

headquarters is a headquarters control centre which has assigned to it the responsibility of tasking a large number of units and personnel from other commands of the Canadian armed forces in the north for the purpose of carrying out operations there and creating an effective Canadian presence, particularly in the northernmost part.

With regard to the suggestion that the forces have been downgraded and have become less effective, this is an echo of the remarks I recall being made in this House at the time of the armed forces unification debate. They are remarks which have emanated particularly from the official opposition and from certain spokesmen outside the House in recent years.

I suppose the best answer to the arguments that the forces are less effective and incapable of carrying forward their tasks are the words of congratulation which the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East (Mr. Fore-stall) used when speaking of the forces' performance last fall. Perhaps the best answer to all these criticisms that the forces are no longer effective or capable of doing their job is the fact that they are not only capable of doing it, but have done it very effectively before the eyes of 22 million Canadians. They have done so not only in the past year at home, but also abroad.

Let me point out as an example the involvement of the officers and men of Air Transport Command during the Peruvian operation in which Canadian Caribou and Buffalo aircraft were the only aircraft capable of operating under these difficult conditions. They won the respect and regard of all governments involved, particularly the Peruvian government which decorated the officers. I might mention the similarly effective and quick support given by Air Transport Command in assisting flood victims of East Pakistan. This is a very effective force and one that is extremely capable, upon short notice, to turn its hand to any one of many tasks planned for it and for which it has been trained.

An hon. Member: What if they had to do two things at the same time?

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Let me point out to the hon. member that they have been doing two things at the same time. As a matter of fact, they have been doing many things at the same time. Let me point out, with regard to the land forces role in Canada and elsewhere, that the troops were involved in the events in Quebec, which the hon. member may not have noticed but which was noticed by everybody else in the country, while at the same time they were involved in a peacekeeping operation in Cyprus and in the NATO role in Europe. In other words, they were not only doing two things at the same time, but three—and doing them very well in each case.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): I suppose hon. members think they are helping their case by deprecating their forces, but I think the actions of the forces speak much more vividly than hon. members' words.

National Security Measures

Mr. Marshall: Would the minister permit a question?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe (Mr. Marshall) rising on a point of order?

Mr. Marshall: I think the minister should be a little more statesmanlike. Perhaps he should join the forces and learn something about—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. That is not a point of order.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member wants to get into a parliamentary debate, he should be tough enough to accept the give and take of it. I would point out that the hon. members has questioned the effectiveness of the forces, not only in respect of their training but also of their equipment. Perhaps I should remind him again of the evolution of the forces.

An hon. Member: Not training equipment.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): I will speak in terms of the equipment and point out, for example, with regard to Maritime Command, an area in respect of which he knows something, we have four new destroyers in the service and three new operational support ships. He has suggested that we need a submarine. Let me remind him that we have four now. He said we needed a submersible, and I remind him that we have one. Our equipment is very well suited for the roles we have to play. One interesting thing in connection with anti-submarine operations and the development of helicopter destroyers—Canada is taking a lead among NATO countries in this regard. As he knows, the devices which have been developed by Maritime Command for the purpose of operating helicopters from ships at sea are really among the most interesting aspects of our forces to other navies. The United States navy in particular is following closely this Canadian lead in establishing helicopter destroyers as a principal anti-submarine weapon.

I think it is fair, in regard to land forces, to point out how infinitely better off we are than we were, for example, in 1963. The infantry battalions in 1963 were mounted exclusively in wheeled vehicles with very limited cross-country mobility. We had no amphibious capability and we were without any night-time fighting aids whatsoever. Today, battalions have one company mounted in amphibious armoured personnel carriers which are equipped with infrared night driving and fighting aids. There are also night surveillance services in all battalions. Equipment and personnel weapons have improved as well. So the hon. member is not quite as current on Canadian armament and mechanism as he should be.

I have already referred to the very considerable achievements of the Canadian armed forces in the air. Let me compare the situation of 1960 with 10 years later. At that time, as the hon. member for Calgary Centre will recall, we had no operational close-support aircraft. We only had 25 light, two-man observation helicopters, no appropriate practical airlift and a strategic lift of 12 Yukons, 23 flying boxcars and four Hercules. Today we