

*Oral Questions*

The member quotes unnamed sources within the bureaucracy. It is not the bureaucracy that will make this decision and no decision has been made about any contract by any member of cabinet.

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**BOSNIA**

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the defence minister said he was looking forward to finding out how the U.S. forces would be deployed in Bosnia. Today the world got a clear indication of where the U.S. is headed when one of its F-16 fighter planes was shot down over Bosnia earlier this morning. Everyone knows this act could escalate the conflict even further.

For the second day in a row, my question is this. Will the government assure the House that it will not let our troops get dragged into a war for which they are neither equipped nor mandated?

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have confirmed that an American plane was shot down. Obviously the situation is very volatile.

A number of Canadian hostages are being held in various parts of the territory in question. The prudent thing for the Government of Canada to do to protect the safety of the hostages is to go to the meeting in Paris tomorrow with a clear mandate. Our number one priority will be to protect those Canadian soldiers and to ensure that any action taken in a collective way will ensure the safety of the hostages and the soldiers who are on the ground right now.

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, civil wars are very messy and they get even worse when other countries join in the fighting, and the situation is escalating in Bosnia.

Given that our troops are not equipped for a high intensity conflict, what is the exact position the Canadian government will take tomorrow in Paris? Will it be the position of the foreign affairs minister or the defence minister, because a definite question has to be asked?

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am not quite clear as to the options the hon. member is offering. I have underlined how concerned we are about the more than 50 Canadians either being detained or being held hostage.

At this point our main concern when we go to Paris tomorrow is to ensure that any collective action decided on by all of the participating parties will first and foremost ensure the safety of those soldiers who are on the ground.

I am sure all Canadians want the Government of Canada to ensure the safety of those troops who are currently being held hostage and others who are on the ground.

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, we are all concerned about the hostages. We want them released. We want all Canadians withdrawn, including the hostages.

• (1125)

We welcome the news that Bosnian Serbs will be releasing the hostages tomorrow without condition. The Reform Party hopes that will happen. There would not have been hostages if we had acted on this much sooner.

Given the escalation of the situation in Bosnia and the potential for further hostage taking, will the government make a commitment to withdraw our troops once the hostages are released?

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I did say that at about 11.13 a.m. we had the opportunity to check the status. At the moment we have no confirmation of the release of hostages. We hope that news is forthcoming.

Our first responsibility should not be to outline our negotiating stance for political gain. Rather it should be to ensure that when we go to Paris, all the parties that have troops on the ground have a chance to make a full exploration of all of the possibilities on the table.

That is certainly what the Minister of National Defence will be doing in Paris tomorrow.

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[Translation]

**HUMAN RIGHTS**

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

In its decision last Friday in the case of *Egan v. Canada*, the Supreme Court of Canada found that sexual orientation is a profoundly personal characteristic, which is either immutable or alterable only at unacceptable personal cost and which, therefore, comes under the protection of section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Since the Supreme Court of Canada considers discrimination based on sexual orientation unconstitutional, will the minister not acknowledge that he has a duty to table his bill to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act by the end of the present session and thus make all discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation illegal? A little courage, Mr. Speaker.