Oral Questions

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park): Mr. Speaker, my question for the same minister on the same subject.

The diplomatic community in Canada is seriously shaken following the vicious attack on the Iranian embassy here in Ottawa on Sunday. The Iranian ambassador and two of his staff were injured, files were removed from the building and 26 people were arrested in connection with this shocking incident.

The minister and his government know that Canada has an obligation to the international community to protect the personnel and property of foreign diplomats. Can the minister explain to this House how at least 30 people forcefully entered the Iranian embassy without being stopped by the police or security?

Hon. Doug Lewis (Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I have been following the media accounts of this as I am sure my hon. friend has. I think if he were to make himself aware of those accounts, there was considerable damage to several embassies around the world and similar situations.

I think if he were to compare the police response and the police action, in this case the RCMP and the city of Ottawa police, action was taken promptly, arrests were made and everything, as far as I am informed, was done as quickly as possible.

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park): Mr. Speaker, a supplementary for the same minister.

The minister tells us what happened in other countries. What happens in other countries does not have to happen in Canada. We are a peaceful country and we can set an example. What happens in other countries does not have to happen here.

My supplementary concerns the next round of the Middle East peace talks on refugees to be held in Ottawa May 13 to 15. Can the minister stand up in this House and issue a guarantee to the international community that Canada, as a host country, is capable of providing adequate safety and security to the principal players in these critical talks?

Hon. Doug Lewis (Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I will give the international community the same guarantee we gave them when they were here for the G–7, the Commonwealth and the Olympics.

Mr. Jean–Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Solicitor General.

Yesterday's attack on the Iranian embassy recalls the 1985 hostage–taking incident at the Turkish embassy in my riding which resulted in the death of a security guard and serious injuries to the Turkish ambassador. The government promised at that time an intensive review of security at all embassies.

● (1430)

I have 38 embassies in my riding. What measures has the government taken since the 1985 incident to reassure those working in these embassies and those living around these embassies that their security is indeed protected?

Hon. Doug Lewis (Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my hon. friend's question. In or about that time the Government of Canada organized the special emergency response team under the jurisdiction of the RCMP and put that in place.

Fortunately since that time it has not been required to be called into action. I can advise my friend that the RCMP makes regular threat assessments and discussions are held with embassies from time to time.

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the same minister.

The Government of Canada is responsible for the security and safety of foreign diplomats and dignitaries in Ottawa. Why then will the government not provide the necessary financial resources to the Ottawa police, the organization that is providing this service free of charge to the government?

Hon. Doug Lewis (Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP has a security responsibility *vis-à-vis* foreign embassies. My hon. friend makes his point on behalf of the Ottawa city police. There may very well be correspondence to that effect, but in my meetings with Tom Flanagan and members of council from Ottawa from time to time that particular matter has never been raised with me.

If in fact someone wishes to raise it, I would be pleased to entertain the question.