

Special Debate

In conclusion, to the men and women who will participate in this mission, we wish them a safe return. There is probably no more noble effort that one can do in life than to help our fellow citizens. In this case we will owe a great debt of gratitude to the young men and women in our forces.

We thank them for their dedication and their commitment. At this time of year when so many families are looking forward to reunions, we also wish the families of those who will be going to Somalia our best wishes and to say to them that our thoughts are with them.

We support this motion because we believe that Canada, in our great tradition, can continue in a humanitarian way to help our brothers and sisters throughout the world.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The motion moved by the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre is in order and debate is now on the amendment.

Hon. Mary Collins (Associate Minister of National Defence and Minister Responsible for Status of Women): Mr. Speaker, it is with a sense of hope that I rise today to speak on the motion and I will be directing my remarks to the main motion in the large part.

The motion concerns the deployment of Canadian forces personnel to Somalia in support of the United Nations Security Council resolution 794, adopted on December 3, 1992. I believe that it is only befitting for Canada, a country that has always been known in the vanguard of peace, to act boldly to restore hope to the people of Somalia.

I wish to encourage my colleagues in the House from all parties to join me in supporting this motion and by so doing sending a message of solidarity to the population of Somalia.

Just a few moments ago I was outside the House for the lighting of the Christmas trees and this year the National Capital Commission dedicated the lighting to our peacekeepers.

It was a very moving ceremony and I was joined by a young paratrooper, paratrooper Vienneau who came from Petawawa to represent his colleagues as a peace-

keeper. He is scheduled to go to Somalia in a very short time. In talking with him I asked him how he felt, was he prepared. His response was he is ready and waiting to go. He wants to get there.

He typifies to me the men and women who serve in the Canadian Armed Forces who have done such an outstanding job. They are so ready and so prepared to help the world over.

Yesterday I was in Chilliwack meeting with the families of some of our peacekeepers at their little Christmas get together with the children and I had a chance to talk to some of our peacekeepers abroad. I know that hon. colleagues will be pleased to hear that they are doing well and are in great spirits.

One of the mothers told me that her son had asked her why his father had to go away at Christmas. They came from a presentation of some pictures of what was going on and the pictures showed the starving children. After the little boy had seen the pictures he said to his mom that he knows those children need his father more than he does right now.

I would like to thank those families and those children because they are also making important sacrifices as their loved ones serve on behalf of Canada all over the world and very shortly in Somalia.

Before discussing the particulars of our deployment to Somalia, I would like to speak about the situation in that country. I would specifically like to address the political context, the military threat and what the United Nations has proposed to do before the most recent Security Council resolution. I would then like to outline for the House the important aspects of the Canadian Forces' intended role in this operation, bearing in mind that this is a humanitarian exercise intended to create the conditions which will allow the delivery of much needed assistance to the people of Somalia.

[*Translation*]

This mission, which is somewhat similar to the military intervention in Korea and the Persian Gulf war, is an unprecedented effort by members of the international community to stabilize the situation in Somalia and ensure that relief reaches those who need it most.