

Our troops have re-opened two hospitals and kept them running. They have installed pumps to provide safe drinking water for residents. And, of course, they have escorted many convoys bringing relief, food and clothing to the besieged, helpless population.

However, while the presence of UN forces has helped to avert total disaster, there is no question that a great deal more needs to be done. The safety of the peacekeepers must be enhanced.

Negotiations must continue and at an accelerated pace because the Canadian public is beginning to get upset about the cost of peacekeeping operations and the majority of our constituents are growing tired of seeing our peacekeepers trying to keep the peace where there is no peace to keep. Some feel that we should impose peace. However, most are of the opinion that governments lack the political will to authorize a military strike and that because of this, our peacekeepers should withdraw and leave these peoples to decide their own fate. And this is precisely what the United Nations and Canada must not do.

• (1240)

My colleague from Rosemont mentioned earlier that the United Nations had effectively disarmed the Bosnians, but it had also been agreed that the peacekeepers would stay on to protect them. That is one more reason for not withdrawing our peacekeeping forces.

The loss of confidence by the Canadian people certainly reflects the mood, the public opinion in other UN nations. That is why, given Canada's leadership in peacekeeping, if we withdrew our forces, that could trigger a similar move on the part of other UN nations, which would be unfair and fatal for the civilian populations concerned.

However, it would appear that recently peacekeeping has taken precedence at times over the real interests of the Canadian people, with Canada allocating military resources to several peacekeeping operations without seeing the need to get a clear and firm mandate. With regard to this peacekeeping race, Canada has also reduced its defence expenditures envelope, forcing our troops to play this role while providing them with less and jeopardizing their security.

Canada will have to look over its latest missions and learn from them. The United Nations will have to reconsider the peacekeeping process, as telling figures clearly show that the situation has changed considerably and that UN interventions are not conducted in the same spirit or under the same circumstances as they used to be. UN statistics show that over a 40-year period from 1948 to 1988, there were 754 casualties among UN peacekeepers, as compared to 197 killed in Somalia and Bosnia in 1993 alone. This huge difference clearly demonstrates that unfortunately the peacekeeping scene has changed

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radically and that a clear and unequivocal stand will have to be taken before any new operation can go ahead. As a matter of fact, nearly all press statements by generals from the United Nations protection force, UNPROFOR, conveyed frustration and a sense of helplessness in the face of explosive situations they could do nothing about.

I would like, at this point, to try to outline on what basis the decision should be made in Canada to participate in UN missions or not.

It is clear that Canada can no longer afford to participate in all missions.

The Canadian government will have to think twice before taking action. This action will have to meet universal criteria such as humanitarian, political and unfortunately economic considerations. Having assessed these, it will then have to set a deadline by which the goals specified in the assessments have to be reached always keeping in mind financial implications.

As with all Canadian activities, it will be necessary to give up the myth of a rich and prosperous Canada and face reality.

Our troops are proud to take part in these missions but we must clarify what the framework should be and what equipment is required and appropriate. Can we still afford this? Does the public still support such endeavours?

I think that within the context of joint action within the United Nations as well as NATO, a system should be established by which each participating nation would contribute in a specific area.

Joint action should be discussed in the UN, where a decision on the mandate of the peacekeepers from the United Nations protection force in Bosnia must be made by the end of April.

This mission should never be viewed as a total failure, because the situation in Croatia has indeed been stabilized and, furthermore, the escalation of the conflict in Macedonia and Kosovo has effectively been halted.

• (1245)

In conclusion, the withdrawal of the peacekeepers from Bosnia is not a desirable option in the present context, as the consequences would be disastrous for the civilian population and for the Bosnians, who have been almost completely disarmed by the UN forces protecting them.

Obviously, a military strike would make the peacekeepers' job less frustrating but perhaps more dangerous. As I was saying earlier, we must press for further negotiations in the hope that an agreement can be reached before the end of the mandate next April and even consider tightening the embargo against the Bosnian Serbs.