



Western Electric Co.

One of 31 radar stations of the Distant Early Warning line scanning the sky over Canada's Arctic wilderness from

atop a peak in this 1957 photo. The 3,000-mile radar line has been changed little since its completion in the 1950s.

U.S. Wants Radar System Modernized

By Norman Black
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WASHINGTON

THE UNITED STATES and Canada are nearing agreement on an ambitious, \$1.2 billion plan to modernize the early-warning radar network that rings the Arctic from Alaska to Greenland.

The plan calls for construction of a new DEW, or Distant Early Warning, line consisting of 52 radar stations. They would replace the original network of 31 radar units built in the 1950s to provide warning of a Soviet air attack.

The 3,000-mile DEW line has been ignored largely over the last two decades because of an emphasis on the threat posed by Soviet inter-continental ballistic missiles. That focus has begun to change in recent years, however, because of the Soviet Union's development of long-range bombers and low-

flying cruise missiles.

Early last month, the Pentagon's top spokesman, Michael I. Burch, cited those developments in arguing that the DEW line would have to be improved regardless of whether the United States ever was able to deploy a "Star Wars" missile-defense system in space. The existing line has become obsolete and does not provide total coverage of all air routes to North America, he said.

PENTAGON OFFICIALS have refused to discuss how the cost of the project would be divided between the two countries. One source, who spoke only on condition of anonymity, said Canada would shoulder a substantial portion of the expense. The United States paid the full cost of building the original system.

Capt. Jim Berg, an Air Force spokesman, said the new plan called for the building of 13 long-range, manned radar stations and 39 short-range, unmanned radar units, which

would serve as "gap fillers." He added that the Air Force already has awarded some small contracts for the system.

Most of the work has been held up, however, pending the outcome of the U.S.-Canadian negotiations. The United States has asked Canada to contribute to the modernization costs because of the defense and economic benefits Canada will receive from the project.

The request comes at a time when Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney has pledged that his government will make a larger contribution to allied defenses.

According to Berg, the new radar system is scheduled to become operational in 1992. The radar system also will be renamed, he added, as the North Warning line. The spokesman said he did not know whether the 31 old stations in the existing line would be dismantled. That issue is a matter of negotiation between the United States and Canada, he said.