

It must be added that many changes in personnel and procedures had been made during the period following the events in Somalia and that serving members of the Airborne Regiment were, by and large, dedicated professionals who had performed their duties with honour and distinction.

The disturbing incidents subsequent to the events in Somalia led the Minister to conclude that the problems of the Airborne Regiment were systemic and must not be permitted to denigrate the reputation of the Canadian Forces. The Minister of National Defence consulted with the Prime Minister and the Minister subsequently announced the Government's decision to disband the Regiment.

INQUIRY INTO THE ACTIVITIES OF  
CANADIAN AIRBORNE REGIMENT—GOVERNMENT POSITION

*(Response to question raised by Hon. A. Raynell Andreychuk on March 22, 1995)*

1. The Government must ensure that the Canadian Forces are not only operationally effective, but also that they are respected at home and abroad. The conduct of some members of the Airborne Regiment over the past few years brought that trust into question and might have denigrated the reputation of all members of the Canadian Forces. The Government could not allow the proud heritage of the Canadian Forces to be jeopardized.

An internal military board of inquiry heard many witnesses and gathered much evidence on the state of discipline and general readiness of the Airborne Regiment immediately prior to and during its deployment to Somalia. That evidence, some 12 volumes, has been made available to the Commission of Inquiry, as have the proceedings of all the courts martial which are in the public domain, and the results of military police investigations relating to the incidents which occurred in Somalia.

After the Chief of Defence Staff and the commander of the land forces made a recommendation on the future of the Canadian Airborne Regiment, the government made the judgement that the damage to the reputation of the Airborne Regiment was so great as to be irreparable. The Minister of National Defence, reluctantly, announced the decision to

disband the regiment for the reasons stated above. The decision was not taken lightly or without due consideration. The problems were deemed to be systemic and the situation demanded action: the Regiment had to be disbanded.

2. The Canadian Forces have distinguished themselves both in war and in peace as well as in peacekeeping activities and continue to do so. Canadians are justifiably proud of our Armed Forces and they must continue to have confidence in our military so that it may represent us at home and abroad.

While the negative aspects of recent events cannot be minimized, it would be unfair to ignore the achievements of the Regiment. It is recognized that many changes in personnel and procedures in the Airborne had been made over the past year. The Minister recognized that the people serving in the Airborne regiment were by and large dedicated professionals. It is also recognized that the Airborne has, in the past, served Canada with distinction. However, the Minister is concerned that the conduct of some members of the Airborne Regiment over the past few years might have denigrated the reputation of all members of the Canadian Forces.

3. The 1994 Defence White Paper recognized the continuing need for an airborne capability within the Canadian Forces to support the United Nations and to respond to emerging situations anywhere in our territory. On 12 April 1995, the Chief of the Defence Staff and the Commander of Land Force Command announced that the army's parachute capability will, in the future, be provided by three separate infantry companies spread across the country that will consist of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry company in Edmonton, a Royal Canadian Regiment company in Petawawa, and a Royal 22<sup>nd</sup> Regiment company in Valcartier. The troops for these units will come from the former Airborne and the 3000 additional combat troops provided by the White Paper.

The plans for expansion from company to battalion level will be finalized after the Defence Minister's Commission on the Reserve Force tables its report in December of this year. The new parachute companies will be formed in their new locations as soon as possible and no later than September of this year.