

**Speech by Hon. Deepak Obhrai, P.C., M.P.  
on the Opposition Motion Regarding Combat Mission Against ISIS.  
December 10, 2015, House of Commons, Ottawa**

**Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am honoured to rise to speak on my first debate in the 42nd Parliament.

Before I begin, I want to take this opportunity to thank my constituents of Calgary Forest Lawn and Calgary East for electing me for the seventh time and for having put their trust in me again. I want to say a very big thanks to them.

The motion today is to continue our engagement to fight ISIL. This is now an international human rights issue. Those who sponsor and carry out these horrendous crimes against humanity must be brought before the International Criminal Court and brought to justice, in the same way as the Nuremberg trials were held. First we have to defeat them.

Our previous Conservative government had brought this current engagement to Parliament and sought approval. I participated in numerous debates on this issue of tackling ISIS in this House.

I listened to the Minister of National Defence, and I am not convinced he is on the right path. We are downgrading our engagement by removing the air force and stopping Canadian air strikes.

During debates in the previous Parliament, we found support for this mission from Canadians and from many Liberals, as well as our allies in the international community. Not surprisingly, of course, we never got any support from the NDP.

However, to see the government trying to follow the same NDP logic by downgrading the fight against injustice is doing an injustice not only to the victims of the terrorist group but also to future generations who would fall victim to this terrorist group. Paris comes to mind.

I can say from experience that when strong action is not taken to fight injustice, its consequences can be devastating.

After the fall of Saddam Hussain, the G-8 and neighbours of Iraq held three conferences. In Egypt, Istanbul and Kuwait. I represented Canada at all three of the expanded neighbouring countries of Iraq meetings.

It was an attempt by the international community to stabilize and rebuild Iraq. We all pledged money and help for Iraq, but the Maliki government did not take it seriously and our international partners, including us, also did not demand stronger accountability from his government.

This resulted in the continued weakening of the Iraqi government to the point where this terror group, ISIL filled the gap. The result was massacres, rape, killings, and much suffering. The lesson we have to take from this is to take strong action when a threat arises.

Today's motion is asking the government to ensure our engagement is not downgraded. Canadian air strikes have been successful in engaging the terrorists. Why the government wants to stop this is beyond our understanding. Only today, reports say that ISIS financial chief was killed in air strikes, and this is a big blow to ISIS.

The question Canadians are asking is: are the Liberals serious in fighting ISIS, or are they just talking about token support? They keep talking about this robust engagement that is going to come. They keep talking as if there is a vacuum right now in the war against the terrorists. The Liberals are forgetting that Canada has been engaged, not only on humanitarian grounds but in training Peshmerga. I have heard Liberals talking about training Peshmerga. They seem to have forgotten the fact that that has been going on through the motion that was passed by the previous Conservative government.

I do not understand where this robust thing is going to come from. It is already there. Why does the government want to take away what is already a successful engagement against this terrorist group? It is beyond anybody's understanding.

I know the defence minister served in Afghanistan. However, I was on the House of Commons special committee on Afghanistan, which was there to oversee our mission in Afghanistan, recommended by former Liberal foreign minister John Manley.

I travelled with the committee to Afghanistan and saw our operations first hand.

The Taliban is still a threat today. Only yesterday it attacked the Kandahar airport, where over 50 people are now confirmed dead.

Have we abandoned Afghanistan? No. However, the presence of American forces is what is keeping Afghanistan safe today. It could easily revert to becoming another region where terror and terrorists reign. Therefore, the government must engage with ISIS to destroy it before it destroys us.

Britain went through a debate as to whether it would perform air strikes. Because of the threat posed by ISIS, it has now changed its mind and is engaging in air strikes.

Let us look at France, Britain, the U.S.A., and the other neighbouring countries, like Jordan and Iran, that engaged in air strikes to stop ISIL because they recognized it as a threat.

We say that we will stop it, then we say that we will find a robust and better way of doing it. I have heard others say here today that we should let the others carry the burden and we can stand on the sidelines. When we go to the Remembrance Day parades here and talk to the veterans who have fought for the freedom of this country and I listen to their stories, it is evident that the reason they have put their lives on the line is for our freedom and that of our country. However, they went out and they fought; they did not run away like this Liberal government wants us to run away from the air strikes. It is beyond my understanding.

Everyone talks about the great job being done by our air force. Our armed forces are well trained. When the previous Liberal government was in power, it cut the military expenditures to the point where our armed forces were no longer effective, creating a period of darkness. The Conservative government invested in the armed forces and today it is doing an excellent job in Iraq and wherever else it is deployed. We are all proud of the excellent work they have been doing, including the members on the

Liberal side. Therefore, I do not understand why the Liberals want to pull out. Time after time, I have heard the argument that we should provide humanitarian assistance. If there is no security on the ground, what is the point of humanitarian assistance? Where do they think it will go? It will not go to the people who need it. First and foremost there is a need for security, and that security can only come if we take up the fight. That is why this motion is very apt. If the Liberals do not support it, so be it. However, Canadians will support this motion, and we will stand to fight against ISIL.

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