

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, it is encouraging to learn that there have been no Canadian casualties so far. As I said, while we had hoped that Canada would not be in this war at this time, we will, as Canadians, do everything we can to support the Canadian men and women who are fighting in the gulf.

In light of that, will the Prime Minister report to members of Parliament and Canadians on a daily basis on how the Canadian forces are doing in the Persian Gulf?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I will of course be happy to report, not only today, but many times as the relevant information becomes available to me.

We also have offered, and I will be happy to repeat the offer, regular confidential briefings for the leader of the Opposition and the leader of the New Democratic Party in regard to developments in the gulf, the details of which it might not be in the public interest to divulge at a given time. We will share with the opposition.

I understand that the Secretary of State for External Affairs will be responding to invitations from parliamentary committees. We would look forward to the co-operation of all members of Parliament. To that end we will share with my friends, the leader of the Opposition and the leader of the New Democratic Party, any and all information that we can. I will make any reports that I can make to the House and the country.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Prime Minister for his answer.

As the Prime Minister knows, the United Nations Security Council was in emergency session overnight last night.

Can the Prime Minister advise the House exactly what Canada is doing in the United Nations to bring about an early cease-fire? What is Canada doing today to seek an end to this tragic conflict as soon as possible?

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, earlier today, following a cabinet meeting, I asked the Secretary of State for External Affairs to be in direct touch with Perez de Cuellar, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, both in regard to the peace plan, elements of which were submitted by Canada in writing as a possible initiative last week and also to consider any possible alternatives even at this late hour which might bring an end to hostilities.

The fact of the matter is that all that is required to end the hostilities is a clear signal from Saddam Hussein that he, even at this late moment, is in the process of withdrawing from the illegally-occupied country. To this end, the Secretary of State for External Affairs has communicated earlier today with the Secretary-General of the United Nations and I know he would be happy to respond to any question in the House in regard to details.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, perhaps I could follow up on the statements made by the Prime Minister in regard to that.

In addition to the contacts made with the Secretary-General, we know this morning that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the United States, General Powell, indicated that there would be no cessation of the bombing until they had completed their program in order to undertake any kind of diplomatic initiative.

Has the Prime Minister or the Secretary of State for External Affairs been in consultation with our allies in this coalition, not just on military matters but to see whether there could be diplomatic initiatives that would secure the withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait so as to end the loss of life before it becomes too extravagant and to exaggerated and there are far too many people killed?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I think that the comment to which my hon. friend refers at the head-of-government level came from Prime Minister Major. He indicated a strong disinclination by Her Majesty's government to cease hostilities at this time in the absence of a clear signal from Saddam Hussein. The British, like all of us, fear