

Government Orders

We see the situation of the refugees, the situation of the migrant workers. Many civilians will be hurt in this war. What exploration did the government make of the possibility of UN supervision or organization of this, or the International Red Cross? The International Red Cross has generally in the past been involved in these kinds of activities.

It seems to us that the accession to the request, humanitarian though that may be, is another step, another escalation of this government's involvement in the assault on the Iraqi positions in Kuwait and Iraq. We understand the government believes that is important, but the government creeps toward this commitment and it gives us great concern.

I may have asked too many questions to be answered in a brief period of time. It may be the minister will find some other opportunity to do it. I guess as I framed the questions I realized it was probably impractical to ask the minister the second question, but I will give him notice that I hope at some point to discuss with him the government's understanding of what is to happen after the forces go into Kuwait and assuming they are successful. What regime will be established afterward? What steps are being taken? What estimates are being made of the future?

If he gets a chance to answer those last questions, I would appreciate it now, but basically I would appreciate it if he would focus on the field hospital first.

Mr. McKnight: Madam Speaker, the hon. member is accurate. He asked several questions, and I was not able to write them all down. If I forget to answer some, I am sure that he will remind me.

We received a request from the United Kingdom originally for some 600 beds for a surgical hospital. We had to staff it. We did not have that capacity in Canada.

• (1800)

As we staffed the request, it became apparent that we would be able to assemble a field hospital of some 100 beds, totally self-contained and totally sustained by a complement of 550 Canadians.

We were able to find the transportation methods. We were able to acquire a Ro-Ro ship, and we made the announcement today because it was important it be made as early as possible. I made it via press release prior to Question Period, but I was certainly prepared to answer questions in the House.

The hon. member can inquire but I am not sure of how many other countries were approached by the United Kingdom to provide field surgical hospital support, but I would assume that it was not just Canada that they made that request of.

As to whether we consulted with the International Red Cross, no, we had not. When the International Red Cross feels a need to call upon countries, it initiates requests to countries if it believes it could receive the contribution it desires. We did not receive a request from the International Red Cross.

We received a request from members of the Government of the United Kingdom. Because of their increased commitment and their increased complement they did not feel they would be able to handle anticipated casualties. They would not be able to handle what they anticipated would be the prisoners of war who would need medical attention. Under the Geneva Convention they have a responsibility as do other nations. Therefore, they put out a request. We were pleased to be able to comply with that request.

It is, as the hon. member says, something we have not been doing because we believed that by January 15, Saddam Hussein would listen to the United Nations, listen to the resolutions, and remove himself.

The Prime Minister in his speech yesterday said that if he had not complied by midnight last night, Canada would use every effort, including force, to have him removed, along with the other collaborating nations. That, unfortunately, is where we are today. But Canada has made every effort. Other countries have made every effort. I have listened to two days of debate in the House and I have not heard any suggestion that I had not heard before.

I will conclude, Madam Speaker, as I know it is six o'clock. My colleagues should put forward suggestions. There are suggestions that sanctions have been working. I just want to tell the House that air sorties by Iraq from November to now have increased steadily by some 30 per cent. So there is no shortage of military parts and there is no shortage of aviation fuel.