

conference. With respect to the contingency plans which are in place, I am sure that the hon. gentleman would agree that it would not be in the best interest of security to discuss those in detail because they, themselves, might be jeopardized.

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[Translation]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRESENCE IN GALLERY OF DELEGATION FROM UNITED
REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. May I draw to the attention of Members to the presence today in our Gallery of a delegation from the United Republic of Cameroon, led by His Excellency Benjamin Itoe, Minister of Justice and Lord Chancellor of Cameroon.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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AIR SAFETY

REQUEST THAT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT HAVE COMPLETE
CONTROL

Hon. André Ouellet (Papineau): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Transport who announced yesterday a number of steps to reinforce security.

Why did not the Minister take these steps immediately following the Air India tragedy, and especially why did he not announce yesterday immediate steps such as giving his Department full control over airport security and the hiring of all security personnel?

● (1425)

[English]

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Hon. Member knows that a number of measures were implemented after the Air-India incident. Furthermore, assessments and audits of all of the major Canadian airports were conducted, deficiencies identified, and corrective measures were being taken. The point the Hon. Member refers to with respect to Transport Canada taking over the security screening, as I indicated earlier, is an option which can be considered. However, I do find it rather strange that the Hon. Member, as a supporter of the Government which put the existing system in place, now finds it convenient to be opposed to that system which he supported as little as 18 months ago.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

DEGREE OF TRAVELLING PUBLIC'S SAFETY

Hon. André Ouellet (Papineau): Mr. Speaker, the Minister seems to forget that there is now a level of international terrorism which did not exist at the time.

I ask the Minister, who promised on three occasions to the travelling public to reinforce the security, to assure today to the same travelling public that it is now completely safe to go to airports and that the 30 to 60 day delay which he is suggesting is not a way of telling them: "Until then, travel at your own risk".

[English]

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I am glad the Hon. Member cracked a smile when he made that statement. He knows full well he could not say what he said with a straight face. Is air travel safe in this country? I can only say that we are taking every step we possibly can in a collective manner, with the co-operation of the airlines, the RCMP, the unions and all concerned, to ensure the utmost safety to the travelling public.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

UNITED STATES-LIBYA CONFRONTATION—CANADIAN POSITION

Ms. Pauline Jewett (New Westminster—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Prime Minister at what point the U.S. consulted with Canada about the proposed military action against Libya, and did the Canadian Government at that point suggest alternatives to military action? If so, what were they?

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, as was contained in the Prime Minister's press release yesterday, we have been in touch all along. The meeting yesterday at which I was briefed was the culmination of a long series of intense consultations which at one time or another have included the Prime Minister, President Reagan, Secretary Shultz, Secretary Weinberger, the President's National Security Adviser, Vice-Admiral Poindexter, as well as the Secretary of State for External Affairs and, indeed, the Minister of Finance and myself.

GOVERNMENT POLICY

Ms. Pauline Jewett (New Westminster—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, there was no cause for concern last Friday apparently. Therefore I am wondering if the Deputy Prime Minister can tell us if the Canadian Government in the interval presented alternatives to military action. If so, what were those alternatives?

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): I want to reiterate that, with respect to the