

One hundred and sixty-six days ago, Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. He did so without justifiable provocation. He did so brutally and totally. That was when war began. Today Kuwait remains occupied. It has been plundered; more than half its population has been forced to flee; Amnesty International has documented shocking violations of human rights. Saddam Hussein has declared Kuwait to be irrevocably a part of Iraq. A sovereign member of the United Nations is being extinguished.

In these 166 days that have passed, the world community has expressed itself with unprecedented consensus and clarity. Twelve resolutions have been passed by the United Nations Security Council, most of them unanimously, condemning Iraq's actions, demanding that Iraq withdraw from Kuwait and imposing sanctions designed to force Iraqi compliance. On November 29, 47 days ago, the UN Security Council gave Saddam Hussein a period during which diplomacy could be given a further chance, a period during which Iraq might be convinced that the world was not bluffing, but a period with an end to it, after which the resort to force would be authorized. That resolution was clear. It stated that this time was designed to "allow Iraq one final opportunity, as a pause of goodwill."

And today, UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar has returned from Iraq, disheartened, believing there is virtually no hope for a diplomatic solution to the crisis. European Foreign Ministers, acting on the Secretary-General's advice, have decided not to send a delegation to Baghdad.

During these past 47 days, diplomacy has been applied to a degree rarely seen before. Canada has been very active in that process. After Security Council Resolution 678, Iraq has every reason to know that the world is not bluffing. Iraq knows now -- if it did not know before -- of the force of opinion and the force of arms arrayed against it. But Iraq remains in Kuwait.

And so, we are at an impasse and approaching a turning point. Peace still has a chance. But where once peace might have been an expectation, it is now only a hope, and that hope grows dim, with every door Saddam Hussein slams shut.

So Canada, and the world, must face the fact that Iraq may force a conflict. There are no good wars. War is mankind's least noble invention. Everyone wants to avoid it. At this sombre moment, we owe it to Canadians to determine as best we can if the course we are embarked upon is correct, and if there are responsible realistic alternatives.

And so I want to outline to you today our assessment of what is at stake and just as importantly what is not. Let me deal briefly with what this crisis is not about.