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NEWS RELEASE

***IRPP Study Suggests that Canada Support the
American Ballistic Missile Defence to Preserve NORAD***

***Ottawa contributes nothing positive to arms control or strategic stability
by refusing to be part of BMD, says author***

Montreal – In a study released today by the Institute for Research on Public Policy (irpp.org), Philippe Lagassé concludes that Canada should support the American ballistic missile defence (BMD) because it would secure NORAD's position and benefit the Canadian Forces.

The author also argues that Canada's involvement in missile defence reinforces its commitment to jointly protect and secure North America. "Participating in missile defence would further demonstrate to our anxious neighbour and closest trading partner that Canada is serious about continental security," says Lagassé.

The study situates the debate, supporting or opposing the BMD, in the context of the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT) and the American nuclear policies that guided its negotiation. Although Lagassé says that SORT and BMD have the potential to "negatively impact strategic stability and the future of arms control," he maintains that Canada's abstention from BMD will not destabilize the status of missile defence. "Whatever Ottawa chooses to do, the Bush administration will not change its dismissive approach to arms control; Canada's 'soft power' backing of arms control and disarmament holds no sway over the White House," he says.

Although the author supports in promoting Canada's engagement in missile defence he also highlights SORT's weaknesses such as its silence on the issue of warhead stockpiles and tactical nuclear weapons, and its weak provisions for verification and monitoring. Lagassé's examination reveals that the Bush administration has systematically justified these deficiencies based on its changed perception of threats. "Rogue states are now a greater concern for the United States than the existing Russian weapons," claims the author.

This same rationale permeates in what Lagassé calls the "five nuclear policy and arms control axioms" of the Bush administration. Among them is the belief that establishing a missile defence system is not detrimental to the United States' increasingly friendly relationship with the Russian Federation because Russo-American rapprochement negates their past adversarial dealings. Lagassé writes that there is a new drive to "confront the realities of a new, more uncertain era," and this rhetoric has led the United

States to adopt a “capabilities-based” nuclear strategy, which seeks to enhance its flexibility in structuring its nuclear forces.

Essentially, in the face of American resolve, Lagassé states that Canada has two choices: save NORAD and maintain its ties with the United States or jeopardize the national interest by remaining adamant on its arms control principles. The author makes it clear that he supports the former position.

“The Sort Debate: Implications for Canada” is the first study to be launched as part of the IRPP’s Working Paper Series. It is released as a component of the Institute’s *National Security and Military Interoperability* research theme. Please find the summary attached. This paper is now available on-line in Adobe (.pdf) format on the Institute’s Web site (<http://www.irpp.org>). There, you will also find other studies that fall under the same theme.

For more information or to schedule an interview, please contact the IRPP.

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