

The leader of the NDP says we must take the risk of war or the risk of more talking. But the war began on August 2 when Iraq invaded an innocent neighbour state. It was a declaration of war on an innocent fellow Arab nation. That was what began the war, not anything that the United States, the United Kingdom, France or Senegal or Canada has done. We are in there to protect the peace. Saddam Hussein is responsible for the war.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mulroney:** Now, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the second part of my friend's question, as I just said, the Secretary of State for External Affairs did get in touch with the Secretary-General of the United Nations this morning. He told him that Canada is quite prepared to initiate fresh diplomatic propositions or to devise political action on the four basic elements already transmitted to the Secretary-General last week. As soon as the world gets a clear signal that Saddam Hussein will abide by the provisions of the UN resolution and withdraw from Kuwait, the United Nations would be prepared to respond with the active support of Canada.

[*English*]

**Hon. William Rompkey (Labrador):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence. Canadians will want to know exactly what role Canadian forces are playing in the gulf now, specifically what missions they will be carrying out—both the planes and the ships.

Can the minister tell us what that role is, will be, and exactly what danger it is likely to put our forces in now and in the future.

**Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of National Defence):** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member is aware, since hostilities commenced, as the January 15 deadline established by the United Nations had passed, the role of Canada's fighter squadron has been that of combat air patrol, the same role that was provided before January 15, before the change in circumstances. That was the responsibility of the Canadian forces last evening. For the near term, I anticipate that to be the role which they will take.

The authorization of sweep and escort for the Canadian fighter squadron does not mean that they will

participate in that role, but it means that they are available to the tactical commanders to participate if they can assist in removing Saddam Hussein from Kuwait.

As to our naval task force, it is assembled to provide defensive support and resupply among a group of other nations. The two destroyers are providing, along with vessels of other nations, air defensive support to the combat logistic group. They, as the hon. member and others are aware, would not operate in the very northern tip of the gulf. They would operate in providing resupply at sea in a less hostile area. They, along with the Canadian destroyers and air defence vessels of other nations, are providing the defensive task force or the grouping for those Canadian ships and ships of other nations.

**Hon. William Rompkey (Labrador):** Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is to the same minister. Will any further Canadian forces be going to the gulf, specifically CF-18s? Have any been requested from other countries? Have any been recommended by the Chief of Defence Staff? Has the government offered any further Canadian forces, specifically CF-18s, to other countries?

**Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of National Defence):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member, I know, is aware that the addition of the six CF-18s, plus the Boeing 707 air refueller into the Persian Gulf area, is part of our air squadron which allows the squadron to now maintain a combat air patrol on a 24-hour, seven-day a week basis. The provision of the Boeing 707 refueller allows for opportunity of refuelling for other nations.

There has not been a request, Mr. Speaker, nor was there a request when we provided the additional aircraft. It was provided on the advice of the Chief of Defence Staff. The answer to the third question is no, there has not been a recommendation to provide more CF-18s. We believe that the 24 that are there with the support staff and supply personnel and form a workable squadron are making a contribution and doing good work.

• (1440)

I can say to the hon. member that if at some time some of those assets or personnel are lost, we are prepared to replace them, and replace them on an ongoing basis.