

I want to report to the House today on the latest developments in the situation in Bosnia and Hercegovina and on my recent meetings in Europe. I want to talk about peacekeeping in the context of the UN Secretary-General's efforts to secure the Sarajevo Airport. I will also talk about our continued participation in the peacekeeping operation in Cyprus.

The situation in Bosnia and Hercegovina has deteriorated to the point that even relief convoys are attacked with impunity. This is a direct challenge to the credibility of the UN's current peacekeeping operation.

For this reason, we have agreed to a request from the UN Secretary-General, that, in the event that the cease-fire holds, he re-assign Canadian peacekeepers to keep the Sarajevo Airport secure to allow humanitarian relief to reach the general population. The mechanized infantry battalion of 850 Royal 22nd Regiment soldiers will be redeployed from Croatia once circumstances permit.

The first phase of the Secretary-General's plan for securing the Sarajevo Airport is already under way, with the deployment of 60 unarmed military observers today under the command of Canadian General Mackenzie.

On the basis of this mission's assessment, the Security Council will decide if conditions permit entering into the second phase of this operation. These conditions were established by the UN last Friday with Serbian, Bosnian Moslem and Croatian parties to the conflict: that artillery and anti-aircraft weapons capable of reaching the airport be withdrawn and placed under UN supervision. We fervently hope the mission can achieve the conditions necessary for the deployment of UN forces.

This may continue to be a difficult situation to manage. As on numerous occasions since the beginning of the Yugoslav conflict, risks of the cease-fire collapsing are very high. It is also imperative that the UN protect the humanitarian operation once forces have been deployed. Dangers will still exist in Sarajevo, but Canadian forces leadership has determined that these difficult assignments are feasible, provided initial conditions can be satisfied.

I believe that Canada had to respond favourably and actively to the Secretary-General's request. His decision is consistent with our commitment to bring an end to the fighting in Bosnia and to bring relief to the innocent.

It also confirms that our commitment to security in Europe remains undiminished. I was able to reinforce this commitment during a series of meetings in Europe last week.

In Oslo, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) took an historic decision. In the past, its role was to provide security