
News Release

September 26, 1995

No. 176

CANADA TABLES ITS REPORT ON A RAPID REACTION CAPABILITY FOR THE UN

Foreign Affairs Minister André Ouellet tabled this afternoon, before the 50th General Assembly of the United Nations in New York, the Canadian government's report, *Towards a Rapid Reaction Capability for the United Nations*. The report was first tabled this morning in the House of Commons in Ottawa by National Defence Minister David Collenette.

The concept of vanguard groups is the cornerstone of the report, which contains 26 recommendations. This approach would allow the UN to assemble from Member States a multi-functional group of up to 5000 military and civilian personnel and rapidly deploy it under the control of an operational-level headquarters upon authorization by the Security Council. The headquarters would provide the UN with the much-needed ability to plan and to make the advance preparations which are crucial if the UN is to be able to respond quickly in times of crisis.

The Canadian study, carried out jointly by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the Department of National Defence, was announced last year by Mr. Ouellet before the 49th UN General Assembly.

"Our objective was to consider practical and achievable ideas and proposals which would give the UN the capability to react more rapidly to crisis and thus enhance its overall effectiveness and credibility," said Mr. Ouellet.

With this in mind, the research was aimed primarily at improving the quality of military advice at the UN, addressing deficiencies at the operational level of the organization, adapting the system of stand-by forces, continuing to study the possibility of instituting a permanent emergency group, and modifying the UN's financial procedures.

"This report illustrates the Government's commitment to ensuring a vigorous and effective United Nations at a time of increased demand for peacekeeping," said Mr. Collenette.

Mr. Ouellet explained: "We acknowledge that fundamental reform is not an easy task, especially in the midst of financial crisis. But the capability to respond rapidly in certain situations is not only appropriate, but highly cost-effective in comparison to the price - in both human and monetary terms - of not acting quickly."

Tomorrow morning in New York, Mr. Ouellet will co-chair with his counterpart from the Netherlands a meeting of foreign ministers from 13 countries to discuss a rapid reaction capability for the UN.

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Media Relations Office
Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade
(613) 995-1874

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