

Native protesters in danger from bombs, military warns

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Aboriginal protesters occupying a military base to reclaim ancestral lands are sitting beside a field of bombs, the military says.

"Those bombs could blow up and kill you," Lt.-Col. Michael Sweeney, head of military operations in Ontario, said Monday.

"It's that simple. If you kick an unexploded bomb, it could explode as though it landed there yesterday."

IMPACT AREA

The protesters, who call themselves the Stony Pointers, are not camping inside the fenced "impact area," which makes up about 10 per cent of CFB Ipperwash, near Sarnia.

But Sweeney said the group, which took over the base Saturday, has driven trucks across the danger zone and repeatedly ripped out warning signs erected by the military.

The protesters took control of the 890-hectare base after reportedly crashing a bus through the door of a hall, setting up a barricade at the front gate and occupying the small cluster of buildings in one corner of the property.

They raised a warrior flag and posted a sign that reads Stony Point First Home Again.

About 25 soldiers withdrew late Saturday — three weeks before a scheduled withdrawal promised by Ottawa last year.

The protesters, who have been occupying part of the huge base



An office at CFB Ipperwash has been transformed into a band office by the people of the Stony Point First Nations.

Windsor Star Photo

since 1993, believe "the land will heal itself," said Tom Bressette, chief of the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point Band.

"They just think it's a ploy from the military."

Bressette and the band council don't endorse the protest group and are angered that the military allowed control of the site to slip away prematurely.

The land for the base was expropriated in 1942 to teach soldiers how to handle weapons and learn military drills.

It was to be returned when it was no longer needed. The federal government finally agreed last year to turn the land over once an environmental assessment is done, but the process has dragged on.