

prepared statement claiming that the helicopters were off course and that the incident was an accident. The ICCS Military Committee quite rightly refused to meet such an outrageous demand.

From the reports which we have received, however, it is understood that before they were released, the surviving passengers and crew of the helicopter had been required to sign statements prepared by the PRG that they were off course, and that it was implied that if they refused they might not be returned to ICCS authorities. I understand that the survivors did sign the statements; I am sure that Honourable Members will make no mistake about the value of such statements signed under these circumstances.

In the meantime, the Commission is proceeding on an investigation of this tragic incident. The PRG have agreed that the Military Committee will be escorted to the crash area where they will be permitted to conduct their own on-site enquiry.

Mr. Speaker, that is the extent of the information which is available to us now. I am bound to say that this incident is only the most tragic of a number of cases in which ICCS aircraft, all of which are clearly and prominently marked, have been fired upon. As Honourable Members will recall, the first such incidents occurred in late February. Since the incident of which I have just given an account, I have received a report that another ICCS helicopter has been fired upon within the past 24 hours. Two Canadians were among its passengers. On April 9, in the southernmost of the ICC's seven regions, the ICCS helicopter was accompanying a helicopter of the Joint Military Commission near a team-site called Vi Thanh. The JMC helicopter was flying at an altitude of 500 feet, and the ICCS helicopter was following it at an altitude of 300 feet. Both were fired upon from the ground, and the JMC helicopter is reported to have been hit by a number of rounds. As a result, all ICCS helicopters in the region have been grounded pending consideration of the matter by the ICCS at its headquarters in Saigon.

I wish to assure all Canadians, and especially the families and friends of Canadians serving in Viet-Nam, that the Government is taking these incidents very seriously indeed. It is doing everything within its power to ensure that they do not recur. We are in touch with our representatives in Saigon to ensure that all possible measures are taken to that end. When we are satisfied that we have obtained all the relevant information, and after consultation with our partners in the ICCS, particularly those whose nationals have lost their lives, we will take appropriate action to hold accountable those responsible.

Such serious incidents will of course have a bearing upon the Government's decision concerning Canada's continued participation in the ICCS. Honourable Members will recall that in my statement to the House late last month, I said that the general situation in Viet-Nam was highly unsatisfactory, and that Canada would terminate its participation at the end of June if the situation did not improve substantially. Since then, the general situation has not improved; in fact it has deteriorated. If it does not improve very substantially, it will be clear that by continuing to serve in the ICCS, we would be staying on to observe, not a peace, not a cease-fire but a continuing war. We would be doing so, as this recent deplorable incident makes clear, at totally unjustified human risk. This we will not do. This House may be sure, and all Canadians may be sure, that we will not continue to risk Canadian lives in fulfilment of a task which is not worth doing. The Parties are responsible for making the task worthwhile, by making it a task in support of peace in Viet-Nam. We will expect them to fulfil that responsibility.