

*Government Orders*

thank them for responding so quickly and co-operatively to our request.

Furthermore we agree with the government's stated position on air strikes. In our view, as soon as an air strike takes place the peacekeepers and helmets of the UN take on the same colour as the helmet of the pilot who delivered the ordinance. They will be deemed to have taken sides, to have become antagonists and thus appropriate targets. Air strikes should only be authorized if UN forces are under or in direct danger of attack.

Our thanks also go to Major General Lewis MacKenzie, former Canadian commander in the area who took time to come and give us his firsthand impressions and viewpoint of the situation in Bosnia.

At the start I want to recognize the excellence of the Canadian forces personnel we have committed in the former Yugoslavia. These troops are well trained, well disciplined, well motivated and well able to carry out any reasonable task assigned to them. They have earned and deserve our respect and admiration.

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They have also earned and deserve our informed consideration for their future involvement in the convoluted situation to which they are presently committed. In Bosnia we face deeply held differences between Serbs, Croats and Muslims who, although they enjoy a common ethnicity, are now radically and violently divided, in fact opposed. Make no mistake, none of the belligerents have clean hands; all have been involved in atrocities against the others.

Canada has a proud tradition of involvement in peacekeeping operations. It has cost more than 140 lives and many more injuries over the years but in the main I believe most Canadians have supported this commitment. However, the feedback I am now receiving from my constituents reveals their concern with the present Canadian involvement in Bosnia. They worry that Canadian lives are being put at risk in what they perceive to be a questionable cause. They wonder, if the people of Bosnia show no inclination to put aside their differences and find a peaceful resolution of their problems, is Canada helping to end or merely perpetuating this unhappy situation?

Canadians were committed to Bosnia to provide humanitarian aid, and despite the difficulties, dangers and frustrations encountered, by and large they have succeeded in their mission. But let it be well understood, this is not a peacekeeping mission, because there is no peace to keep. Rather our forces are observing and operating in and around a civil war, in the full sense of the word.

Canada presently has more armed forces deployed in theatres of operations than at any time since the Korean war. We are

stretching our resources, particularly the infantry, to the limit, to the extent that should another incident such as Oka arise, it could very well be beyond the capacity of our armed forces to adequately respond.

However, the size of the Canadian forces and the tasks assigned them should await the outcome of the forthcoming defence review. On this point, Reformers commend the government on its decision to conduct this study. It is long overdue.

But a decision on Canadian involvement in the former Yugoslavia cannot await finalization of the defence review. The end of our present commitment in Bosnia is rapidly approaching and we must soon take a stand. It seems to me that Canada has only two options: first, to stay and prepare for a long-lasting involvement in the region; or second, to take the initiative by demanding that the belligerents commit to achievable, measurable and enforceable progress toward a peaceful resolution.

In this second instance Canada would further state that failing such commitment Canadian forces will be withdrawn from the theatre.

If our studies and briefings have done nothing else they have clearly shown us there are no easy solutions. By staying involved we are alleviating the suffering of tens of thousands of civilians. At the same time, inescapably, we are supplying the fighting forces and enabling or even assisting them to continue the war. Our presence is diminishing the fighting, but children are still being maimed and killed, women raped, and the general population indiscriminately bombarded. So increased hatred is continually being bred.

Conversely a withdrawal by the UN would unleash the opposing forces, prompting the likelihood of an increase in hostilities and, in some instances, a blood bath. Furthermore, it would enhance the danger that this war could extend beyond its present boundaries. We are damned if we do and damned if we don't. Which way do we go?

It strikes me, and I admit that my background as a fighter pilot may be influencing my reasoning, that some action is better than none. While we do not know what the outcome will be, it may be time for Canada to be hard-nosed, saying to the belligerents: "If you are not willing to make some concessions and compromises toward a peaceful resolution of the war, we are going to withdraw and leave you to it."

If such a declaration were delivered it would be stronger if it came in the name of all UN forces in the theatre. However, considering Canada's reputation as a peacekeeper, a threat of unilateral Canadian withdrawal would unquestionably draw world attention and hopefully impact strongly on Serb, Croat and Muslim leaders.