

The decision to take these steps without recalling Parliament itself, is one on which individual Canadians will make their own political and moral judgements, since the technical, legal requirements were met. It is worth noting what I witnessed in Britain recently when its Parliament was recalled from its summer recess for this purpose. There had been criticism of the delay there, too, but the recall was managed relatively smoothly. When the debate actually occurred, it was notable that there was broad, non-partisan support for the firm British line -- with much higher stakes in terms of both troops and hostages involved -- and only a small fringe element in the Labour party voicing opposition, largely on the basis of knee-jerk anti-Americanism.

In Canada, there were even early suggestions from some quarters that Canada should stand back from tangible commitments to support the UN resolutions in the hope that Baghdad would be more gentle with hostages from countries that had not taken a firm stand against it. Some were also still ready to argue, in this era of global interdependence, that the threat to international oil supply, and presumably the aggression, had no effect on Canada and thus we should "stay out of it". The temptations to either appeasement or isolationism do not seem to have attracted any wide support.

Subsequently much of the Canadian debate has revolved around the two commitments: first on August 10, of a naval contingent of three ships and subsequently, on September 14, of a squadron of CF18 fighters with related support personnel. The related measures of refugee assistance and logistical support to other policing contingents have not been much discussed. Many of the concerns and criticisms that have been voiced about the Canadian involvement are the same as those worrying others internationally, and there is little unique about the challenge we face: how to contribute in a responsible way to an unprecedented world effort to check an aggressor -- it is an unpleasant job, but everybody has got to do it.

Two distinctive features of the Canadian involvement may be found in our position as the world's premier UN peacekeeping nation, and in our proximity to the United States. Much has been made by some critics of the fact that the UN action in the Gulf