

Another development over the last few days has been the flight into Iran of an increasing number of Iraqi warplanes, approaching by some counts 100 warplanes. There has been speculation about why Iraqi pilots are taking their planes to Iran, and I must say that we do not yet have a clear fix on the extent to which this is part of an effort to protect these assets for some future period, or the extent to which it is not part of any coherent plan. We do, however, appreciate and accept the assurances of Iran that these planes will be interned for the duration of the conflict and that Iraq will not permit its territory to be used for any hostile activity.

During the latter part of last week, we saw emerge a number of proposals for bringing the hostilities to an end via a more or less immediate ceasefire. Some of these have been proposed by individual countries, others pursued through the UN, another considered by a group of the Non-Aligned Movement.

I should say that we have no problem with this searching by other countries -- indeed, should any proposition offer a real chance to shorten this war with fewer lives lost it would be welcomed by Canada and by others, assuming, of course, it resulted in Iraqi compliance with UN Security Council resolutions.

It is, however, regrettably instructive that each and every ceasefire proposal that we are aware of -- one by Algeria, another by India, for example -- have all proven unworkable because of one fundamental face: they have all been premised on an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, and Saddam Hussein continues to keep that door firmly shut. So, the practice that began before the period established by the United Nations, of Saddam Hussein saying "no" to Baker, saying "no" to Perez de Cuellar, continues with respect to initiatives that would come forward from India, from Algeria and from others.

If Saddam Hussein continues to give every indication that he will hold on to Kuwait until he is dislodged by force, then he is making very dim the prospects for any peace proposal or ceasefire. Witness the comments about the UN Secretary-General on Sunday, where Tariq Aziz accused Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar personally of being responsible for casualties in Iraq, and remarks to CNN journalists yesterday.

This leads me to make a comment or two on the recent public questioning in Canada, as elsewhere, about the objectives and aims we are collectively pursuing during this military phase of the crisis.