

Mr. Speaker, in order to inform the House, and the Canadian public, of developments to this date concerning the death of two Canadian girls on the Zambian/Rhodesia border, I wish to table, in both official languages, a statement on this tragic matter.

This statement sets out the facts of this tragedy as we know them. I wish to quote from, and thereby draw the attention of Honourable Members to, the conclusion of the statement: "The situation now is that our strong and persistent representations to the Zambian Government have resulted in expressions of regret and apologies, which I have no doubt are sincere, and an offer of ex gratia payments to the families of the slain girls. We appreciate these indications of their concern. The Zambian Government has not denied that the shots came from their guards but it has maintained that the sentry or sentries acted in accordance with their duty in the circumstances as they saw them. We do not consider that there is evidence of a threat to Zambian installations which would justify the prolonged shooting which resulted in the deaths of two innocent Canadian girls. As long as this major difference remains between our view of what happened and the view of the Zambian Government, we cannot consider the matter closed. Our stand all along has been that it is the responsibility of the Zambian Government to carry out investigations and produce explanations that will satisfy reasonable Canadian opinion."

I have instructed our High Commissioner in Lusaka, Mr. Broadbridge, to present the text of the statement I am tabling to the Zambian authorities.