



Amidst the conflict in Lebanon, Canada's new Conservative government reacted swiftly, decisively and boldly to evacuate over 15,000 Canadians. The following is a brief recapitulation of how that happened and why Canadians are so proud of our commitment to peace and security.

On July 12, Hezbollah, a group outlawed in 2001 by the Canadian government as a terrorist group, attacked Israel and killed eight soldiers while kidnapping two others after crossing a UN established border in the south of Lebanon. Just weeks earlier, Hamas had attacked, kidnapping another Israeli soldier. Israel responded swiftly to this repeated provocation by launching air, ground and naval offences. Once again, as have so many nations done in the past whose sovereignty was under attack, Israel responded to the aggression.

Canada's response was swift and direct. Prime Minister Stephen Harper, attending a G-8 Summit Meeting in Rome immediately reacted by recognizing who had initiated this

conflict – the Hezbollah terrorists – and the fact that Israel was legitimately responding to an unwarranted act of aggression. Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay quickly initiated a massive governmental response, contacting the Canadian embassies in the region and issuing a travel warning regarding the escalating crisis in Lebanon. By July 14, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) established a departmental task force in order to coordinate and



During the crisis in Lebanon, Canada successfully evacuated over 15,500 Canadians from the war-torn shores of Beirut. It was the largest evacuation operation in Canadian history.

synchronize the actions of the affected government departments. By the following day, a crisis call centre was in place, including representatives of DFAIT, the Canadian International Development Agency, the Department of National Defence, Citizenship and Immigration, Public Safety and Canadian Border Services. The government was pooling its resources and expertise in order to meet the

extraordinary demands of this unfolding crisis.

The Canadian Embassy in Beirut began contacting individual Canadians to inform them of the evacuation plan. The government con-



tracted ships to first move Canadians from Lebanon to staging areas in Cyprus and Turkey. Chartered planes would remove them safely to Canada. The initial evacuation occurred on July 19. By August 15, 15,500 Canadians were safely removed from Lebanon: it was the largest evacuation in Canadian history and, despite some complaints about waiting times, the most successful mass movement of refugees in memory. The United States, while evacuating approximately 1,000 more people than Canada, had at its disposal aircraft carriers and a significant naval presence that facilitated rescue efforts. Canada, with fewer resources, but with first-rate personnel equal to the task, did as much and did it faster. Canada was second only to the U.S. in the number of people it successfully evacuated from Lebanon.



Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his wife Laureen greet Canadians evacuated from Lebanon as they prepare to leave Cyprus by plane. The evacuation involved many different government departments working in coordination.

These numbers only begin to describe the dedication and professionalism exhibited by foreign affairs and other departmental officers. They dealt with 35,000 phone calls and 12,000 e-mails. At the height of the evacuation, they were making 5,000 phone calls a day to our citizens in Lebanon to help transmit information. Many officials volunteered their after hours time to assist in the efforts, came back from vaca-

tion or refused to leave their posts until all Canadians who wished to be evacuated had been so. Canadians had ample opportunity to be reminded that, like our military personnel who have often been left without adequate resources and materiel by negligent governments in the past, our officials performed their jobs with an ardent dedication to duty that was an inspiration to the world. The evacuation, judged by many international affairs analysts as the best delivered in the world, was evidence of their professionalism.

Unfortunately, some members of the Opposition on the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development chose to disregard this achievement and believed it was necessary to recall the committee, of which I am a sitting government member, to debate the validity of Canada's evacuation success. Hence, the "emergency" committee session of Aug. 1, though ostensibly organized to discuss the evacuation efforts, degenerated into a confused and rambling attack on the government and its policy towards Israel and the conflict in Lebanon. When it was very apparent that there was little negative to say about the evacuation, the Opposition parties chose to shift the focus away from positive reports of



Lebanese witness groups in attendance.

The Opposition focused on questioning why Canada's new Conservative government refused to be neutral with regards to Lebanon and insisted on supporting Israel in its right to self-defence and continued condemning the terrorist tactics of Hezbollah.

In his presentation to the Foreign Affairs Committee, Minister MacKay reminded Opposition members that Canada is not, and has never been a "neutral" nation. Canada fought in



Thousands wait for evacuation...

two world wars and in Korea. We are a member of NATO and NORAD. Moreover, as far as the Canadian government is concerned, there can be no moral equivalency imagined between terrorist thugs and the Israeli military. "Hezbollah is a cancer on Lebanon that is destroying stability and democracy within their boundaries," said MacKay. He also reminded the Liberal committee members that the previous Liberal government had listed Hezbollah as a terrorist group in 2001

As for ending the conflict in Lebanon, Mr. MacKay made it clear that Canada desired a cessation of violence with a sustainable and permanent ceasefire. However, he related to us that terrorist organizations tend not to be available to negotiate: "Hezbollah has indi-

cated no willingness, no desire to talk or to engage in diplomatic solutions." Furthermore, ceasefires do not result from the wish-dreams of committees: "But it's not enough to just say the words, there has to be a plan that follows. There has to be...a robust international intervention that is going to stand between these two factions."

But while placing the blame for the conflict where it should be – on the shoulders of Hezbollah – the new Conservative government is committed to helping the innocent victims of war. Accordingly, Canada originally announced that it will provide \$5.5 million in humanitarian assistance to Lebanon and on Aug. 17 an additional \$25 million was promised. It has already facilitated the delivery of vital humanitarian supplies to the citizens of Lebanon. On July 29, a Canadian vessel assisted the international relief organization Doctors Without Borders in shipping emergency medical supplies. Canada remains committed to Lebanon's long-term reconstruction and development.

During this crisis, as both a Member of Parliament and a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, the daily events in Lebanon were a constant concern for me. Whether it was responding to Lebanese-Canadian constituents who were gravely concerned about the welfare of family members and loved ones across

the sea or my frequent calls to the DFAIT operations centre to receive updates on case files, I was impressed with the actions of my government and proud to be a Canadian. In the days leading up to our Aug. 1 committee meeting, my office received over 100 calls from Canadian citizens who merely wished to tell me that they were proud of Canada's response, highly impressed with the success of the evacuation and strongly encouraged that Prime Minister Harper had the fortitude to take a principled stand in the Middle East and not confuse recognized terrorist groups with the right of legitimate nations, such as Israel, that have the right to protect themselves.

identifying the aggressor and ministering to the needs of the innocent victims. Canada's new Conservative government has shown that it is remarkably quick-thinking, clear-headed and resolute in the pursuit of an effective, rapid response to a world crisis and equally quick reaction to humanitarian needs following conflict.

But that's the Canadian way. Canada historically has not backed away from its international duty to speak out against aggressors, be they terrorist or belligerent states. Canada also is there to help Canadians in foreign lands in difficulty and to provide humanitarian aid when needed.

No crisis in the Middle East is ever without its complexities and nuances. However, we do not advance justice by confusing terrorists with legitimate military action. We do advance justice by

Update:

Canada's new Conservative government is offering foreign policy that is principled, far-sighted and multi-faceted. This is a time for action.

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This brochure series is intended to highlight special issues that Member of Parliament, Peter Goldring, has been involved in. If you wish to comment, please take a moment to fill out the survey below, write or call to the address above.

Your Opinion Matters...

Question #1 Do you believe that Canada should have taken a neutral position between a known terrorist group and recognized nation?

Yes No

Question #2 Are you supportive of the government's efforts to evacuate Canadian from Lebanon during this crisis?

Yes No

Question #3 What could Canada have done otherwise?

Comments: _____

Name: _____
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