

Indeed these are precisely the talents Canada has been applying to help advance the peace process in Central America. From the outset, the five governments of that region turned to Canada to help design a peacekeeping mission. That effort led to the adoption, on November 8 last year, of a unanimous U.N. Security Council resolution which created a security verification group to supervise an eventual peace in Central America. The structure of the peace-keeping operation closely followed the recommendations which Canada made after studying the requirements for an effective U.N. presence.

That is the sort of useful role Canada has played - and will continue to play - in the region. It is a role which not all can play. And it is a role which requires some judgements to be made.

Some Canadian NGOs criticize Canada's continued relations with El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. We have been urged to cut off links, to walk away. Some European countries have done just that.

But when it came time to prepare for peace in Central America, it was not to those countries that the region turned. It was to Canada. For we maintained relations with the entire region - kept doors and borders open, to be in a position to assist when assistance was required.

Let me turn now to recent events in Panama.

When the United States intervened militarily in Panama, I made three points:

- The first was that Canada regretted the American action.
- The second was that we understood the reasons why the U.S. felt compelled to do what it did.
- And the third was that intervention by force is a very dangerous precedent.

No one would claim that the U.S. action was a high point in hemispheric relations. When Canada signed the OAS Charter, we, along with others members, signed on to the common principle of non-intervention in the affairs of other countries. Central America - as with the rest of Latin America - is not anybody's backyard.

What happened in Panama was the final act in a long series of efforts to bring democracy and civil order to that country. It followed a long series of provocations.

The May 1989 elections were declared null and void when General Noriega's candidate was about to lose.

You will recall the violence in the streets which followed that action - the terror directed against candidates who in normal circumstances would have won the election.