

I welcome the opportunity to update the Committee today on the situation in the Gulf. I do not intend this to be a military briefing. That information is being made available by the Canadian Armed Forces on a daily basis.

I would simply enter a note of caution in terms of the military situation. These are early days. This conflict will be neither easy nor quick. The world learned that when Saddam Hussein launched his missiles on Israel. The most difficult phases of conflict may lie ahead. The most important thing to maintain is unity of purpose and unity of will.

The purpose of our participation in the conflict in the Gulf remains constant. It will not change. That purpose is to implement the provisions of 12 UN Security Council resolutions, that is, to get Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait. Our purpose is no less and no more than that. We are now doing by force what diplomacy and sanctions were unable to do. Our methods have changed. Our purpose has not. That purpose is firm and we will not yield.

And the principle behind that purpose is to give the United Nations, for the first time in decades, a chance to do what the Cold War did not allow: to preserve and uphold international peace and security. We are not accustomed to the UN acting in this way. But this is how the UN was meant to act -- not as a talking shop or a seminar but as an agency of action for international security.

If, with the Cold War over and the old excuses gone, the UN had failed here, under what possible circumstances could it be expected to succeed? So the choice for Canadians and for others has been clear: a UN which talks and fails or a UN which acts and succeeds.

We must not underestimate the precedent being set here. This may not be the war to end all wars. But if the UN had not responded as it has, there would be no hope for an end to conflict, no hope for a UN which worked.

As this conflict proceeds, the coalition will hold together as it did before January 15. That is not simply a military requirement. It is a political requirement which will have a substantial bearing on the character not only of the conflict but of the peace which follows and the repercussions of this episode for a highly volatile region.

Just as it is important for us to maintain unity, so too it is a priority for Saddam Hussein to destroy it. That explains his despicable and wanton use of missiles against Israel, a non-combatant in this conflict, a country which has shown admirable restraint both before and after those attacks.