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Canadian killed in ICCS helicopter attacked in Vietnam

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Mitchell Sharp, informed the House of Commons on April 9 of the death in South Vietnam, while on duty with the International Commission for Control and Supervision, of Captain Charles Eugene Laviolette, who had been killed when the ICCS helicopter in which he was a passenger crashed near Lao Bao with the loss of all nine persons aboard.

Mr. Sharp described as follows the circumstances surrounding the incident:

...The Canadian Government deploras this tragic and unnecessary incident which, according to preliminary investigation and reports, was the result of a hostile act directed, either deliberately or by mistake, against helicopters which were clearly marked with ICCS insignia. One helicopter was struck by a missile fired from the ground, presumably by the party in whose area of occupation the incident occurred, while it was approaching Lao Bao on an ICCS mission. This happened despite the fact that all the safety procedures and precautions designed specifically to prevent such incidents had been

carefully followed. The team had secured the Viet Cong's assurances of safe passage, as witnessed by the presence of two of their representatives on the stricken helicopter, and according to our information, the helicopters did not stray from the designated flight corridor to which these assurances of safety specifically applied. I wish to state as clearly and as forcefully as I am able, Mr. Speaker, the conviction of the Canadian Government that absolutely no circumstances should ever justify the firing upon personnel of the International Control Commission by any of the belligerents. Even if these helicopters had strayed off course, which all the evidence available to us denies, the penalty for losing one's way in the cause of peace should not be death at the hands of one of the signatories to the Paris peace agreement.

While we were under no illusions at the start of our participation in the ICCS concerning the dangers that existed for Canadian personnel in Vietnam, we have advocated and, we believed, had secured adequate safety and security measures in the field, based largely on trust in the assurances the ICCS is given by the parties involved in each particular case. However, the circumstances of this incident and the events which followed, particularly the hindrances encountered by the Commission in its efforts to locate and bring aid to ICCS personnel on the missing aircraft, are such that they jeopardize this trust even to the point of questioning the ability of the PRG representative in Saigon to speak for all of the military formations occu-



Wide World photo

The body of Captain Charles Laviolette of Quebec City is lowered from aircraft in Saigon on April 9.