

Government Orders

The point is this: When you have an array of 675,000 ground troops in the Persian Gulf area, 13,000 combat vehicles, 4,500 tanks, 150 warships, and 1,600 combat aircraft from close to 30 nations, from one end of the gulf to the other, you have a different proposition when you go to war than you have right now in peacetime. We are exercising Canadian command and Canadian control over a designated force of three ships, 1,860 men and women, and 24 aircraft operating in a designated sector and carrying out predictable, designated tasks. Once you go to war with this great array of forces—and if you consider two sides you are looking at well over one million people, to say nothing of the highly technical force—the co-ordination effort becomes extraordinarily difficult. But there is one principle involved: there has to be somebody in charge. I am told—and I do not mean to be facetious—it is not conceivable at this point in time that a Canadian commander will be in charge of the gulf operation if we go to war with Iraq, not because we do not have the people who have the capability, intelligence or experience, but because it simply ain't going to work that way.

• (1750)

I have a question to which I want an answer from the Minister of National Defence. I have no doubt our troops will be commanded by Canadians. We have great leadership ability, and that is the way it has to be and that is the way it always has been. But I remind hon. members of Dieppe and other areas where Canadian troops commanded by Canadians were controlled by other forces and were led into disaster. That is my concern.

This House deserves to know the mechanics of what is involved in the operation of the Canadian forces however this vote goes when we take it. I want to know as a member of the House of Commons, as a Canadian, as a defence critic or in any capacity in which I stand here, the answers to those questions. Those are the questions to which the men and women in the Persian Gulf and Canadians want to know the answer. Until we get the answer to that question, I will not be satisfied. If the member needs any more clarification than that, I will get up and speak again.

On the second point, I think it is a fair question, but again I presume it is not a planted question because I do not believe the member opposite really wants to be overly partisan about it. But, Mr. Speaker, have a look at the United Nations resolutions. I have them all here. I will not go through them. I do not have time to do that. But this has been a model United Nations operation. We started off the sequence properly. We went through the resolutions identifying aggression, calling for compliance with non-military sanctions and compliance with military sanctions. No matter how we read the United Nations charter or no matter how we interpret it, does it say, that when all these measures fail will we then resort to the use of force?

There is something somewhere in the United Nations charter that I remember reading as a youngster which says that the purpose of the United Nations was to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, and here we are now taking that charter and tipping it upside down.

The hon. member referred to 35 countries that agreed with those sanctions. There is no evidence that those 35 countries will follow the United States into action. I have no evidence. I have asked the question. The Leader of the Opposition asked that question today. How many members of the force now in the Persian Gulf will follow the United States into this action? Will Russia be there? Will France be there? Will Japan be there? What happens if Israel is attacked? Egypt has already said that it may not follow. I worry about that.

I see my time is up, Mr. Speaker. I do not accept the premise the hon. member gives me that all those who are now involved in the peacetime operation will follow the United States on a path to war like we seem to be doing right now.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

AUTHORIZATION TO BROADCAST PROCEEDINGS OF STANDING COMMITTEE

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There have been discussions and I believe Your Honour will find consent for the following motion: