

transfer of power, taking effect on September 1st this year, from the Noriega regime to the people who had been elected in the May elections. The OAS also launched a diplomatic mission, headed by the foreign ministers of three of its member countries, who travelled extensively and worked hard to try to find a peaceful way in which this transfer of power could be achieved.

What is lamentable but evident is that that peaceful solution did not work. There was, as we all know, recently an abortive coup. In the past week, there have been developments that were particularly alarming -- would be to anyone in this House, were to many of us -- including the statement by General Noriega that Panama is in a state of war, to use his words, with the United States. That declaration, unilaterally by General Noriega, was followed by harassment of Americans stationed by treaty in Panama; indeed it was followed by the murder of an off-duty member of the American services, and threats to the family of that individual.

It's important here, sir, to emphasize two facts which distinguish the situation in Panama from that which might exist in other parts of the world. One of those facts is that the United States presence there is the result of a treaty. It is not a presence that is the result of an occupation. It is not the result of an uninvited presence by the United States in that country. The American troops are there as the result of a legal agreement -- there as the result of an international treaty. They have a right to be there, and they have a right to be protected while they are there. That is one distinguishing factor and feature about the situation in Panama today.

A second thought that I want to underline is that peaceful solutions had been sought, and peaceful solutions had failed. In fact, what was remarkable for so long was the willingness of the Bush Administration to put its faith in mediation, to put its faith in negotiation, to put its faith in peaceful processes. And the response to that was the murder of an off-duty American stationed there, the response to that was threats to Americans who had a right to be there, and who had a right to be protected while they were there.

The Government of Canada today, in my name, issued a statement that made essentially two points. The first is that the government regrets the use of force by the US in Panama, but understands and is sympathetic to the American action in