

These are the questions with which the Government is now wrestling. The views of this House, and of the public generally are of critical importance in our deliberations.

In discussing events in Bosnia, we must bear in mind certain factors that have guided our action to date. To begin with, we must recognize that there are two relatively distinct operations taking place in the former Yugoslavia. Though both are taking place under the banner of one UN operation, the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), they are quite different in terms of the activities under way and the dangers they face.

In Croatia, our peacekeepers are engaged in a relatively traditional UN operation. There are two distinct sides, and they have agreed to respect a stable cease-fire line while negotiating a permanent settlement to their differences. While these negotiations are in progress, the two sides have asked the UN to provide an international force to monitor the cease-fire and patrol the line. The situation is relatively stable, though that stability is highly dependent upon events in Bosnia, and the risks to our troops are low. This is peacekeeping as we understand it, and have practised it for several decades.

In Bosnia, however, the situation is radically different. There is no cease-fire, and there is certainly no line. Even the desire to negotiate seems to be lacking. In these circumstances, the UN Security Council has mandated our forces to engage in assisting in the provision of humanitarian relief to the civilians caught in the middle of the conflict, and in providing protection through a small military presence in Srebrenica, a UN designated "safe area." Our actions in Srebrenica, Mr. Speaker, are a perfect example of the evolution of peacekeeping to which I referred earlier. It remains an environment in which the peacekeepers require the permission of the parties to the conflict to go about their duties. At the same time, however, there are some elements of enforcement in our mandate in Srebrenica, though they are not well-defined.

The task in Bosnia is an infinitely more difficult and dangerous one than that which our peacekeepers have traditionally faced. In addition to the dangers of simply operating in a war zone, we must face the fact that some of the factions do not always want the humanitarian aid to get through.

For all of these dangers, however, it has been argued that the UN force is making a critical contribution. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the Red Cross have confirmed that aid is getting through. People who would otherwise be dead are alive today. Canadian troops have played a vital role in this effort and continue to do so.