

*Special Debate*

**The Deputy Speaker:** There seems to be confusion about that. After the first three members, no member can speak for more than 10 minutes and so we will not have the dividing of time. This member has 20 minutes.

**Mr. Frazer:** Mr. Speaker, I hate to start on a complaining note, but I feel I must. The timing of this debate is the one I would like to address. I would much rather have risen to my feet to discuss our commitment to Bosnia and Croatia in December or I suppose we could have accepted January.

To be rising two days before the commitment is to come to an end seems to me to be very late in the game. Moreover, until very late this afternoon there has been no consultation whatsoever or briefings presented by the government. This seems to be a very dramatic oversight on the part of the government.

I think that the opposition parties, while we represent different philosophies, are certainly also trying to represent Canadians and present their views in this House.

It strikes me that we have two committees, the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs and on foreign affairs, both of which would be appropriate forums to have discussed the possibilities of extension, the difficulties and the ramifications of extending the mandate in Bosnia.

We have heard overtures that this might happen, but as yet it has not. I think it is a dramatic oversight on the part of the government. I request very strongly it reconsider this and in future involve the opposition parties more deeply in this type of negotiation.

To move into the situation, the background on Croatia is that it is a true peacekeeping operation as the definition goes. It is basically a separation zone which keeps antagonists apart. Once again I would like to pay tribute to our troops not only in Croatia but in Bosnia. They have done superb work and unquestionably are, if not the most professional, among the most professional who are performing the duty in the UN mandate.

Bosnia is a totally different mandate because, to use the official term, it is humanitarian assistance. It is to try to separate three different groups of people who are rather antagonistic toward each other. They are again doing very good work under extremely difficult conditions that have really constrained their activities to a tremendous degree.

By virtue of their flexibility, their professionalism, they have managed to create homogeneous or friendly situations—friendly is probably going too far—but acceptable situations in areas by interceding on a personal level with the local leaders. By showing without any question they are totally unbiased, that they have no favouritism, they have performed very well.

It could be fairly safely said that Canada and perhaps one or two other nations are the only ones that can make the claim of being completely and totally unbiased.

The problem is there have been many violations of agreements. We have seen rapes, we have seen murders, we have seen atrocities that are unspeakable. These are conducted by people who are committed to hate each other. It seems such a shame. It is such a beautiful country and there is so much prospect for it to prosper. Unhappily, it is caught up in what is truly a war.

We have seen hostages taken. This comes about as a result normally of NATO exerting influence to try to coerce or force people to abide by agreements that they have made but choose not to abide by.

• (1905)

Canadians I think are in a particularly vulnerable position in this case because we are the only ones, to my knowledge, who are actually occupying positions in Serb held territory. The other UN forces are not so deployed.

As a result, if the UN calls on NATO air support to achieve a change of heart on the part of Serb aggression, the Serbs will in all likelihood do as they have done before and they will take Canadian hostages. This has happened twice now and I think it is pipe smoking opium if we do not think that it will happen again if the situation arises.

UN patrols have been fired on in both Bosnia and Croatia. In Croatia at New Year's two of our Canadian UN peacekeepers were wounded and it was only by some extraordinary effort on the part of one of them and good hospital facilities that resulted in no Canadian fatalities in this instance.

There were a total of nine soldiers killed in the UN commitment in the former Yugoslavia. I think it is likely that if the situation continues, and it does appear to be heating up, we could very well be in danger of having even more casualties.

We have seen the lifeline of Bosnia put in extreme danger or even cut off completely. The Sarajevo airport was closed for an extensive time. As recently as a couple of days ago UN aeroplanes were being shot up as they went in and out of the airport. This impacts of course on the ability of the UN and UNPROFOR to perform the duties they are there for which is to provide humanitarian assistance by delivering supplies to the people concerned.

The problem is that there does not seem to be any particular desire on the part of the antagonists there to abide by agreements that they have made. We have seen aggression in the form of UN declared safe zones which are totally ignored and in fact attacked in dramatic fashion by the opposing forces, particularly the Serbs in this case.