

Statement

Secretary of
State for
External Affairs



Déclaration

Secrétaire d'État
aux Affaires
extérieures

92/60

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**NOTES FOR A STATEMENT BY
THE HONOURABLE MARY COLLINS,
ASSOCIATE MINISTER OF DEFENCE, ON BEHALF OF
THE HONOURABLE BARBARA McDOUGALL,
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,
IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS,
ON CANADA'S PARTICIPATION IN
THE UN PEACEKEEPING MISSION IN CYPRUS**

OTTAWA, Ontario
December 11, 1992

Mr. Speaker, I rise today, on behalf of the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Barbara McDougall, who was unable to fly to Ottawa this morning because of the snowstorm, to announce the government's decision about Canada's participation in the United Nations' peacekeeping operation in Cyprus.

After extensive consultation with the United Nations, Greece and Turkey, as well as Greek and Turkish Cypriots, the government has informed the Secretary-General of the United Nations that Canada will withdraw its troops from Cyprus beginning in June of 1993, the withdrawal to be completed by September.

For the past 28 years -- in fact from the very beginning of the UN peacekeeping operation in Cyprus -- thousands of Canadian men and women have displayed extraordinary competence, fairness and calm under pressure in the cause of peace. Their presence in Cyprus has been a powerful symbol of Canada's commitment to peace and security in the world. It has been a source of honour and pride, not only for those serving there, but for all Canadians.

I am sure I speak for all members of this House and for all Canadians when I say to these Canadian men and women, as well as to their families, that Canada owes them a large debt of gratitude for their dedication, their professionalism, and to those who died in the service of peace, their sacrifice.

Beyond our contribution of troops and equipment, Canada has spared no effort to help the Secretary-General find a peaceful solution to the dispute. Mrs. McDougall visited Cyprus, Greece and Turkey in May of this year to press all parties concerned to work with the Secretary-General to that end. She renewed our plea to Cypriots at the UN General Assembly in September and indicated that our patience was running short.

We were deeply disappointed that the discussions under the Secretary-General's guidance have not been successful. In a unanimous resolution on November 25, the Security Council stated that "the present status quo is not acceptable."

The government has also taken into account the report of, and appreciates the efforts of a group of parliamentarians, led by the Honourable Member for Don Valley East, who provided Mrs. McDougall with useful information on the current situation in Cyprus.

After 28 years of service in Cyprus, after 28 years of watching both sides in the dispute either being unable or unwilling to negotiate a political solution, after 28 years of significant expenditures to maintain troops and equipment in that region without any measurable progress, it was time to face facts and come to certain conclusions.

Mr. Speaker, our experience in Cyprus has taught us many lessons. One of the most important is that parties to a dispute must understand that there are limits to the duration of any peacekeeping operation.

Peacekeeping must never be considered as an end in itself or as a substitute for political leadership, negotiation and honourable compromise. The basis for any peacekeeping operation has always been an agreement by the parties involved to work towards a political settlement.

Whether or not Canadian troops remain in Cyprus, Greek and Turkish Cypriots bear the ultimate responsibility for resolving the dispute. But it appears that, instead of taking advantage of the peace and order that the UN mission has afforded, some political leaders have used the presence of UN forces to avoid making difficult choices, to avoid making the compromises required to ensure peaceful co-existence.

At a time when there are increasing demands for peacekeeping around the world, we must ensure that we establish our priorities carefully, and manage our resources and contributions effectively.

Mr. Speaker, in deciding to withdraw our troops, we are not saying that the United Nations should put an end to its peacekeeping mission in Cyprus. That is a matter for the Security Council, the Secretary-General, and the parties involved to consider.

Furthermore, I assure the House that we will continue to support the Secretary-General's ongoing efforts to find a peaceful, negotiated solution. In that regard, Canada once again calls upon the parties involved to implement Security Resolution 789 and to work with the Secretary-General. If circumstances change, Canada would consider contributing directly to new UN efforts towards a peaceful settlement in Cyprus, or to its implementation.

Mr. Speaker, as Mrs. McDougall told the UN General Assembly last September, the Government of Canada endorses the Secretary-General's Agenda for Peace and, in particular, the peacemaking and peacekeeping themes in that document. That is why Canada will continue to play a leading role in international efforts to secure peace. Though we are turning the page in this particular chapter of our history, our passion for peace remains as fervent as it was almost 30 years ago when our soldiers donned the blue beret and went to Cyprus.

With over 4,000 troops participating in peace missions from Cambodia to Bosnia, from Croatia to Central America and the Middle East, the words "Canada" and "peacekeeping" will always be closely associated in the eyes of Canadians and in the eyes of the world.

Thank you.

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