

Statement

Secretary of
State for
External Affairs



Déclaration

Secrétaire
d'État aux
Affaires
extérieures

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

NOTES FOR A STATEMENT

BY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE JOE CLARK,

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

BEFORE THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**OTTAWA, Ontario
January 21, 1991**

I welcome the opportunity to update the Committee today on the situation in the Gulf. I do not intend this to be a military briefing. That information is being made available by the Canadian Armed Forces on a daily basis.

I would simply enter a note of caution in terms of the military situation. These are early days. This conflict will be neither easy nor quick. The world learned that when Saddam Hussein launched his missiles on Israel. The most difficult phases of conflict may lie ahead. The most important thing to maintain is unity of purpose and unity of will.

The purpose of our participation in the conflict in the Gulf remains constant. It will not change. That purpose is to implement the provisions of 12 UN Security Council resolutions, that is, to get Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait. Our purpose is no less and no more than that. We are now doing by force what diplomacy and sanctions were unable to do. Our methods have changed. Our purpose has not. That purpose is firm and we will not yield.

And the principle behind that purpose is to give the United Nations, for the first time in decades, a chance to do what the Cold War did not allow: to preserve and uphold international peace and security. We are not accustomed to the UN acting in this way. But this is how the UN was meant to act -- not as a talking shop or a seminar but as an agency of action for international security.

If, with the Cold War over and the old excuses gone, the UN had failed here, under what possible circumstances could it be expected to succeed? So the choice for Canadians and for others has been clear: a UN which talks and fails or a UN which acts and succeeds.

We must not underestimate the precedent being set here. This may not be the war to end all wars. But if the UN had not responded as it has, there would be no hope for an end to conflict, no hope for a UN which worked.

As this conflict proceeds, the coalition will hold together as it did before January 15. That is not simply a military requirement. It is a political requirement which will have a substantial bearing on the character not only of the conflict but of the peace which follows and the repercussions of this episode for a highly volatile region.

Just as it is important for us to maintain unity, so too it is a priority for Saddam Hussein to destroy it. That explains his despicable and wanton use of missiles against Israel, a non-combatant in this conflict, a country which has shown admirable restraint both before and after those attacks.

That desperate act did not succeed. Israel remains a non-combattant. And our other partners in the region remain in the coalition.

I have spoken in recent days to the Foreign Ministers of Turkey, Israel, Egypt and Jordan. The purpose of those conversations was to consolidate the coalition and to reassure them of our understanding of the courageous steps they are taking:

- I told the Israeli Foreign Minister of our support for that country's right of self-defence and of our great appreciation of their responsible restraint in the face of great provocation;
- I sought the views of the Foreign Minister of Egypt and expressed our admiration of their determination to maintain the coalition and to not allow a second Iraqi aggression to undo our response to the first;
- I discussed with Turkey's Foreign Minister that country's participation in the coalition, a co-operation made all the more brave by the difficult circumstances arising from their location next to Iraq and their political situation;
- And, in conversation with my Jordanian colleague, I reiterated our offer of humanitarian assistance to that troubled country and put forward our good offices to maintain the lines of communication between Jordan and its Arab neighbours. He thanked me for the concrete assistance Canada had delivered thus far.

I also spoke last Thursday to the United Nations Secretary-General indicating to him, on behalf of the Prime Minister, our appreciation of his great efforts and our willingness to contribute to the settlement of this conflict when Saddam Hussein agrees to withdraw from Kuwait. That includes any expertise or assistance we might offer to establish a peacekeeping force in the region. I said to the Secretary-General that Canada was with the United Nations before this conflict, that we are with it now, and that we will be with the UN to build a new peace after Saddam withdraws from Kuwait to build a new peace.

We hear in some quarters a call for a pause in the conflict. It is our firm belief that this would be counterproductive and unwise. By his actions, Saddam Hussein continues to show an utter contempt for the United Nations. Military power remains in his hands to threaten Israel and others with terror. A pause now -- with those weapons in place -- would not be a risk worth accepting. A pause now would be read as a

reward for Iraq's attacks on Israel or a reward of his threat to commit war crimes by moving POWs (prisoners-of-war) to strategic targets as human shields.

Saddam Hussein knows what the world wants. He does not need a pause for contemplation. He had his pause. The activity currently directed against his military machine should be sufficient to concentrate his mind. The only pause he will get is the pause that will come when he demonstrates unequivocally that he is withdrawing totally from Kuwait.

But as we must act now with determination and unity, we must also think of the peace which will follow. This region, perhaps more than any other, has a history of wars whose end merely sowed the seeds of the next conflict. This cannot be that kind of war. That too is a reason to maintain the solidarity of the coalition. For if that coalition breaks down, the animosity and tensions which will result could poison the peace we seek to build.

Prior to January 15, the Prime Minister wrote to the United Nations Secretary-General outlining what we believed to be the elements of a package which could prevent conflict. I tabled that letter in the House on January 16. That package was very similar to the contents of the last-minute plea for peace made by Mr. Perez de Cuellar prior to midnight on January 15.

In our view, after Saddam Hussein demonstrates that he is withdrawing from Kuwait -- and only then -- aspects of that package may remain relevant:

- an international guarantee of all borders in the Gulf area from attack;
- the initiation of a process to settle Iraq's differences with Kuwait, bilaterally or by mutually agreed reference to an appropriate international forum;
- the creation of a peacekeeping force as part of a broader security system for the region; and
- a follow-on process to address other issues in the Middle East.

I state here today, as I have to the Secretary-General, that Canada stands ready to work towards a settlement when Saddam Hussein abides by the wishes of the United Nations and gets out of Kuwait.

I believe it is going to be crucial that we devote as much energy to the construction of peace after this conflict as we must now devote to the conduct of that conflict. This is a

region where weapons of mass destruction exist and must be controlled. This is a region which has been a bonanza for arms merchants. This is a region of uneven and unstable development politically and economically, a fertile feeding ground for extremism and terror. This is a region which has seen four wars between Israel and its Arab neighbours.

This is a region where diplomacy has failed. We must act with determination to see that diplomacy works in the future. If we concentrate only on the battle, and neglect that which will certainly follow, our victory here -- no matter how easy or hard -- will be hollow. Just as this conflict is a litmus test for a United Nations system which works, so too building the peace which follows will be a test of the UN and all its members. I can assure you today that both tasks will be pursued with vigour and determination by Canada.

These are trying times, tormenting times for the families and friends of those who now risk their lives in the pursuit of a principle Canadians have always upheld. We cannot promise that risk will diminish soon. But we can promise them our support and our efforts to end this conflict on terms which do honour to our purposes.