

Government Orders

international community can feel secure from military threats and intimidation.

I want to emphasize that the government is not considering the prospect of conflict in the Persian Gulf in anything but the gravest terms. As Canadians, our abhorrence of war is informed by the sacrifices that we have made in the past in the pursuit of a better world: in two world wars and in Korea and as part of peacekeeping operations, which have given us a very sober approach to conflict. Certainly, no one must have a keener sense of this than the families and friends of the Canadian forces personnel who are currently serving in the gulf, and I am sure that the thoughts of all hon. members are with them at this time.

Iraq's brutal invasion of Kuwait once again presents Canada with a severe challenge. How we respond will be a test of our maturity as a society, and of our willingness to actively pursue the principles which will promote the type of world community we keep for ourselves and future generations. Our ultimate objective, after all, is a safer and more secure world.

What Canada and the rest of the multinational coalition are doing in the gulf supports the goals of peace and security contained in the Charter of the United Nations. We are adhering to the notion that peace must be protected if it is to be kept. The best guarantee of peace is the guarantee that unprovoked attacks will not be tolerated.

I submit that it is imperative for Canada to insist and assist in enforcing the ground rules of a new international order where the kind of outrageous behaviour we have seen by Iraq is not tolerated. This new order is within reach, but only if it is supported and strengthened by all civilized nations, by the United Nations and of course Canada.

• (1710)

Mr. Speaker, I know that my time might be up but in conclusion I would like to indicate that at this point I want to emphasize that the UN resolutions in themselves do not in any way change the mission assigned to the Canadian forces and that any change of mission that the Canadian government might assign to the Canadian forces in the future would indeed be commensurate with our capabilities. Should that occur I wish to reiterate that

it would be on the basis of a deliberate decision made by the Canadian government.

For now, Canada, along with the other members of the UN Security Council and like-minded nations around the world, endeavour to ensure that future measures are implemented under UN auspices. This has been our preferences from the very beginning of the crisis. We are also mindful of the need to provide the multinational force with additional options so that it may better implement the aims of the UN resolutions.

Of course, we hope and will continue to do everything to try to ensure that war does not break out. But if wiser counsel does not prevail, rest assured that our men and women in uniform are equal to any of the tasks that may be demanded of them. Most important, they are not only serving the interests of security in the Middle East, but also of peace and stability in the world at large.

Mr. Fred J. Mifflin (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. minister for her presentation. I think she really brought us up to date with some of the facts, figures and numbers of the operation in the Persian Gulf. I was particularly pleased to hear her compliment the men and women of the Canadian forces who are over there, who are prepared to put their lives on the line to protect our way of life, peace, liberty and freedom.

I have a question, and it is important to me. Even the three, four speakers that we have had, and with the follow-on speakers that we are likely to have for the rest of this debate, I think it is important that we focus on any differences that we may have. I think it is very important that those men and women, of whom I just spoke, understand that if there are differences in this House, that the differences are substantive, that they are not for partisan reasons and that legitimate concerns are shown where there are differences. I think it is very important in an issue of this kind that that principle pertain.

To that end, I have great difficulty in understanding, if indeed the deadline of January 15 is in this particular resolution that we are asking for support, why we are asking for a deadline of any kind at this particular point in time. My understanding is that the sequence of events should be, as far as the United Nations is concerned, that identification of aggression has taken place. That certainly has taken place. There is call for compliance, non-military sanctions and blockades, which is where we