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Address by the Hon. Stephen Harper, P.C., M.P.  
Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada

OTTAWA: Thursday, December 22, 2005  
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## Harper Stands Up for Arctic Sovereignty

Ladies and gentlemen, Canada needs change to a new government – a new government that will bring accountability to Ottawa, and will get on with addressing the real priorities of ordinary working families. Priorities like cleaning up government, cutting the GST, and cracking down on crime. Priorities that will move Canada forward after 12 years of scandal and inaction.

Today, I want to discuss a crucial issue of national sovereignty, namely protecting our sovereignty over the Arctic and Canada's north. The single most important duty of the federal government is to protect and defend our national sovereignty. And now there are new and disturbing reports of American nuclear submarines passing through Canadian waters without obtaining the permission of – or even notifying – the Canadian government.

It's time to act to defend Canadian sovereignty. A Conservative government will make the military investments needed to secure our borders. You don't defend national sovereignty with flags, cheap election rhetoric, and advertising campaigns. You need forces on the ground, ships in the sea, and proper surveillance. And that will be the Conservative approach.

As Prime Minister, I will make it plain to foreign governments – including the United States – that naval vessels travelling in Canadian waters will require the consent of the government of Canada.

Today, I am outlining the Conservative Party's plan to stand up for our Arctic sovereignty. It is an integral part of our "Canada First" defence commitment. We will budget \$5.3 billion over five years beyond the current government defence planning levels as I announced in Trenton, Ontario last week. In order to ensure sovereignty over our land, waters, and airspace in Canada's north, a Conservative government will take the following measures:

- We will create a new Arctic national sensor system to monitor our northern waters for submarines and other vessels.
- We will purchase three new heavy naval ice breakers, capable of carrying troops. These ships will be built right here in Canada.
- We will build a new combined military civilian deep water docking facility in the Iqaluit region. At least 500 sailors will be committed for operating these icebreakers and the docking facility.
- We will deploy new fixed wing search-and-rescue aircraft in Yellowknife, and replace existing utility aircraft.
- We will deploy new unmanned aerial vehicle or UAV squadrons in CFB Comox and CFB Goose Bay, in addition to upgraded aurora aircraft for continuous surveillance of all three of our coasts.

- We will establish a new Arctic army training centre with around 100 regular force personnel in the area of Cambridge Bay on the Northwest Passage.
- The new 650-strong airborne battalion, to be stationed at CFB Trenton, will be capable of providing emergency response anywhere in the Arctic, including areas inaccessible by road or helicopter.
- And we will expand and revitalize the Canadian Rangers, the vital northern defence force that helps establish our sovereignty in remote Arctic communities.

I also want to add a few words about enhancing the Canadian military presence here in Winnipeg and Manitoba under the Conservative "Canada First" defence strategy. We will strengthen Canada's transport and rescue capabilities at CFB Winnipeg with new tactical airlift and new fixed wing search and rescue aircraft. We will also provide more regular and reserve force personnel to fill out existing operational, support and training units.

Finally, we will improve Canada's emergency response capabilities in Manitoba by stationing a new territorial defence battalion with 100 regular and at least 400 reserve force personnel in the Winnipeg area.

The Conservative "Canada First" defence strategy, including our proposals for enhancing our Arctic sovereignty, is not a new plan developed in the heat of this campaign. It is a carefully planned part of our defence package that I began to discuss in Trenton last week. But events since then have shown how vital this is. We now know that empty words will not defend our borders.

Under a new Conservative government, things will change. Under a new Conservative government, Canada will know when foreign ships – whether they be Russian, British, Danish, American, or anybody else's are in our waters. It is the responsibility of the Canadian military to monitor and patrol our land and waters, and under a Conservative government, this will be done. We simply need to know when the ships of the United States, Russia or any other country are in Canadian waters, and we will require them to ask our consent to traverse our waters.

Paul Martin talks eloquently about defending national sovereignty, but the reality hasn't matched his rhetoric. The fact of the matter is that he doesn't know who is in our waters in the north he has allowed our sovereign capability to defend our territory crumble.

As I said, the single most important duty of the federal government is to protect and defend our national sovereignty. On that score, the Martin Liberals have failed.

Under a new Conservative government, Canada will have the tools to protect our sovereignty in the north. Canadians have had enough talk, enough phoney promises. It is time to equip our forces to do their job, and it is time to act. Only a new Conservative government can provide real action on sovereignty, not just words.

On January 23<sup>rd</sup>, it is time to stand up for sovereignty, stand up for our Arctic, and stand up for Canada.