

Oral Questions

The Prime Minister after his meeting with the President of the United States this morning said that new action in Bosnia must be authorized by a new Security Council resolution.

There is a Security Council resolution being considered by the Security Council this afternoon. It reads: "UN troops will be authorized to take necessary measures, including the use of force, to stop attacks against civilians".

I ask the government: Does Canada support this resolution?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, first of all I want to say that everybody on this side of the House and indeed all reasonable Canadians are outraged at what is going on in the former Yugoslavia and the atrocities being committed where innocent civilians and women and children are the victims.

The hon. member is correct. The discussions are under way at the Security Council. The Prime Minister discussed the subject extensively with President Clinton this morning. He made it very clear that he felt the United States should be actively engaged along with the European allies in seeking to find a solution.

We have always taken the position that UN action is required. We are concerned about unilateral action. We are concerned about adopting a resolution that is implementable because the safety and security of our troops are first and foremost.

Since the Security Council has not yet reached a conclusion on these particular discussions, it would be a bit premature for us to be making a judgment on them.

We can be sure that Canada is inputting. The Prime Minister through the President and the Secretary of State for External Affairs spent 45 minutes talking to the foreign affairs minister for Russia. We are doing everything we can on the diplomatic front.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Madam Speaker, I am sure that all these discussions are taking place, but what has not taken place is a clear articulation of the Canadian position on this important resolution. That is missing.

Members of Parliament and their constituents would like to know. When we have UN relief workers being shot at, when we have troops standing by while genocide takes place, while we have the whole situation deteriorate into a mess, we believe that Canada because of our background and our reputation has the responsibility to take a stand on these issues.

I ask the minister again: Are we going to support the resolution being debated this afternoon at the Security Council authorizing UN troops in Bosnia to take action to stop attacks against civilians and to stop the slaughter?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, I am a little confused by the hon. member's argument because he says that Canada should take a position quite independent of any position anybody else takes.

Of course, he realizes that if every country did this, no resolution would be possible. We can only find resolution by working together in discussion. As he points out, the UN now has it actively under discussion. I would be very surprised if Canada did not agree with the final resolution.

The final resolution has not been adopted. We stated our position quite emphatically. We believe it must be united action. We believe that unilateral action of the kind that was earlier proposed by the Clinton administration would not work. We believe that it is unrealistic to propose military action to which our troops could not possibly respond because of the numbers and equipment and the terrain in Yugoslavia and so on. All of those are being factored in. The discussions are under way. Canada as usual is being sought out for advice. We are looking for a consensus. We are not standing in isolation adopting our own position for the rest of the world to accept or reject.

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RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister for Science.

The other day the president of the National Research Council appeared before the parliamentary committee on industry, science and technology. He warned that if the present pattern of budget cutbacks continues at NRC