

STATEMENTS
AND
SPEECHES



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Notes for an address
in the House of Commons by
the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney,
Prime Minister of Canada,
on the situation in the Persian Gulf

Ottawa, Ontario
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On August 2, Saddam Hussein launched a war against Kuwait. His invasion and subsequent annexation of Kuwait are grievous violations of the most basic principles of international law and of human decency. We are here, today, to reaffirm Canada's support for the United Nations' efforts to bring those violations to an end.

On October 23, the House approved sending members, vessels and aircraft of the Canadian Forces to participate in the multinational military effort in the Persian Gulf. On November 29, the House passed a further motion supporting "the United Nations in its efforts to ensure compliance with U.N. Security Council resolution 660 and subsequent resolutions", notably Resolution 678 co-sponsored by Canada and passed the same day at the United Nations. Resolution 678 gives Saddam Hussein "one final opportunity" to comply with the will of the world community, as expressed in successive U.N. resolutions.

The 47 day "pause for peace" provided for in Resolution 678 ends tonight. As I speak, efforts continue at the UN on a proposal that contains elements that are similar to ideas advanced in writing by Canada to the U.N. Secretary General last week.

Diplomacy has been and is still being given every chance. Following U.S. Secretary Baker's unsuccessful meeting with Iraqi Foreign Minister Aziz last week in Geneva, the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Perez de Cuellar, made the second of two visits to the Middle East on this issue. His appeal to Saddam Hussein to leave Kuwait was callously rebuffed once again.

Mr. Perez de Cuellar told journalists yesterday that he saw "no reason to have any real hope". He has reported that Saddam Hussein "never mentioned...that he was prepared to withdraw from Kuwait." No one could have failed to notice Saddam Hussein's contempt for international opinion, international law and common decency.

United Nations Resolution 678 authorizes member states to use all necessary means to uphold and implement the relevant U.N. resolutions on this crisis and to restore international peace and security in the area. Resolution 678 -- approved by this House on November 29 -- also requests all member states including Canada to provide "appropriate support" for actions taken in pursuance of this goal.

The choice of peace or war remains Saddam Hussein's, as it has for the past five-and-a-half months, but time is running out on him. Regardless of how they cast their votes last November 29, Members on all sides of the House hoped hostilities would not be necessary. But it was clear to us all then that we might have to impose the ultimate sanction on Saddam Hussein -- military force -- if he did not withdraw his forces from Kuwait.

The U.N. made the threat of the use of force to persuade Saddam Hussein of the seriousness of its determination to see him out of Kuwait. It was not an empty gesture. The question before Canadians now is a simple one: if Saddam Hussein does not withdraw peacefully from Kuwait, and the use of force is required, where will Canada stand? On this simple question of right and wrong, will we continue to support the international coalition or will we stand aside and hope that others will uphold the

rule of law? There are differences of opinion on this very important question in this House. I respect the views of all members as they consider it.

The Government of Canada, and I as Prime Minister, have reflected carefully on this crisis. Our entire policy has been designed to achieve a peaceful solution to it. If, however, Saddam Hussein continues to reject the will of the United Nations, Canada will join with the United Nations in expelling him from Kuwait by force.

Kuwait may seem a remote place geographically, and culturally, but so did Manchuria in 1931, Abyssinia in 1935 and Czechoslovakia in 1938. While, in the '30s, these were little known places, in the '90s they figure in our history books as the stepping stones to World War II. In each case what has been described by a leading historian as "a profound pacifism, an almost doctrinaire insistence on peace regardless of the circumstances," led the League of Nations to turn a blind eye to aggression -- and the world paid a price in millions of avoidable deaths in World War II.

What is happening in Kuwait has direct and substantial effects on Canada's interests. As a country with a comparatively small population, with two superpowers as neighbours, and with our own limited military capacity, Canada's most basic interest lies in the preservation of international law and order.

The United Nations and its Charter are essential to the rule of law and to the respect of the integrity of small countries by larger neighbours. The architects of the United Nations were determined "to make certain", as Lester Pearson wrote in 1945, "that never again should an aggressor be permitted to strike down one nation after another before the peace-loving nations of the world organize and take concerted action against it."

The fundamental purpose of the United Nations, as proclaimed in Article 1 of its Charter, is "to maintain international peace and security" by taking "effective, collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace..." But with the exception of Korea, the U.N. has been prevented by the Cold War from either suppressing acts of aggression or preventing them, as the Suez crisis, Vietnam, Afghanistan and the Arab-Israeli wars, among dozens of other conflicts, make clear. With the extraordinary unanimity that has accompanied the relaxation of East-West tensions, the authority vested in the U.N. by its architects -- including Prime Ministers King, St. Laurent and Pearson -- can be exercised by our generation to preserve international law and order.

Saddam Hussein's challenge raises the stakes for the U.N. Because, while this crisis provides an opportunity for the U.N. to play the role Canada has always wanted it to play, regrettably it also provides an occasion for the U.N. to fail to do so. And if the U.N. were to fail to do so, a large part of the principles and objectives and efforts of 45 years of Canadian diplomacy would have been for nothing.

Our generation, having ignored the lessons of history, could be condemned to re-live some of history's darkest chapters. Saddam Hussein would become an example for other potential bullies, making the world an even more dangerous place than it is already. Nations would be left alone to defend themselves against aggression and a new arms race would be launched. The U.N. -- designed to prevent a return to the rule of the jungle -- could go the way of the League of Nations. And this at a time when international problems -- from the environment to human rights to debt to development to drugs to the protection of children -- can only be resolved collectively, and when a credible, effective U.N. has never been more necessary.

These are not abstract issues to Canada. They are not someone else's business. They are direct, vital Canadian interests, and they are engaged fully in this question. The U.N. cannot be allowed to fail at this critical moment in history. Some argue that Canada should hold itself back now to play a peacekeeping role later.

Were Saddam Hussein to succeed in his annexation of Kuwait, he would be in a position to threaten the entire Middle East. With the time and wealth he would gain, he could add further weapons of mass destruction to his arsenal, including, in all probability, nuclear weapons. What position would this put his neighbours in? After Iran and Kuwait, who would be his next target? Saudi Arabia? Jordan? Would we hold ourselves back again, waiting for the latest atrocities to end so that Canada might then be invited in as part of a peacekeeping force?

Saddam Hussein has threatened to attack Israel with weapons of mass destruction. In the face of extraordinary provocation from Iraq, as evidenced by Foreign Minister Aziz's deplorably aggressive threat last week in Geneva, Israel has demonstrated remarkable restraint. Should Saddam Hussein move against Israel, would we still hold ourselves back in the hope that we would be called in later to help keep what's left of the peace in what's left of the Middle East? This course is a prescription for neither wisdom nor responsibility.

It is also argued that a peacekeeping role would be more in keeping with Canada's traditions. But there is no reason to believe that a peace-making role now disqualifies Canada for a peace-keeping role later. Participation in the Korean War did not prevent then External Affairs Minister Pearson from helping to create the U.N.'s peace-keeping function. Membership in NATO and NORAD has not prevented us from participating in every U.N. peace-keeping operation but one since the beginning of the international organization. And supporting right over wrong in the Persian Gulf does not preclude a peace-keeping role for Canada there following hostilities.

Like all Canadians, we are justifiably proud of Canada's peace-keeping tradition. But peacekeeping is only one part of Canada's traditions. Standing firm for what we believe in and fighting if necessary is also a Canadian tradition, one that we remember most solemnly every November 11. More than 1,700,000 Canadians participated in World War I and II and Korea. One-hundred-thousand graves in Europe

and Asia bear silent but eloquent testimony to the courage and will of Canadians to stand for what we believe is right.

A terrible wrong is being committed by Saddam Hussein and it is the moral duty of the international community to stop him. His motives in attacking Kuwait were self-aggrandizement and greed. To confuse international opinion, he has attempted to link the Persian Gulf crisis with the Palestinian issue. No one believes he invaded Kuwait to help the Palestinians. Everyone can see he is trying to rationalize his invasion of Kuwait, after the fact, and to undermine the multinational coalition facing him. His attempt to portray the occupation of Kuwait -- and the atrocities and murders he perpetrated on other Arabs -- as somehow advancing legitimate Palestinian interests and concerns is both beyond understanding and beneath contempt.

Since we last debated this crisis in November, we have received the Amnesty International report detailing the extent of murders, rapes and brutalization in Kuwait. Torture and executions of non-combatants, including young children, have been wide-spread. Thousands of people have been subjected arbitrarily to arrest and detention. And hundreds of thousands of people have been forcibly evicted from Kuwait.

A systematic effort is being ruthlessly carried out to erase the identity of a nation. Notwithstanding these atrocities, some still make the argument that economic sanctions should be given more time to work. However, the most fundamental question we must ask ourselves is will sanctions alone work? The sanctions and the naval and air blockades have succeeded in stopping a great deal of Iraq's foreign trade. They are unquestionably having an impact on economic conditions and living standards within Iraq. And Iraqi oil production is down substantially. At the same time, there is clearly leakage of foodstuffs and components through the embargo.

