

The most serious -- indeed troubling -- question for many Members in this debate has been as much about timing as about principle. Why could the world not wait and give sanctions and diplomacy more time? It is the view of this Government -- and the view of virtually every other U.N. coalition member -- that the risks and costs of waiting had become too great to tolerate. If sanctions alone had continued, the plunder of Kuwait would also have continued.

When this House debated this issue in September and again in November, Amnesty International had not yet documented the terrible reality of Iraqi brutality -- the unplugging of the incubators of Kuwaiti babies, the assaults on Kuwaiti women, the execution of young Kuwaiti men before the eyes of their parents and their brothers and sisters. We know now. We know as well that over half of Kuwait's population has fled in terror. What would have been left of Kuwait if the world had waited another six months, or 16 months or 60 months, or however long it would have taken sanctions to affect Iraq's military capacity, if they ever did?

We know now that Saddam Hussein used the pause for peace not for diplomacy but to lay plans for terrorism and to build his defences. He did not prepare for peace. He did not even explore the path to peace but instead prepared to launch missiles at innocent civilians in Israel and Saudi Arabia. Those criminal, terrorist attacks continue this afternoon. He used the time to mine Kuwait's oil wells and to build a pipeline to pollute the Persian Gulf. And he used the time to prepare formidable tank defences. He used the pause for peace to prepare for war. The world will measure the costs of waiting in coalition casualties. It is reasonable to conclude that with more time, he would have dug in deeper -- and the risk of casualty lists lengthening further would have increased.

Nor can we overlook the political risks of delay in a region that is a ticking time-bomb. A continuation of sanctions would have given Saddam Hussein time to sow discord and to trigger terrorism. Meanwhile, the developing world and Eastern Europe would have continued their economic tail-spins. One week ago today in my address to the House I said: "The argument is made by some that Canada should hold itself back now in order to play a peacekeeping role later. Were Saddam Hussein to succeed in his annexation of Kuwait, he would be in a position to threaten the entire Middle East, and he is in the process of threatening individual nations as we speak. With the time and the wealth he would gain and acquire, he would add further weapons of mass destruction of his arsenal, including, in all probability, nuclear weapons.

"In what position would this put his neighbours? After Iran and Kuwait, what would be his next target? Saudi Arabia? Jordan? Would we hold ourselves back again, waiting for the latest atrocities to end so that Canada might then be invited in as part of a peacekeeping force?