



OFFICE OF THE LEADER | BUREAU DU CHEF
NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY | NOUVEAU PARTI DÉMOCRATIQUE

June 23, 2017

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street, Langevin Block
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister,

I write to you with concern about recent news reports regarding an elite Canadian Special Forces unit's sniper fire against enemy combatants in Iraq. It is not clear exactly how and when this engagement occurred but it seriously calls into question your government's claim that Canadian Forces are not involved in direct combat in Iraq.

Your government increased the number of Special Forces trainers in an "advise and assist" role in order to train Iraqi forces in their fight against Daesh. Earlier this year, however, the Chief of the Defence Staff confirmed Special Forces were operating inside Mosul, much closer to the front lines.

Let me take the opportunity to acknowledge the excellent capabilities of our Canadian Forces. Canadians can be confident that the skill and expertise of our men and women in uniform places them amongst the best in the world. However, Canadians also deserve to know whether your government has accurately characterized Canada's role in Iraq as an "advise and assist" mission to train Iraqi forces in their fight against Daesh.

In March 2015, you stated unequivocally, "involvement in direct combat in this war does not serve Canada's interests." You have also stated that airstrikes and long-range rifle fire constitute ground combat. Under the previous government, the Liberal foreign affairs critic, Marc Garneau, defined a "combat operation" as "a military operation where the use — or threatened use — of force, including lethal force, is essential to impose will upon an armed opponent — or to accomplish a mission." Finally, you made a clear commitment in the 2015 Liberal Party campaign platform that you would "end Canada's combat mission in Iraq."

.../2

OTTAWA

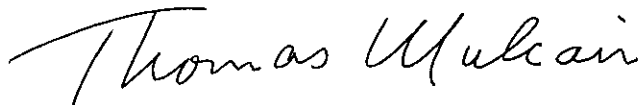
HOUSE OF COMMONS | CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES | 202 SPARKS STREET | OTTAWA, ONTARIO, K1P 5B9

TEL/TEL: 613-995-7224 | FAX/TELÉC: 613-995-4565

Given this information and what we know about the recent sniper fire through media reports, the following questions merit immediate, clear answers from you, as Prime Minister: Will you now confirm that Canadian troops have engaged in ground combat since your government took office? Why have you not declared that the current military operation is now a combat mission? Why has there been no debate in the House of Commons regarding this change of mission? Has your definition of "combat" changed since forming government? If not, how do you explain breaking a clear campaign commitment to end the combat operations in Iraq?

Any changes in our troops' role must be announced and properly debated in the House of Commons. Canadians deserve no less than to know the true extent of our involvement in Iraq. Our troops deserve no less because it fundamentally affects their own safety.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Thomas Mulcair". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Thomas Mulcair, P.C., M.P. (Outremont)
Leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada