

Statement

Secretary of
State for
External Affairs



Déclaration

Secrétaire d'État
aux Affaires
extérieures

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**NOTES FOR AN ADDRESS BY
THE HONOURABLE BARBARA McDOUGALL,
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,
TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS
ON YUGOSLAVIA**

**OTTAWA, Ontario
June 10, 1992**

Affaires extérieures et
Commerce extérieur Canada

External Affairs and
International Trade Canada

Canada

I want to report to the House today on the latest developments in the situation in Bosnia and Hercegovina and on my recent meetings in Europe. I want to talk about peacekeeping in the context of the UN Secretary-General's efforts to secure the Sarajevo Airport. I will also talk about our continued participation in the peacekeeping operation in Cyprus.

The situation in Bosnia and Hercegovina has deteriorated to the point that even relief convoys are attacked with impunity. This is a direct challenge to the credibility of the UN's current peacekeeping operation.

For this reason, we have agreed to a request from the UN Secretary-General, that, in the event that the cease-fire holds, he re-assign Canadian peacekeepers to keep the Sarajevo Airport secure to allow humanitarian relief to reach the general population. The mechanized infantry battalion of 850 Royal 22nd Regiment soldiers will be redeployed from Croatia once circumstances permit.

The first phase of the Secretary-General's plan for securing the Sarajevo Airport is already under way, with the deployment of 60 unarmed military observers today under the command of Canadian General Mackenzie.

On the basis of this mission's assessment, the Security Council will decide if conditions permit entering into the second phase of this operation. These conditions were established by the UN last Friday with Serbian, Bosnian Moslem and Croatian parties to the conflict: that artillery and anti-aircraft weapons capable of reaching the airport be withdrawn and placed under UN supervision. We fervently hope the mission can achieve the conditions necessary for the deployment of UN forces.

This may continue to be a difficult situation to manage. As on numerous occasions since the beginning of the Yugoslav conflict, risks of the cease-fire collapsing are very high. It is also imperative that the UN protect the humanitarian operation once forces have been deployed. Dangers will still exist in Sarajevo, but Canadian forces leadership has determined that these difficult assignments are feasible, provided initial conditions can be satisfied.

I believe that Canada had to respond favourably and actively to the Secretary-General's request. His decision is consistent with our commitment to bring an end to the fighting in Bosnia and to bring relief to the innocent.

It also confirms that our commitment to security in Europe remains undiminished. I was able to reinforce this commitment during a series of meetings in Europe last week.

In Oslo, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) took an historic decision. In the past, its role was to provide security

against attack on Alliance members from the countries in the East. Today, the countries of the East look to NATO for security from attacks by each other or from ethnic and nationalist violence occurring from the break-up of the Soviet Empire. We trust that our common commitments to the principles of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) -- democracy, peaceful settlement of disputes and, above all, the legal acceptance and tolerant treatment of minorities -- will be a formula for peace. But, if there is a need to resolve conflicts through peacekeeping, all of Europe welcomes the application of NATO's unique abilities to provide real resources and expertise. In Oslo, NATO agreed to consider just such CSCE requests. In my view, this could well prevent Yugoslav-type tragedies from occurring in the future.

Canada was one of the originators of the concept of peacekeeping. Since the 1950s, Canada has served in virtually all UN peacekeeping operations. Canadians now serve around the world -- in the Middle East, Cyprus, Central America and Europe -- and are slated as well for Cambodia.

The most important test of the effectiveness of peacekeeping is the length and strength of the peace once the peacekeepers have gone. Our troops have been with the UN peacekeeping force in Cyprus for 28 years. Twenty-eight years: clearly this is not a model for peacekeeping.

The absence of peace must not be allowed to contaminate the relations between new generations of old rivals.

I have just visited Cyprus and discussed the situation there with its president and with my colleagues in Ankara and Athens. I said that unless there is progress on a solution Canada would withdraw its forces. I can report that there is some progress.

Over the next two months, a set of ideas will be discussed among leaders to establish the basis for peace without peacekeepers. Because of this positive development, Canada will not completely withdraw its forces this year. But we must take this opportunity to force the search for a definitive settlement of a longstanding grievance, one that has gone on for far too long.

While in Cyprus I had the privilege of visiting the Canadian battalion assigned to peacekeeping duties in Nicosia. I also had a chance to visit the troops on duty and in their barracks in the Nicosia buffer zone. I am pleased to report that the high degree of professionalism they display is recognized and appreciated by all sides. All Canadians should be proud of their actions and the honour that they bring to our country.

But the risk of conflict in the world in the coming years remains real. Our challenge will be to make the UN and regional

organizations respond in timely and effective ways. We recognize that some decisions will be difficult and that risks to the safety of soldiers and civilians will be high. The financial burden will also be higher than in the past. Canada may not be in a position to participate in every mission as it has in the past.

How we contribute to a mission in the future may also vary. But we have to encourage changes in the international management of peacekeeping, and we must be flexible in our own support of peacekeeping operations.

Canada has a long and distinguished position of leadership in peacekeeping, and we intend to retain that position in the UN, in NATO and in the CSCE. But we must also continue our efforts in the newer area of peace-building, the negotiated settlement of potential conflicts before they erupt into violence. We look to the CSCE Summit in Helsinki this July to consolidate progress in peace-building for Europe.

In the months ahead, as our Canadian peacekeepers continue to provide a measure of stability in troubled areas of the world, we must work vigorously to identify and resolve the underlying motives and forces that generate conflict in the first place.

We must not squander the opportunity that history has afforded us. I can assure this House that Canada and Canadians will continue to be in the forefront of the movement toward global peace, and I will continue to report diligently on our progress toward this end.