

cannot be over-emphasized; children are often victims of these wars which benefit only arms dealers or crackpot idealists or people who will use any means to reach their ends.

However, I would like to have some clarification on air raids, which are at the heart of the debate on Bosnia. When we go on peace missions, do we also have to have air raids or should it be the other way around: if we are attacked from the air, should we respond to these attacks after receiving an order from the commander in chief? Consultation can take about an hour. I would like the previous speaker to tell me more about what he thinks of these air raids.

[English]

**Mr. Flis:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his comments and compliments and for supporting today's process. If the hon. member does not see enough of such debates I hope he will remind us that it is time for another. In debates like this we see the best of every member of Parliament, all 295.

Actually the hon. member's comments and questions coincide with a poll that was reported in the *Ottawa Citizen* today. The poll suggests that an overwhelming majority of Canadians favour the idea of UN peacekeeping in general, but six in 10 respondents said that Canada's mission in Bosnia is too risky and should be ended in April. I quote from the poll: "More and more Canadians are saying it is too damned expensive and it is so dangerous, why not have some other countries take on the job?"

The poll also suggests that when the heat is high in Bosnia, meaning the military heat, attitudes toward peacekeeping are cool in Canada but if the shooting stops then Canadians want their soldiers to be there to administer humanitarian aid.

I think when we send our troops there the one thing our mandate should guarantee is the safety of our Canadian forces. It is all right for countries to negotiate air strikes but how can air strikes be negotiated and mandated if the Canadian peacekeepers are in that region? That is where we will not get the support of Canadians if things like that happen.

If one of our soldiers has to come back you know how, I do not think we will get much support from Canadians in future peacekeeping. Yet our troops have the highest reputation in the world.

• (1310)

I had the good fortune of being in Cyprus and was talking to our Canadian forces. I talked with the British commander who begged Canada to please not pull the Canadian forces out

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because they are such an excellent example for the other countries that have peacekeeping forces.

We had an example in the Bosnia-Herzegovina area when it was time to remove the Canadian soldiers and replace them by soldiers from another country. The Serbs said no. They said they would accept the Canadians but not the troops of another country. The Canadian forces have this ability. They are respected by the Muslims, they are respected by the Croats and they are respected by the Serbs. That is why we can play such an important role. However, if we start dropping bombs on them, our taxpayers will give us the message to bring our troops home.

First, before we make any such move I think we have to ensure the safety of our troops over there.

[Translation]

**Mr. Plamondon:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member was right when he said that our taxpayers are concerned. There is even mention, in the poll referred to, of a will to withdraw from peacekeeping operations in Bosnia. I wonder if this is not a golden opportunity to analyse our need for military equipment.

As members of the Opposition, we supported the government when it decided to cancel the helicopter contract, but now we know that 800 extremely sophisticated tanks are presently being built in Ontario. We also have various military equipment, such as our F-18 airplanes, for which it costs \$1 million just to train the pilot.

Should we not rethink the role of our armed forces in order to reduce all this equipment, to specialize our troops further in those peacekeeping missions, and therefore to reduce expenditures and activities in other military sectors where this material is rarely used, or should we consider leaving some special role to other members of NATO, since Canada has already participated in all the peacekeeping missions since the Second World War? Is that not something to consider?

The total budget could be reduced by eliminating some equipment which may not be necessary, but the money saved would enable us to carry on with our peacekeeping missions without overburdening our taxpayers once again. I would like to hear the hon. member's point of view.

[English]

**Mr. Flis:** Mr. Speaker, when the cold war ended everyone was hoping that there would be peace dividends; money that would be saved on defence would be put toward economic renewal, stimulus, reducing poverty on this planet, et cetera. That is why this government is recommending a review of our foreign affairs and defence policy.

As the Prime Minister mentioned and offered, both standing committees will be going to the people of Canada to review our