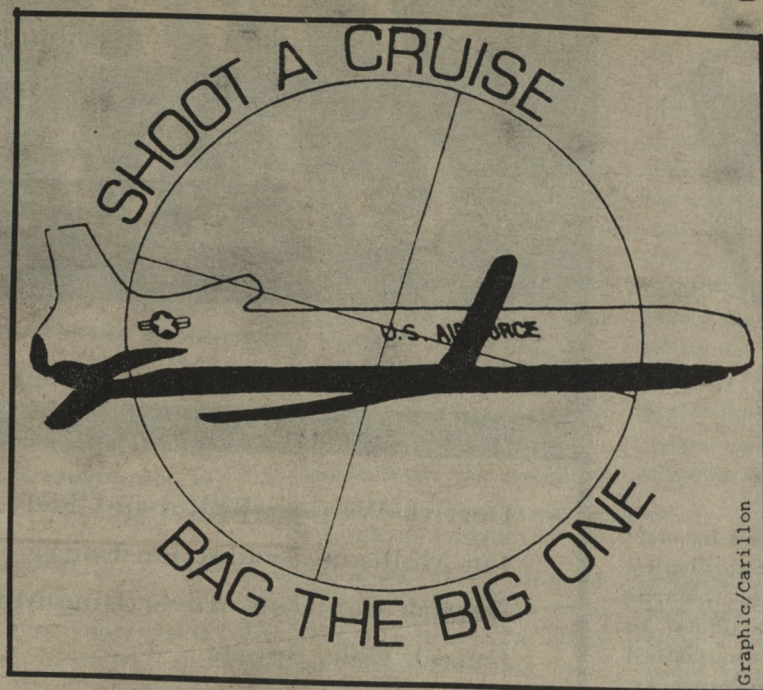


New "improved" cruise coming soon



VANCOUVER (CUP) — The debate over whether the cruise missile is a first-strike or retaliatory weapon has been raging on Canadian campuses for years, but new developments leave little room for dispute.

This spring, a series of letters to the The Ubysey at the University of British Columbia, argued that the low-flying cruise is for retaliatory purposes, since it is much slower than supersonic missiles.

Other students, however, argued that the cruise's extreme accuracy classifies it as a "counterforce" weapon, and must, therefore, be designed for nuclear war-fighting or first-strike strategies.

But John Lamb, director of the Canadian Centre for Arms Control and Disarmament in Ottawa, says the debate about the missile's use will change significantly with the new Advanced Cruise Missile or ACM.

In a recent brief, Lamb and other researchers say

ACMs will be faster, with improved guidance systems and longer ranges. Most importantly, they will have radar-evading "stealth technology" designed to make the weapons more difficult to detect, and better suited to a surprise attack.

The new cruise was to be deployed by late 1989 or early 1990, but is now a year behind schedule. About 2,300 of the weapons will likely be produced. An even more advanced, supersonic version of the weapon will be deployed in the mid-to-late 1990s.

The Centre for Arms Control recommends that Canada should "head the advanced cruise off at the pass," pressing both Washington and Moscow to negotiate limitations on modernizing cruise missiles, particularly their speed.

Without such an agreement, Soviet versions of the advanced cruise will eventually create serious problems for Canadian air defence, say the researchers.

"The prospect of one day facing (and trying to defend against) a substantial Soviet force of advanced cruise missiles is hardly reassuring," says the brief.

To date, defence minister Beatty has denied that there are any current plans to test the modernized cruise — but officials at the centre say that's not good enough.

"What is needed is a forthright statement by the Secretary of State for External Affairs setting out Canada's position on the modernization of cruise technology," they say.

"Where, in short, does the government propose to draw the line on cruise testing?" the brief asks.

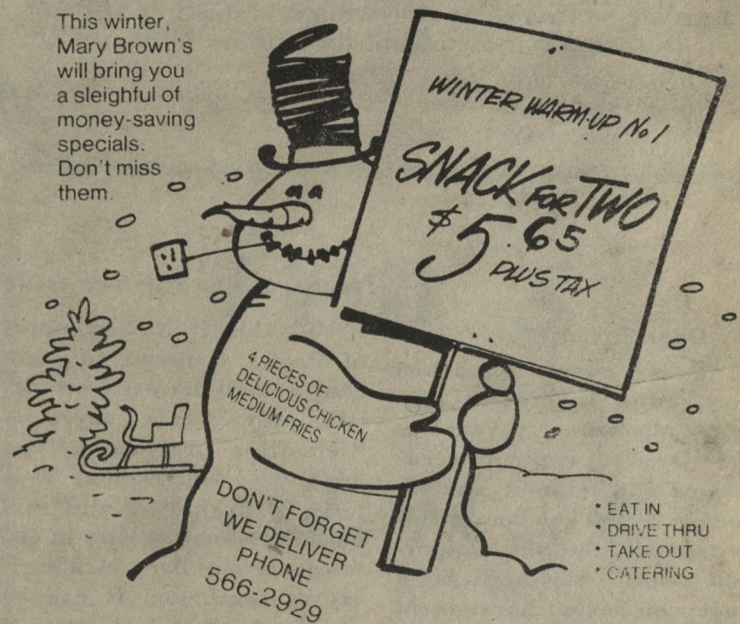
The cruise missile has an explosive power 15 times greater than the Hiroshima bomb. Both the NDP and the Liberals oppose further cruise tests, especially since the recent Soviet-U.S. agreement to cut intermediate range weapons negates Canada's original reasons for allowing the testing.



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