

*Special Debate*

It appears that the UN really is a toothless monster. It makes agreements, gets concurrence in those and then the antagonists decide which one they are going to adhere to. As I mentioned before, we have seen atrocities committed and even now we are seeing more battles between the ethnic groups in the area.

As far as any cease fire agreement, and we are now in an realm where a cease fire was declared some time ago, there is no cease fire because as the hon. leader of the official opposition has said, in the past four days I believe there have been 14 different violations recorded. As I understand from the briefing we were given an hour ago, these are relatively major incidents that are recorded because the sniper who shoots at an individual in Sarajevo is not considered to be a reportable incident. I am told that on average there are between 80 and 200 incidents reported daily. That adds up to a pretty hot war situation.

All this came about because of mandate deficiencies. First, we did not have agreement from all parties concerned to involve ourselves or the UN in the area. We decided to impose ourselves there and they said: "You are here but we did not agree to you being here". There is no indication that they have changed their mind on that at all. They will go along with things they agree with, but the instant that it does not suit their purpose they go back to doing what they want to do. There is without question a lack of desire to achieve a peaceful resolution.

I must say that if there were any sort of a light at the end of the tunnel, a view on the horizon, that there could be an accommodation which would last it would be a very different solution than we are facing.

We have seen that UN agreements are unenforceable. The UN makes an agreement, people come forward and sign off on them and then sometimes within hours or a few days the thing is violated and it is gone.

• (1910)

It is patently obvious that despite the embargo arms are getting through. Word has it that the Bosnians are now armed to the extent that they feel relatively capable of operating on an even footing against the Serb forces. There is a lot of question as to the capability of the various forces, but it seems without any question that there is every likelihood that there will be what is referred to as a spring offensive. I sincerely hope this is not the case, but certainly every indication is that the war or the fighting in the area is becoming worse rather than tailing off.

I think there are some unique Canadian problems which should be discussed. I will start with equipment. The government and the chief of defence staff have said—the chief of course is required to say that—that the equipment in fact is functional and is adequate. I would call it obsolescent, if not obsolete. Certainly when we were on the ground in Bosnia and in Croatia, particularly in Croatia with the M-113 armoured per-

sonnel carriers, there was no question in the minds of the people who were using them that this was not a piece of kit that they really enjoyed. They are unreliable. The tracks broke regularly and they were not sufficiently armoured to do the job they were intended to do.

The solution to this of course was to add additional armour to them. The problem with adding additional armour is that it adds to the weight. Adding to the weight means that the drive train will be in trouble, the suspension will give up and the fuel consumption will rise tremendously. That is not an adequate solution.

The radios are vitally important in that situation, with observation posts and troops deployed in various areas; to be able to talk to the guy you want to talk to when you want to talk to him. We heard time and again from people that their radios were broken down. Everyone has become a fixer of communications equipment. That is unacceptable.

The flack jackets that our personnel wear there are cumbersome and uncomfortable. We saw in Croatia a new design which was being tried out, but the ones which were issued to our troops, in their opinion, are unacceptable.

We have a very poor night vision device available. That is absolutely unacceptable again because a lot of our observation posts are involved in night observations and if they cannot see or use them properly this is not good.

I think the business of helmets has been discussed a couple of times and I understand if it were not so tragic it would be humorous. When we got the Kevlar helmets they were not blue. We decided to paint them, so we went out and bought some paint. The only problem was that the paint reacted with the Kevlar and they became soft and basically useless. The other UN forces I think who use those helmets have put canvas covers on them. Again, I do not think we did our homework.

We also have a problem, in my estimation, with our people. First of all, I want to pay tribute to the co-operation, the professionalism, the dedication and the sincere interest that our people have shown and the way they have conducted themselves. However, I think we are rotating them through the operational zone too often. We have people who have been there three times. Soon if we keep up the rate we are doing, if we renew the commitment, we will have people on their fourth tours of operation.

Many of these people are volunteers, and I understand that. However, I still think that from a man management point of view, this is not the way we should go. It is fine for the troops who are in the zone, but their families are tremendously impacted by the fact that they are away. Dad is out of the picture or, in some cases, mom. The children suffer, the family suffers and therefore it has to impact to an extent on morale.