

*Government Orders*

Croatian citizens from their homes in occupied Croatian territory”.

He writes that during a recent trip to Croatia he also witnessed the daily shelling of the Croatian towns of Gospic, Karlovac, Zadar and Osijek by Serbs, all from within so-called United Nations protected areas.

The criticism has also unexpectedly come from all sides in the conflict. Last January the entire mission was placed in jeopardy when Croatian President Franjo Tudjman stated that he did not want to grant UNPROFOR an extension of its mandate because it had failed to achieve its original objective. In particular President Tudjman was reacting to the failure of the UN to demilitarize those forces in UN protected areas.

• (1700)

Even the United Nations itself has admitted that in Croatia UNPROFOR has been unable to establish conditions of peace and security that would have permitted the voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes in the protected areas. The UN has admitted that despite the best efforts of its civilian police they have been unable to prevent discrimination and abuse of human rights in the protected zones in the first year of their mandate. The UN has also expressed frustration over its inability to compel the warring parties into accepting negotiated agreements.

The situation in Bosnia is somewhat different from that in Croatia. For starters, the mandate of peacekeepers in Bosnia was strictly to assist in the delivery of humanitarian aid to the victims of the war. That has not been an easy job. Quite often the delivery of aid has been dangerous and difficult. Aid convoys have been detained at various checkpoints for hours and days on end while the war victims wait.

While aid is getting through to some of those in need, it is getting there with great risk to those who are delivering it. The war is fiercely continuing in Bosnia. Sniper fire and shelling continue to be daily occurrences. While the UN refers to safe areas in parts of Bosnia, fighting continues in and around those areas.

In fact it is in one of those so-called safe areas that Canadian peacekeepers have been surrounded. They are unable to leave until replacement troops arrive. However replacement troops have not been permitted to enter the town of Srebrenica to relieve our troops. While an agreement to allow our peacekeepers to leave appeared to have been reached in principle several weeks ago, Canadians are still waiting for their replacements.

In conclusion, this peacekeeping mission has had some unforgettable successes. In July 1992 Canadian soldiers liberated the Sarajevo airport and enabled airlifts of humanitarian assistance to commence in a region that had been without food and other necessities for far too long.

On another occasion just before Christmas it was Canadian peacekeepers who came to the rescue of Bosnian psychiatric patients abandoned by hospital staff. We all remember the television images of those helpless people in a field outside the hospital, some without clothes, all unable to care for themselves. Had it not been for our peacekeepers those people may not be alive today.

Those are but two of the highlights in a war that has been raging for over three years. However noble and brave those acts were, we must accept that tensions are rising. It appears as though all sides are getting frustrated with what they see as the status quo. They are beginning to take their frustrations out on our peacekeepers.

This past weekend we learned of two incidents in which the lives of our Canadian soldiers were placed in jeopardy. One of those incidents took place in a so-called protected area in Croatia, and the other in a peacekeeper's camp in Visoko, outside Sarajevo. These events follow several others which have taken place over the past two months.

I am sure that members of the House recall that Canadian peacekeepers were held at gun point and endured a mock execution in Bosnia at the hands of Serb soldiers not long ago. We also recall that they were detained by Croatian soldiers in Gospic at approximately the same time. It has only been a few weeks since Canadian peacekeepers were caught in the middle of a shootout between Bosnian Muslim and Croat warriors.

• (1705)

Canadians are extremely sensitive people. We are propelled by a desire to help people in need. That is why we cannot bear to witness the daily suffering and tragedy in Bosnia and Croatia. That is why we sent Canadian peacekeepers to those two countries. We felt that we could help put an end to the suffering of the innocent victims of war. However we must decide whether our desire to help the people of Bosnia and Croatia is more important to us than placing the lives of Canadian soldiers in jeopardy.

The decision to remove Canadian peacekeepers from Bosnia and Croatia is a difficult one. The situation in Croatia while serious is not nearly as volatile as that in Bosnia and Hercegovina. There is a role for the UN to play there. Efforts demand to be redefined.

While I am concerned that the departure of our peacekeepers from Croatia and Bosnia-Hercegovina may result in increased hostilities in the region and place the lives of my friends and relatives in jeopardy, I can no longer support any initiative in which Canadian soldiers are often used as human shields separating warring factions.

There are also fiscal implications. As everyone is well aware our country's pockets are not overflowing with money. We have a serious debt and deficit problem that needs to be addressed. We must assess whether we can actually afford, not just the missions in Bosnia and Croatia which last year alone cost us