

Adjournment Debate

What we are seeing is a bunch of like-minded countries making peace by quarantining the source of the infection and, in this case, by imposing an embargo against one country that invaded, pillaged, and claimed ownership of another country. In our world today, that is considered unacceptable.

Before I get into the cost issue, I would like to recognize the tremendous contributions made by the Canadian forces. It is not a token effort. It is a very strong effort. As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, there are almost a half a million troops in the Middle East. There are over 100 ships and a countless number of different types of aircraft: fighter aircraft, ground attack aircraft, carrier aircraft, land based aircraft, you name it.

Canada has sent three ships, a handful of airplanes, and 1,700 young men and women. To this date, we are responsible for 25 per cent of the interceptions of surface ships going through the Persian Gulf. That is the crux of the embargo—25 per cent. We are dealing with well over 500 interceptions at this point in time, but I do not know the exact number. So, I want to presage any comments that I have on cost, which is a concern of mine, with the overview of my feeling on what is happening there with respect to the Canadian forces.

I bring up the subject of cost because I think it is having somewhat of a negative effect. We committed the Canadian Forces three months ago. Now, three months later, we are having a great discussion on how we are going to pay for this operation. This all stemmed, of course, from a question I asked the Minister of National Defence on October 22, and I just want to relate some of the chronology.

I asked the minister how he was going to pay for this operation and he suggested to me that, at that point in time, it was going to come out of DND's hide. They would pay for it themselves. I was somewhat distraught to hear that because, as I will say later, I am aware that after severe cuts Canadian Forces is on the verge of rust-out. They do not have much fat left in the system. In fact, they have no fat.

On November 11, three weeks later, I was delighted, and I am sure the Canadian forces planners were delighted, to hear the Prime Minister say that he was going to damn the torpedoes and go full speed ahead, because money was no problem. He said the deficit had nothing to do with freedom.

The relief of senior DND planners must have been great when he said that there was going to be substantial additional funding. My heart rose. I felt happy. Alas, three days later, somebody must have got to the Prime Minister, and said: "Prime Minister, you cannot go around saying that. Money doesn't grow on trees". Then the Prime Minister drew back, and he said: "No, no. We are now going to pay for it from existing expenditures and that the hat would be passed around to other government departments and they would finance the defence of freedom".

My point here is that when the government commits Canadian forces to an operation such as this one in the Gulf, there goes with it other corresponding commitments. For example, how many, how long, how much, what sort of command and control, what is the bottom line for withdrawal, follow on long-term commitments, and so on.

I am not convinced, with the perturbations and the confusions we have had with funding, that it augurs well for the future with respect to some of these questions.

Will the embargoes work? Well, we do not know. It could take up to a year from now to find out if it is going to work.

There is no question about it, it is going to be costly for all the countries involved. But if we do not achieve it peacefully, it is going to be even more costly. We are looking at both sides, 300,000 casualties and anywhere from \$50 billion to \$150 billion. That is horrendous. I am concerned about the cost and the follow-up in this particular presentation.

• (1825)

With the state of affairs now, no matter what happens or how it happens, it has to end with Saddam Hussein getting out of Kuwait. What happens when he gets out? Do we fold our tents and go home? I think not. We have got to think through this thing, very systematically and very logically.

These are parts of the questions that I have and, specifically, I have a number of concerns. First, when the parliamentary secretary addresses my presentation on behalf of the Minister of National Defence, I want assurances that the Canadian forces gulf operation will not suffer from this fuzzy funding formula.