

*Oral Questions*

Could the Deputy Prime Minister confirm the statement by the Red Cross that the Bosnian Serbs will release the 370 peacekeepers who are being kept hostage sometime during the next few hours, although Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic said yesterday that no hostages could be released without guarantees that all air strikes would be suspended?

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we received communications mentioning that a few hostages might be released today, but at 11.13 a.m., we were unable to confirm whether that was the case.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, B.Q.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defence confirmed yesterday that Canada was negotiating with the Bosnian Serbs to allow a rotation of the 45 Canadian peacekeepers being held hostage at their observation post. Meanwhile, in Europe the Minister of Foreign Affairs was saying, with Canada's allies, that there would be no negotiations with the Serbs regarding the hostages.

That being said, who speaks for the Canadian government? Is it the Minister of Foreign Affairs or is it the Minister of National Defence, who said that conducting negotiations would be tantamount to saying the Bosnian Serbs have the right to take hostages? Who is telling the truth?

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada does not negotiate with the Bosnian Serb government.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, B.Q.):** Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Deputy Prime Minister should say so to the Minister of National Defence who said yesterday in the House, as did the Prime Minister—just read *Hansard*—that negotiations were being conducted locally to obtain the release of hostages.

In any case, the Prime Minister was delighted with the position taken by the UN Secretary General on redefining the mandate of the peacekeepers in Bosnia, and he went on to say that this had been Canada's position since last Sunday. However, need I remind members that although it has been questioned about this all week, the government has steadfastly refused to announce its intentions?

Since tomorrow there will be a meeting of NATO defence ministers in Paris, mainly to discuss the French plan, and since a NATO plane was shot down this morning, while flying over Bosnia, could the government tell Canadians now, before tomorrow's meeting, what Canada's position will be on the French proposals?

[English]

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to underscore that the claim made by the hon. member is simply

not true. In comments made to date we have stated quite clearly that we are not negotiating with the Bosnian Serbs.

If the hon. member's question is reviewed, he speaks about the issue of rotation. In the normal activities of the team on the ground there is a rotation of troops. That rotation is being discussed on an ongoing and soldier to soldier basis in Visoko. That is certainly consistent with the position we have taken as a government.

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[Translation]

## AGUSTA

**Mr. Jean H. Leroux (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. Defence and Industry officials confirmed yesterday that the government is preparing to spend \$2.6 billion on the purchase of 47 new helicopters. The main supplier of this equipment vying for the contract is no other than Agusta, the very company facing accusations of bribery in Europe.

• (1120)

My question is for the Deputy Prime Minister, who is responsible for enforcing the government's code of ethics in this House. Will the government commit to excluding Agusta from all new contracts until we get to the bottom of the circumstances surrounding the EH-101 contract, as demanded by her colleague, the Minister of Human Resources Development, in 1993?

[English]

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, no contract has been authorized by the government.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean H. Leroux (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is again for the Deputy Prime Minister, who is responsible, as I said earlier, for enforcing the government's code of ethics in this House when the Prime Minister is away.

Given that Agusta just hired the Liberal Party of Canada's former communications director, Daniel Despina, to lobby for the sale of new helicopters to the Canadian government, and given that all cabinet members know him well, how can the Deputy Prime Minister not commit to launching an investigation into the awarding of the EH-101 contract to Agusta before the government does any more business with the company, which is, as I already said, currently facing corruption charges in Europe?

[English]

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thought I made it quite clear to the member. No contract has been approved either by the Minister of National Defence or by the government.