

*Special Debate*

conducted 314 flights and delivered more than 4,100 tonnes of relief supplies since early September 1992.

Nevertheless, these aircraft have come under fire while air-dropping supplies to remote parts of Somalia. Another instance of this violence against relief efforts occurred on October 5. While people were unloading the Canadian Hercules and a Belgian transport aircraft at the Mogadishu airport a shell landed between the planes. Both aircraft were forced to depart quickly, and pursued by small arms fire. Fortunately no one was injured.

The other aspect of Canada's contribution to the international relief efforts has been our willingness to participate in the United Nations Operation in Somalia, UNOSOM. On August 28 the Minister of National Defence announced that the government was offering 750 Canadian forces personnel to this multilateral peacekeeping operation. The Canadian Airborne Battalion, reinforced with engineers and support personnel from Canadian Forces Base Petawawa, was ready to deploy to the northeastern part of Somalia in the area around Bossaso. The supply ship *HMCS Preserver* was in the Red Sea en route to Somalia loaded with provisions to make our Canadian contingent self-sufficient.

It was at this point that the United States offered the United Nations up to 30,000 personnel to deal with the situation.

The United Nations Secretary-General considered the American offer and on November 30 presented the Security Council with options for a response to the present impasse. On December 3, the Security Council passed resolution 794 which authorizes: "Member states. . .to establish as soon as possible a secure environment for humanitarian relief operations in Somalia".

As the Security Council resolution pointed out:

The situation in Somalia is intolerable and—it has become necessary to review the basic premises and principles of the UN effort in Somalia and—UNOSOM's existing course would not, in the present circumstances, be an adequate response to the tragedy in Somalia.

In light of the emerging situation the government was presented with essentially two options. Canada could either participate in this new UN operation to ensure the

delivery of humanitarian aid or in the peacekeeping mission that would likely follow.

The government decided to make the most realistic and immediate consideration that it could of our contribution. Given the fact that our airborne battalion was already equipped and prepared to go to Somalia as a part of UNOSOM and that *HMCS Preserver* was already in the area it only made sense for Canada to participate in the first phase. This is a meaningful contribution that we can make now, and with a minimal amount of adjustment to our planned deployment as part of UNOSOM.

Thus, Canadian forces personnel will work together with a number of other countries to ensure that the mission is accomplished with a minimum amount of risk and with the greatest benefit to the needy population of Somalia.

I want to make it perfectly clear that we are participating in this new UN action for humanitarian reasons. As a responsible member of the international community it is our duty to answer the call of the starving people of Somalia. Accordingly, up to 900 Canadian forces ground personnel, 350 personnel aboard *HMCS Preserver*, and some additional people assigned to various headquarters will participate in this new international effort.

We envisage contributing essentially the same force that we were planning to send to the northeastern part of Somalia as part of UNOSOM, which is a parachute battalion with wheeled armoured personnel carriers. However, this task force will take some additional equipment, such as more heavily armed wheeled fighting vehicles, in response to the changing requirements of the mission. This necessary equipment is now in the port of Montreal. The Chief of the Defence Staff has already instructed the commander of Land Forces Command to begin loading operations, so those ships will be loaded in the next few days and ready to sail.

While this mission entails some measure of danger—and no one has denied that, from the UN, the Chief of the Defence Staff, or the minister—we consider the risks to our personnel acceptable. Members of the Canadian forces have an appropriate mandate and the necessary equipment to complete their mission. As with all United Nations missions, contingency plans exist for commanders to take necessary action to protect their people.