

Oral Questions

National Defence. Since 1974 Canada has had approximately 200 military personnel involved in the United Nations Truce Supervisory Organization Disengagement Observer Force on the Golan Heights. We have had many other personnel in the region during the years previous to 1974, dating back to 1948. In the light of the recent action of the Israeli government with respect to the annexation of the Golan Heights, will the Minister of National Defence give a report to the House on the status of the members of the Canadian Armed Forces who presently make up the Canadian Observer Force in place now on the Golan Heights?

Hon. J. Gilles Lamontagne (Minister of National Defence): Madam Speaker, following the most unfortunate action by Israel on the Golan Heights, the status of our observer group there has not changed. As the hon. member knows, we have 190 military people there and they are responsible for communications, logistics, and technical support to our Austrian, Polish and Finnish friends who are with us in this observer force. We have daily contact with the commander. Every day we ask him what is the situation. I might tell the hon. member that his answer yesterday was that "the situation is normal, there is no imminent danger, UN forces are not at a higher state of alert, morale is good, and they expect to have a pleasant Christmas."

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PENITENTIARIES

REPORT ON MATSQUI PRISON RIOT

Mr. Benno Friesen (Surrey-White Rock-North Delta): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Solicitor General. The officials of his department have completed their study on the riot in Matsqui prison last summer. He has released it to the police chief in the area. The officials know what the study says. The prisoners can have news conferences and dump on the guards. Only the guards cannot defend themselves. Will the minister make that report available to the guards so that they can defend themselves and maintain some semblance of morale in the prison?

Hon. Bob Kaplan (Solicitor General): Madam Speaker, the guards did have an opportunity the night that I visited Matsqui to express their views and they held a press conference. So far as making the report public, for the sake of the guards, I point out to the House that the purpose of that report is not to level criticism at the guards but that the purpose of the report is to improve the security of the institution.

If I were to change the long-standing policy of the confidentiality of those reports, the Inspector General, who gathers them, would not have the benefit of confidential disclosures from the hundreds of individuals whom he interviews in connection with the preparation of those reports, and they would not be nearly as useful as they are now. If I were to make them public, reviewing, as they often do, some of the security weaknesses of the institutions, they would be a great benefit to

inmates who are considering escaping. Those are the only reasons why those reports are not made public.

I gave it to the police chief so that any suggestion of wrong doing or cover-up could be exploded. The only reason for keeping those reports confidential is a good reason, and I intend to continue that practice.

RELEASE OF REPORT TO POLICE

Mr. Benno Friesen (Surrey-White Rock-North Delta): Madam Speaker, the minister has already violated confidentiality by releasing it to the police chief. If he is concerned about the reputation of the force with the police chief and the police departments, why does he not allow the prison guards to defend themselves?

Hon. Bob Kaplan (Solicitor General): Madam Speaker, I was willing to release it to the police chief because I understood that he would be prepared to respect the confidentiality of sources of the report and that he would not disclose to the inmates any of the structural or other weaknesses in the institution. To go beyond that I think is taking risks with that institution, that I am not prepared to take.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

REPORT ON CONDITIONS IN FOREIGN SERVICE—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Walter Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. It has to do with the report of the Royal Commission on Conditions in the Foreign Service. Miss McDougall, in a very commendable way, has pointed out some real difficulties with respect to foreign service officers serving abroad with their families, and in other areas which must be of concern to the minister. In view of the fact that she has found that there is a great deal of cynicism in the foreign service and about the government's intentions to implement any of the recommendations that she might make, will the minister advise the House what are the government's intentions with respect to her recommendations?

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, the McDougall report was commissioned by the Prime Minister. He will be making a statement on it in due course. I hope to have an opportunity of reading the report during the recess. I have not yet had a chance to open the covers. In any event it will not be for me to make a statement on behalf of the government. There will be government discussion, and at the appropriate time the Prime Minister will indicate our views.

● (1500)

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Madam Speaker, when the minister is reading the report during the recess, will he pay