

I would say, as well, that we stand with all Canadians and all members of the House in saying that we have the greatest of confidence in our men and women who are serving in the Canadian contingent in the Persian Gulf.

We have not the same confidence, I may add, in the equipment that has been provided by successive Liberal and Conservative governments. On that score, I had an opportunity to do a little research. I looked up some of the statements made by our party in the past.

It is intriguing, Mr. Speaker, when you go back even as far as the founding convention of the party in 1961, to see that our party has consistently urged successive government after government to reshape our military forces, not to continue to provide a kind of mini-American army in Europe and to waste an inordinate amount of money over the last 30 and 40 years in seeking to achieve that role, but rather to prepare ourselves for precisely the kind of role we are being asked and may yet be asked to perform in the Middle East; that is, a role of international peacekeeper under the aegis of the United Nations.

A little volume was produced by an earlier defence critic who was my father and who happened to represent Toronto in Parliament. I noted in doing this research that he served as a member of the defence committee of this Parliament for a number of years. In this volume that he wrote back in 1965, he built on the resolution adopted by the founding convention of the party and outlined the kind of policies, that if we had been following for the last 30 years, we would not only have saved the Canadian taxpayers millions of dollars, but we would have been equipped to play a real role as peacekeeper in the world.

When we look at the role that Canada has now in the Middle East, we say that we should alter the role and that Canada should move its forces back into the Gulf of Oman. But we should also prepare for the culmination of the crisis which is clearly upon us in the next few weeks. The United States and the armies of Egypt and Saudi Arabia are clearly building to the point that they at least have the capacity to engage in a major military assault on Iraq and the Iraqi forces in Kuwait. All of the analysts indicate that such an assault would be extraordinarily costly in human lives and in the long term political consequences. Some of the estimates are that there would be 30,000 to 40,000 U.S. soldiers killed in such an action. There would be thousands and thousands more

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innocent civilians in Iraq who would be killed. There would be thousands upon thousands of Iraqi soldiers killed. The cost in human lives of a military assault on Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi forces would be enormous.

The cost in terms of instability in the Middle East in the long run will be incalculable. The world has seen in the last two months, since the crisis began, a very remarkable pulling together of international opinion. Virtually all of the international community has supported the actions that have been taken to date. They have done so under the aegis of the United Nations and the United Nations Security Council. This is an achievement which the world has dreamt of since 1945 when the United Nations was first founded.

Offensive military action taken outside the purview of the United Nations will shatter the work that has been done in the last two and one-half months. Further, it will shatter the very shaky but important alliance in this venture that there is to date between the Arab world, or at least the majority of the Arab world, and the rest of the international community.

The cost in terms of stability within the Arab world would be enormous if the United States leads offensive unilateral military action against Saddam.

It is hard at this stage to understand exactly what the U.S. intentions are. We have General Michael Dugan, who was the Chief of Air Staff for the United States, saying that it was clearly the U.S. intention to engage in offensive action in the Persian area and against Iraq.

There are others who suggest that this is merely an important bluff designed to persuade Saddam Hussein that rather than face the American might that is now being organized in Saudi Arabia, he would be advised to pull back from Kuwait.

There are those who argue publicly in the United States that the objective should not be the objective set down by the United Nations resolutions, namely the withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait and the return and freedom of the hostages, but the objective should be the personal removal from power of Saddam Hussein, deserved though that may be, given his record.

For the international community to accept that additional objective brings with it a number of important consequences. The bluff itself may involve great dangers because it may induce Iraq to take pre-emptive action in