

Mr. Speaker, it is my very sad duty officially to inform the House that Captain Charles Eugene Laviolette of the Canadian Armed Forces, on assignment to the Canadian Delegation to the International Commission of Control and Supervision, was killed in the line of duty on Saturday April 7 when the International Commission helicopter in which he was a passenger crashed near Lao Bao in Viet-Nam with the loss of all 9 persons on board. I know that all Members of the House, and all Canadians, join with the Government in extending sincere condolences to the wife and family of Captain Laviolette and share their deep sense of grief at this tragic event which has befallen them.

The sadness and grief caused by this incident does not affect Canadians only. One Indonesian officer and two Hungarian officers were also killed, as were two Americans and one Filipino, crew members on the helicopter, and two Viet Cong or PRG Liaison officials accompanying the party. We are relieved, however, that the other two Canadians, Captain R.L. Parsons and Master Corporal J.M.R. Laplante, who were passengers in another helicopter on the same mission which went to the aid of the stricken aircraft, are now safe and in good health.

The Canadian Government deplors this tragic and unnecessary incident which, according to preliminary investigation and reports, was the result of a hostile act directed, either deliberately or by mistake, against helicopters which were clearly marked with ICCS insignia. One helicopter was struck by a missile fired from the ground, presumably by the party in whose area of occupation the incident occurred, while it was approaching Lao Bao on an ICCS mission. This happened despite the fact that all the safety procedures and precautions designed specifically to prevent such incidents had been carefully followed. The team had secured the Viet Cong's assurances of safe passage, as witnessed by the presence of two of their representatives on the stricken helicopter, and according to our information, the helicopters did not stray from the designated flight corridor to which these assurances of safety specifically applied. I wish to state as clearly and as forcefully as I am able, Mr. Speaker, the conviction of the Canadian Government that absolutely no circumstances should ever justify the firing upon personnel of the International Control Commission by any of the belligerents. Even if these helicopters had strayed off course, which all the evidence available to us denies, the penalty for losing one's way in the cause of peace should not be death at the hands of one of the signatories to the Paris Peace Agreement.

While we were under no illusions at the start of our participation in the ICCS concerning the dangers that existed for Canadian personnel in Viet-Nam, we have advocated and, we believed, had secured adequate safety and security measures in the field, based largely on trust in the assurances the ICCS is given by the parties involved in each particular case. However, the circumstances of this incident and the events which followed, particularly the hindrances encountered by the Commission in its efforts to locate and bring aid to ICCS personnel on the missing aircraft, are such that they jeopardize this trust even to the point of questioning the ability of the PRG representative in Saigon to speak for all of the military formations occupying the area in question. It cannot but have an effect on the future operations of the ICCS