How much time would it take for sanctions to work? Six months? -- 16 months? -- 60 months? No one knows. The essential point is that Saddam Hussein has demonstrated limitless tolerance for the suffering of his own people. This is a man who put his nation through eight pointless years of a war that took almost a million lives. So pointless, in fact, that in August he gave back almost everything he had taken from Iran in order to purchase Iranian neutrality in this conflict.

While industrial production is down substantially because of shortages of imported goods, Saddam Hussein will ensure that the Iraqi armed forces are guaranteed the top priority for key commodities. He will not hesitate to pass on any amount of suffering and deprivation to his countrymen. Their well-being and security is clearly the furthest thing from his mind. And there is no evidence that sanctions have caused a groundswell of public discontent.

In fact, there is no reason to believe that the sanctions are having the desired effect -- to persuade Saddam Hussein to remove his forces from Kuwait. And, there is every reason to believe, based on his own statements and behaviour, that he is

determined to stay. He shows every sign of trying to out-wait the international community in the hope that events sooner or later will split the United Nations coalition. And given the volatility of world affairs, especially in the Middle East, his gamble might very well work.

In weighing the arguments in favour of using force, it must be conceded that the risks and costs of a war are literally incalculable but that they would certainly be substantial in lives and resources. How risky and how costly would depend on a number of factors. How long would war last? How strongly would the Iraqi forces and the Iraqi people resist? Could war be limited to the Iraq-Kuwait theatre or would it spread? How much damage would the environment sustain? These are fundamentally important questions and unfortunately there are no firm answers to them at this time.

But while we properly concern ourselves with these questions, we must also guard against the tendency to regard waiting as cost-free. The fact is that there would also be incalculable risks and costs to waiting. The destruction of Kuwait continues. An entire nation is being systematically dismantled and destroyed before our very eyes and human rights abuses continue at a pace and on a scale with few precedents in modern times.

Furthermore, the international economy is being damaged, and the poorest people in the Third World are most affected. The funds that are paying for a massive military presence in the Gulf are not available to the fledgling democracies of Eastern Europe, with potentially critical consequences for their futures. And all the while we wait for sanctions to work, the Iraqi defences become increasingly formidable. If it requires hostilities to get Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait, the costs in terms of casualties among the coalition partners, including Canada, probably increase with every day and week that pass.

So while a war is certain to be very costly, waiting to see if sanctions will work is far from cost-free. And, if sanctions failed, there is no guarantee that the coalition would still be united and able to fight even 16 months down the road, let alone 60. Were Saddam Hussein to succeed, the costs to Canadian interests -- the discrediting of the U.N., the distortion of international order, the trampling of human rights and the impact on the world economy -- would be unacceptable. For all these reasons, the government believes that Canada should continue to support the U.N. in taking all possible measures to cause Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait.

Some allege that the government is simply following the lead of the U.S. Administration on this issue. This is perhaps the most tired and threadbare accusation of all. Because, as Prime Minister Pearson wrote derisively in his memoirs, "a sure way to get applause and support at home is to exploit [Canadians'] anxieties and exaggerate [their] suspicions over U.S. power and policies."

It should not be surprising or offensive that the views of free nations often coincide. In fact, in this case the views of all of the leading western nations, -- led by

governments of very different political stripes -- including the United Kingdom, Italy, Australia, France, the United States and Canada are in harmony. And why not? We all share the values of liberty and democracy and equality before the law. Our institutions all draw their validity from the free expression of the wills of our peoples. And in foreign affairs, we all stand for the respect of international law.

And it is not surprising that in light of the stakes on this issue these democracies all back the U.N. strongly. Canada worked hard to persuade the United States to work within the United Nations and to forego unilateral action. The international coalition knows it must now be prepared to stand up for what is right.

Prime Minister Bob Hawke of Australia, the leader of the Labour Party in his country, in weighing the same considerations we are weighing, told his Parliament on December 4 that "if conflict occurs of a kind which is contemplated and authorized by the [U.N.] resolution, [Australian] ships will be available to participate in action with the allied fleet..." François Mitterand, President of France and leader of his country's Socialist Party, has made clear his country's position when he said that "...France considers a complete withdrawal from Kuwait to be an inviolable principle. Moreover, (France) holds that the January 15th deadline cannot be postponed or extended for any reason whatsoever... If the conditions that have been set are not fulfilled, then France will be doing its duty." In the United Kingdom, Prime Minister Major has been equally clear and consistent on this point.

