

Oral Questions

ous nature, as we are required to do under article 5 of the international agreement on the return of objects launched into outer space?

Hon. Barney Danson (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, first of all the object has to be correctly identified. There is contact among the Department of External Affairs, the Soviet embassy and our embassy in Moscow, as well as Soviet officials, so they are fully aware of the current situation. Also, I am sure they are reading the press as this matter evolves.

Mr. McKinnon: My supplementary question is for the same minister. Paragraph 5 of article 5 of the same treaty requires the launching authority, in this case the U.S.S.R., to pay expenses incurred in recovering and returning a space object. Has the government contacted the U.S.S.R. in this regard and, if so, what was the result?

Mr. Danson: Mr. Speaker, the costs are not yet known. We are keeping a record of all the costs involved, which are rather significant I must say. The owners of the material, when identified, will certainly be well aware of the costs. They are fully aware of the treaty. The international régime will meet its responsibilities, as was indicated to the Department of External Affairs by the Soviet ambassador.

Mr. Paproski: Why didn't you tell us that last week?

Mr. McKinnon: My final supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, is to the same minister. If he casts his mind back prior to the launching of the satellite, the preamble to the treaty provides that the nation launching the satellite shall, upon request, furnish identifying data prior to the landing of an object it has launched. Did the government make such a request of the U.S.S.R. before the landing of the satellite? If so, what was the answer?

Mr. Danson: Not to the best of my knowledge, Mr. Speaker.

DISINTEGRATION OF SOVIET SATELLITE OVER CANADIAN
SOIL—INFORMATION PROVIDED MINISTER

Mr. Bob Wenman (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, Admiral Falls, Chief of the Defence Staff, is quoted as saying that he knew Cosmos-954 carried a nuclear package and was likely to fall to earth, but did not inform the minister because "they say he is a busy man". Has the minister discussed this matter with Admiral Falls recently, and has any new system of priorities been established in the minister's office which will establish the confidence of competent senior Canadian defence officials in the adequacy of the minister of defence regarding such information?

Hon. Barney Danson (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, first of all, perhaps I may complete my answer to the previous question. Of course, before the spacecraft, or vehicle, or any indication of landing took place, we did not know it was going to land in Canada, which made it difficult. There was communication between Mr. Brzezinski and Soviet authorities,

[Mr. McKinnon.]

because they were the ones involved in this problem. With respect to the second question, there is complete communication. With respect to items of priority, there is no question that I was advised, as soon as it was helpful for me to be advised, of the situation regarding the space object.

Mr. Paproski: Before, or after, it landed?

Mr. Danson: I have responsible officers who are properly carrying out their roles. It would be foolish to interfere with their day to day work. They call upon me, when it is necessary, as a matter of course.

Mr. Wenman: Mr. Speaker, the time they called upon the minister indicates the confidence they had in his course of action. On Tuesday, the minister said there was a 98 per cent chance that the satellite would not reach the ground. On Wednesday, the minister told reporters there was a 90 per cent chance that they had found the satellite. He said they had found either a piece of satellite debris or the greatest uranium mine in the world. On Friday, Admiral Falls said it was neither.

Can the minister tell to the House whether he and the Chief of Defence Staff have totally separate sources of information, or does the minister simply prefer to spread his own pan-demonium, without any source?

Mr. Danson: First of all, Mr. Speaker, my staff and senior officials have sufficient confidence in me to come at very short notice and receive wise, fast action and decisions. The Chief of Defence Staff and I are working in close concert. I think that is quite an inappropriate question. Any difference is only one in timing: the same information comes to both of us. It comes to me through the Chief of Defence Staff, and we are in constant communication. I was out of communication for a short period of time when I was on an aircraft at the time there was an exchange of information, but it was not conflicting information.

* * *

AIRPORTS

EDMONTON INTERNATIONAL—GOVERNMENT POSITION ON
IMPROVEMENTS

Mr. Douglas Roche (Edmonton-Strathcona): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport and concerns the Edmonton international airport. Has the minister reconsidered his decision to make only cosmetic improvements to the international airport, when in fact the government's own study shows that structural changes are urgent to meet the growing demand reflecting increasing passenger and commercial traffic?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, we have not been able to review the decision concerning major improvements to the Edmonton international airport which we have in the plans. Those improvements will be made as soon as we have financial provisions. We have, however, authorized