

*Special Debate*

forces. It would rend one's heart to see this place in operation. There are many other examples.

The humanitarian aspect would be sorely missed. I fear, because of the Canadian reputation in peacekeeping, that our decision to exit would give a signal that perhaps would not be conducive to world stability, particularly world stability in the Balkans.

I agree with my hon. friend from Saanich—Gulf Islands who says that ideally we should have a clear mandate. We should have a clear set of operating instructions. Ideally we should have acceptance from the countries we are participating in and a clear set of rules of engagement. These points and principles were included in the white paper. I fear they are not being totally regarded in our participation in the ex-Yugoslavia.

We do not live in an ideal world. Is the contact group, the five countries that were formed last year to negotiate a settlement, making progress? I think it is but it is very slow. If we accept this mandate for another six months how much longer are we prepared to go? I cannot answer that. I would say, as the minister of defence said, that I do not believe it is the intention of anyone in Parliament to have a commitment in ex-Yugoslavia that would last for 29 years.

We are a long way from 29 years. Yes, there are risks. Yes, there are many land mines. Yes, there are snipers. Yes, there are flareups. However the situation in ex-Yugoslavia now, despite the 14 ceasefire violations in the recent past, I am told by the operators is not much different from what it was three years ago.

Let us stay the course for this round. Let us help in the humanitarian aspect. Let us contribute as much as we can to the peace negotiation. Let us go forward with hope that we will see an amelioration of the situation if not an end to the conflict.

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, it is truly a pleasure to speak this evening on peacekeeping in the former Yugoslavia.

I emphasize a few of our concerns regarding the lateness of the debate and how it is just two days away from the mandate ending. I discussed this point with the minister a month ago. It was felt that we could be part of briefings much earlier and that then we would look at whether we needed to have this debate. We felt that before a decision was made there could be all-party involvement. We would agree. We would work toward that. We would co-operate in every way possible.

This last minute type of thing certainly makes us wonder how serious the government is and what is the real purpose of our being here. Let us take that it is for honest reasons and that the government really wants to hear what we have to say.

To move to the issue itself, as the foreign affairs critic for the Reform Party I state very strongly and clearly, as did the last speaker, that Canada should not renew its peacekeeping commitment to Bosnia or Croatia.

Canadians have served honourably for almost three years now but enough is enough. Canada has performed above and beyond the call of duty in all its commitments to the UN. No country can say that we did not try our utmost to re-establish peace and facilitate a long term negotiated settlement to the disputes.

• (1955)

The facts are sad but obvious. The warring parties have shown no serious commitment to peace negotiations. Over the winter many have rearmed and resupplied their soldiers so they can start fresh fighting in the spring. The mid to long term prospects for peace are bleak and no amount of Canadian peacekeepers can change that fact. If we could just see light at the end of the tunnel, possibly this speech could be quite different.

The Reform Party believes the time to leave is now. If predictions about an increase in the level of fighting over the late spring and summer are true, we must act quickly to pull out our troops now. It may not be easy but now is our best chance to get them home without incident. If we wait and things get tougher, our troops will face an even greater unnecessary risk.

Last fall we saw how increased levels of fighting led to a corresponding increase in hostage taking of UN soldiers. This could happen again if we fail to act decisively now. The conditions in Bosnia during high levels of fighting remind me of the Eagles song "Hotel California". I will not sing it because it would certainly clear the House. Basically the words are: "You can check out any time you like but you can never leave".

If Parliament dithers we may find some time down the road that we want to check out but will not be allowed to leave without fighting our way out through militias and possibly even through civilians. If we are to act responsibly we must leave now.

As far as Croatia is concerned its president does not want UN peacekeepers any more. Although he is no longer forcing the UN out, he has demanded that it scale down its operations dramatically. As the process is going on Canadian troops would have a perfect opportunity to end their tour there without disrupting the ability of the UN to fulfil its new and more modest mandate.

Speaking in more general terms about Canada's role in peacekeeping around the world, it is high time that Parliament rethink how we can be most effective in our UN commitments and set clear criteria for our participation in future missions. We are not saying to get out of peacekeeping; we are saying to set the criteria.

Canadians are not prepared to give up on their proud traditions of caring and intervention for the sake of peace. However these times cannot be seen from a purely international perspec-