And Neil Kinnock, the Leader of the Opposition in the U.K., said last week that the Labour Party "will not, in the interests of distancing ourselves from the government, distance ourselves from our forces or from the United Nations." And we know now that both chambers of the U.S. Congress as well have voted to support the U.S. Administration in the implementation of U.N. Resolution 678 -- to get Saddam Hussein's forces out of Kuwait.

Canada's policy from the beginning has been a two track policy -- working for peace but preparing for hostilities, if diplomacy failed. In fact, the record will show that from the day Iraq invaded Kuwait, we have carried on extensive diplomacy designed to find a peaceful solution to this crisis. We have consulted widely in the region, and elsewhere, promoted the importance of the U.N. as the instrument of the world's response, urged a prompt withdrawal by Iraq and counselled prudence on our allies. A full outline of all of our principal efforts since last August will be set out by Mr. Clark, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, when he speaks in the debate later today.

I am satisfied that we have done everything possible to promote a peaceful outcome to this crisis. No one wants a war, least of all those to whom it falls to fight. I am sure that I speak for every member of this House and for all Canadians in expressing my admiration for the dedication and professionalism of the Canadian servicemen and women in the Persian Gulf. And I am sure, whatever our policy views, we in this House will be unanimous in supporting these outstanding and courageous men and women. They are there in the defence of the values and interests of all Canadians

and they deserve the country's gratitude and support. Both they and their families have our prayers for a safe return.

If war comes, Canadians will be at risk. Saddam Hussein has openly and blatantly threatened to use weapons of mass destruction in the region and to sponsor terrorist activity abroad as well. We have, therefore, advised Canadians that they should defer travel to the region and, if they are already there, to consider leaving now.

CSIS and the RCMP have increased their levels of alert. On this point, I want to reassure Iraqi-Canadians that they will not be subject in any way to illegal surveillance or unwarranted detention, as was the case in regard to other citizens during World War II. That lesson fortunately has been learned.

The House has been recalled today, in these serious circumstances, to permit members to express themselves on the Gulf crisis in the full knowledge of the facts and of the government's position on them. We are asking that the opposition join in re-affirming Canadian support of the U.N. in securing the withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait. This procedure is consistent with our tradition in the past.

In 1939, the Leader of the Opposition, stated in this House for example that "We are going through a very grave crisis," ... he said, "It is no exaggeration to say that this is a war for the preservation of human liberty." "So far as my party is concerned... there will not be... anything in the way of political manoeuvring or captious criticism."

And, in June 1950, the Honourable Stanley Knowles, speaking on behalf of his party on the Korean crisis, pledged his party's "complete support of the principle of collective security, and [their] readiness to carry [their] support of that principle into all it may involve." Mr. Knowles went on to say that "the government has the concurrence of all the groups in this house in its readiness to support the action taken by the United Nations. "That is clearly our obligation, and that way alone lies hope. If we can deal with this present crisis on that basis and demonstrate the effectiveness of collective action for peace we may yet achieve much more in that direction than at times we have dared to hope."

As it was in 1950, so it still is in 1991. The Government is acutely conscious of the gravity of the situation. Canada is a peaceful country. Canada Day is an occasion for family gatherings and friendship not for bombast and military parades. Canada is a country that stands for decency and peace but we are also a country that stands for principles -- respect for the law, freedom and human dignity.

The fundamental truth in this debate is that if we want peace we must defend these principles which are enshrined in the U.N. Charter. We must be prepared to stand up for what's right. To do otherwise is to signal to Saddam Hussein and to other potential aggressors that the U.N. is incapable of responding effectively to aggression. No moral superiority accrues to those who stand on the sidelines and let

others defend their principles. Canada is a peaceful country -- but Canada is not a neutral country, nor a country that expects a free ride.

Most members of this House, including me, are too young to have had personal involvement in war. We know, however, the devastation that war has brought to too many nations around the world and the sorrow it has brought, in the past, to too many families in our own country. As a result, the avoidance of war has been the principal thrust of Canadian foreign policy.

Over the decades, Canada has made contributions to the cause of peace that have been substantial and effective. But we have always known that peace comes to those who are willing to defend it. Indeed, it is because our parents and theirs courageously resisted aggression in places, far away, that we, today, are members of this democratic Parliament in a free and independent country.

I believe we honour that heritage and respect noble Canadian traditions of valour today by standing firm in support of the United Nations and in helping to suppress aggression against an innocent member state.