

News Release

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STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ON CANADIAN FORCES IN BOSNIA

Foreign Affairs Minister André Ouellet today made the following statement in the House of Commons:

"The situation in Bosnia has changed substantially in recent weeks. As a consequence, the UN has now determined that it no longer requires the numbers of troops once authorized for UNPROFOR. The UN has therefore asked some troop-contributing nations to reduce their forces, and has asked others to withdraw. The total force reductions and relocations will amount to about 9000 troops, with UNPROFOR being reduced from 21 000 to about 15 000 troops and the rapid reaction force being reduced by about 3000 personnel.

"Some Canadian forces are among those which the UN has determined are no longer necessary in Bosnia. Details will be announced later today by the Secretary-General of the UN. Therefore the Canadian battalion in Bosnia will not be replaced at the end of its current six-month tour of duty in November. Nevertheless, Canada will continue to have a presence in the area, including Canadian military observers and Canadians in UN Force Headquarters in Zagreb and Sarajevo. In addition, Canadian forces currently serving in NATO operations in the Adriatic and monitoring the no-fly zone over Bosnia are not affected by this reduction.

"If current efforts to reach a peace agreement are successful, we will enter a new phase for the region. Canada will contribute to reconstruction efforts in the former Yugoslavia. Once a settlement has been reached, Canada will be there if necessary in the new force, with our allies, to help implement the peace under the authority of the United Nations and as part of Canada's continuing commitment to Europe.

"Canada has been in the former Yugoslavia for three and a half years, since the beginning of peacekeeping in the region.



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Canadians have served with distinction in land, sea and air operations. I want to pay tribute to the courage and integrity of the thousands of Canadian forces personnel who have served with honour under the Canadian and UN flags. I pay special homage to those who have paid the supreme sacrifice in the service of peace. I express appreciation to those Canadians who will continue to participate in the UN's efforts to forge a lasting peace in the area."

Canada presently has just over 1300 troops in the former Yugoslavia. They are mainly in Bosnia, with the exception of a logistics unit and headquarters personnel operating out of Croatia.

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