

Oral Questions

they will be available to the Hon. Member and the House on a normal basis like all expenditures that are made. My hon. friend should take the time to examine the facts.

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● (1130)

NATIONAL DEFENCE**REQUEST THAT MINISTER GROUND CF-104 STARFIGHTER AIRCRAFT**

Hon. Allan B. McKinnon (Victoria): Madam Speaker, on May 24 I asked the Minister of National Defence whether he would consider grounding the Starfighters because of their unacceptably high attrition rate. He replied:

Madam Speaker, if there were any unreasonable risk in letting our pilots fly any of our planes I would stop them from flying right away.

According to press reports the Minister has stated that he will not ground the fighter but will temporarily curtail certain operational exercises. In view of yesterday's accident, will the Minister not now completely ground the Starfighters until the causes of the crashes are known and, possibly, rectified?

Hon. J. Gilles Lamontagne (Minister of National Defence): Madam Speaker, as I mentioned yesterday, after the news of the crash in Germany reached me I had a conversation with the Chief of Defence Staff and the Director of Air Command. I asked them for their opinions. They advised me there was no serious reason just because of the accident to ground the aircraft. They indicated that most of the maintenance and safety precautions with respect to the aircraft are at the highest level they have ever been. They also advised me that only 15 per cent of the accidents that have occurred in the last 15 years of flying these planes were due to mechanical defects. The remainder were not as a result of mechanical defects.

Also, as a precaution, the Chief of Defence Staff yesterday issued an order at my suggestion that some of the air to ground exercises will be suspended until we have the reasons for the last two crashes. According to the Chief of Defence Staff at Air Command there was no serious reason why we should ground the aircraft.

Yesterday was a very bad day. Two Jaguar aircraft from the British Air Force crashed in Goose Bay. That was not a reason, again, to ground these aircraft just because these accidents happened. These Jaguar planes were also old. They are to be replaced by the Tornado, probably next year.

Just because there are crashes and even though we know the reasons for these crashes, we do not think that these reasons call for us to ground them.

PILOT ERROR FACTOR

Hon. Allan B. McKinnon (Victoria): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is also for the Minister of National Defence. I would like to point out to him that the CF-101s are not crashing, and the CF-105s are not crashing. It is only the

CF-104 that seems to be crashing fairly frequently, much too frequently.

The Jaguar crash provided good grounds for believing there was pilot error. Yesterday in an interview the Minister said that the pilots were to blame for the crashes and not the planes.

Frankly, I think that Captain Bayles' reaction yesterday may have been the smartest move he will ever make, when he bailed out of the CF-104. Can the Minister tell us any fact or give us any evidence that he has for thinking that yesterday's crash, or indeed that the last three crashes could have been caused by pilot error?

Hon. J. Gilles Lamontagne (Minister of National Defence): Madam Speaker, I did not say anything about the last three crashes being due to pilot errors. I think that the media took my remarks from my interview out of context. What I did do was to quote the figures I have for the different causes for accidents. These reasons could be personnel, materiel, environment, operational, unknown. Statistics say that 60 per cent are caused by human error; 15 per cent are material; 14 per cent are environment; and 13 per cent for other reasons. I do not think I said it was strictly a human error. It could be human error. The statistics are there.

Maybe I should mention, Madam Speaker, that following these accidents, I, of course, sent my condolences to the Minister of Defence for Germany, and I received his reply today. I want to quote his concluding sentence. It reads as follows:

We will continue trying to prevent such accidents, and it is our belief that the Canadian pilots contribute their part to flight-safety over Germany and are esteemed as especially competent and capable flyers.

I think that is a good commendation from the German Minister of Defence.

SENATE COMMITTEE FINDINGS ON MARITIME DEFENCE—LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE

Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West): Madam Speaker, my question is also for the Minister of National Defence. It deals with policies affecting our naval force in Maritime Command. The Minister has continually assured the House that Canada is fulfilling its NATO commitments and maintaining an adequate level of personnel and equipment. Now the Senate subcommittee on National Defence has destroyed that assurance concerning maritime defence.

Since the Minister has already refused the recommendation to increase expenditures on maritime defence by \$550 million per year, as recommended by the Senate subcommittee, what increase in expenditure will he provide the Maritime Command? What does the Minister intend to do in response to the scathing criticism of his administration contained in the subcommittee report on matters like the patrol frigate program, additional Aurora aircraft, diesel submarines, patrol boats, and all the other specifics which the subcommittee says are now required?