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OUELLET URGES BOSNIAN GOVERNMENT TO ENSURE FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT OF CANADIAN UN PEACEKEEPING FORCES IN VISOKO

Foreign Affairs Minister André Ouellet today urged the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina to take all necessary steps to ensure the safety, re-supply and freedom of movement of Canadian UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) troops based in Visoko in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions.

"I have written to Bosnian Foreign Minister Sacirbey to express the Canadian government's concerns about restrictions on our troops in Visoko, particularly the blockading of the Canadian base. I understand that the Bosnian authorities have now agreed to relax the restrictions on UNPROFOR and to allow re-supply of Canadian observation posts," said Mr. Ouellet.

The Minister underlined that Canadian forces are determined to fulfil their UN mandate and that Bosnian Army threats to shell the Visoko base or fire on Canadian forces are completely unacceptable. He is urging Mr. Sacirbey to pursue Bosnia's political aims at the negotiating table.

Mr. Ouellet has also written to the Foreign Minister of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia/Montenegro), Vladislav Jovanovic, to urge his government to use its influence with the Bosnian Serb leadership to ensure they now accept the Contact Group plan as the basis for negotiations.

Mr. Ouellet added that, as underlined by the Political G-8 leaders at Halifax, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina within its internationally recognized borders would give new impetus to the peace process.

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