ways to foster participation by the Third World in the important scientific work now going on. The environmental community may wish to capitalise on this interest in science as a means of promoting the preservation of Antarctica for scientific research purposes, or at a minimum to promote the carrying out of research required to effectively implement Antarctic resource regimes.

Another aspect of broadening international participation involves the provision in the minerals regime of a mechanism for outside review and comment on decisions and activities. The minerals regime should call for maintenance of an extensive public record composed of:

- scientific and environmental data
- measures adopted by the institutions
Penguin Paranoia

At previous Antarctic meetings in New Zealand, Germany, the United States and Japan, delegates have been greeted by NGO penguins, to the enjoyment of all concerned. In Brussels, this did not occur. This was not because of any lack of enthusiasm on the part of the penguins or delegates, but because the Brussels police force, convinced that a handful of penguins two hundred metres from the conference room constituted a real and serious danger, took them away for two hours of questioning, confiscating their suits. Apparently in Belgium it is a crime to dress up at any time of year other than Carnival time, in February and March.

ECO wants to express its deepest indignation and outrage at this unprecedented and completely unwarranted expression of intolerance from the Belgian forces of law and order. It’s a sad day when delegates to an Antarctic meeting are prevented from meeting or even seeing their favourite penguins - the only penguins that many of them have ever seen! Delegates might like to have a quiet word in the ear of their Belgian hosts.

The possibility of circulating documentation on various pending matters to all contracting parties to the regime and to observers was proposed by 11 major environmental organisations in the US last May. As the consultative parties consider whether and which international organisations to designate as observers under the various Antarctic regimes, they should bear in mind the importance of ensuring that they incorporate the full realm of knowledgeable Antarctic partisans. Moreover, if they designate organisations with widespread international constituencies, be they inter-governmental or non-governmental, they will de facto broaden participation in decision-making.

Both the development of the observer role in Antarctic decision-making and increasing the flow of public information contribute to the "accountability" of the ATS, as called for in the UN and elsewhere. A primary weakness of the system, which stems from the need to avoid prejudicing either claimant or non-claimant position, is its lack of specificity with respect to enforcement rights and procedures to consider allegations that the rules are not being complied with. While the former may not be resolved in the minerals regime for the same reason it is not dealt with explicitly elsewhere, the minerals regime should provide for explicit procedures to
OPENING DAY

The opening of the Preparatory Meeting took place, as foreseen, on Monday. The host country, Belgium, was first appointed to the chair of the meeting, as is traditional. Then, first the ATCP and then the NCP delegations made their opening speeches. ECO would like to thank the Belgian Government for inviting several NGO representatives to this session.

Almost all the delegations, both ATCP and NCP were present at the opening session. Following on from the previous Consultative Meeting, in Canberra, and the minerals meeting in Rio, this is the third time the NCPs have been allowed to participate as observers. It is very pleasing that most NCPs have confirmed their active interest by being present in Brussels. ECO feels discussion will gain a lot from this wider participation, and encourages the NCPs to look critically, but constructively, at the way in which the Treaty system presently operates.

The meeting this week takes place in the Palais d’Egmont, the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ conference building. Unfortunately, access to the palace is severely restricted, and hence delegations are not as accessible to NGOs as we would like. Again, we’d urge delegates to contact us if they have any matters at all to discuss.

Meanwhile, out on the Boulevard de Waterloo outside the Palais d’Egmont, a bus, borrowed from Greenpeace France for the occasion, played host to a press conference which was attended by a film crew, several photographers, press and the Belgian press agency Belga. Speakers at the press conference included Roger Wilson, Antarctic Co-ordinator for Greenpeace International, Francois Roelants, a Belgian Euro- parliamentarian for the Rainbow faction, and Yves Boupape, Director of World Wildlife Fund Belgium. All expounded their views on serious matters of concern to environmentalists interested in the Antarctic.

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