

World News

EUROPE MIDDLE EAST

and 'jibe Cameron

François Hollande of France at the G-20 summit meeting but was seemingly too busy to see Mr. Cameron one-on-one.

So, when the BBC reported the "small island" comments, Mr. Cameron's office called on Russia for a clarification.

Rather than letting the matter rest after Mr. Peskov's denial, Mr. Cameron went on the offensive. He told British reporters Friday that while Britain may be a small island, he "would challenge anyone to find a country with a prouder history, a bigger heart or greater resilience. Britain is an island that has helped to clear the European continent of fascism and was resolute in doing that throughout the Second World War," he said, according to British media reports.

"Britain is an island that helped to abolish slavery that has invented most of the things worth inventing, including every sport currently played around the world, that still today is responsible for art, literature and music that delights the entire world," Mr. Cameron added.

At a later press conference, Mr. Cameron repeated his point, this time adding references to The Beatles, Shakespeare, Elgar and the pop group One Direction, joking that, if he talked too long on the subject he "might have to put it to music."

The reaction at home may not have been what Mr. Cameron had hoped for. The Daily Telegraph drew comparisons not with famous political orators like Winston Churchill but with a scene from the 2003 movie "Love Actually" in which a British prime minister, played by Hugh Grant, stands up to a bullying American president with a speech invoking Shakespeare, Winston Churchill and Harry Potter. "We may be a small country, but we are a great one, too," the fictional prime minister concluded.

ied in effort rs on Syria

southern Turkey near the Syrian border, but did not issue an order.

The announcement came as Secretary of State John Kerry prepared to leave for Lithuania to meet with diplomats from the European Union.

Mr. Kerry is to confer with them on Middle East issues, including Syria, on Saturday. He will then fly to Paris to confer with his French counterpart, Laurent Fabius, and meet with diplomats from the Arab League. He is also going to London and will confer with William Hague, the British foreign minister.

Speaking with reporters as he was about to end his three-day overseas trip, Mr. Obama repeatedly refused on Friday to say whether he would abide by the congressional vote he asked for authorizing the use of force against Syria if lawmakers said no. "You're not setting



Relatives of Rizo Mustafic, who was killed in Bosnia in 1995, reacting to the ruling in The Hague on Friday that found the Netherlands had "effective control" over peacekeepers.

Netherlands held liable in 3 Srebrenica deaths

PARIS

Supreme Court rules
country responsible for
conduct of peacekeepers

BY MARLISE SIMONS

In a decision that may pose new risks for nations involved in international peacekeeping operations, the Dutch Supreme Court ruled Friday that the Netherlands was responsible for the deaths of three Bosnian Muslim men because Dutch peacekeepers had ordered them to leave their United Nations compound during the 1995 Srebrenica massacre.

The court dismissed the arguments of the Dutch government that holding it liable for the peacekeepers' conduct would have a negative effect on future U.N. operations "and in particular the willingness of states to make troops available." Peacekeeping troops were not exempt from judicial scrutiny, the court said.

"The ruling is crucial because it establishes that peacekeepers cannot operate in a legal vacuum, where there is no accountability or redress for vic-

tims," said Liesbeth Zegveld, a human rights lawyer representing the victims' families. "It's a breakthrough because governments want to hide behind the immunity of the U.N. This says clearly that countries involved in U.N. missions can be held responsible for crimes."

The court said that international law applied not only to the United Nations but also to the state, because in this case the state had "effective control" over the peacekeepers.

The Supreme Court ruling concluded a legal case that wound its way through three Dutch courts, taking more than 10 years as government lawyers fought to have the victims' suit struck down.

Two families are now entitled to receive damages from the Dutch state, and others could follow. The amounts have not been determined. "We have never discussed the amount of the damages because the legal hurdles were so high," Ms. Zegveld said.

The case dates to July 1995, when Bosnian Serb forces under the command of Gen. Ratko Mladic overwhelmed the fewer than 400 lightly armed Dutch peacekeepers, known as Dutchbat, and seized control of the so-called safe area around Srebrenica, killing virtually

every man and boy they captured.

Close to 7,000 captives have been dug up from mass graves.

Inside the U.N. protected enclave at the time were 30,000 or so refugees, but several thousand of them were actually within the walls of the peacekeepers' base. The court said that even as killing was going on outside the compound, "Dutchbat decided not to evacuate them along with the battalion and instead sent them away," a summary of the ruling said. "Outside the compound

"Peacekeepers cannot operate in a legal vacuum, where there is no accountability or redress for victims."

they were murdered by the Bosnian-Serb army or related paramilitary groups."

They included the father, mother and brother of Hasan Nuhanovic, who had filed the case. Mr. Nuhanovic's brother, who worked as a U.N. translator, and his father, who had also interpreted for the troops, were told they could stay. But when soldiers ordered the mother and younger brother to leave the com-

pound, the elder Nuhanovic joined them. They were never seen again. Rizo Mustafic, an electrician on the base, was also sent away. His relatives were also part of the lawsuit against the Dutch state.

"I feel we heard the truth today, at least part of the truth," said Mr. Nuhanovic in a telephone interview after the ruling. "The court used clear language, it said my family and the other refugees were handed over to the Serbs. This was always downplayed in all the reports."

He said he went to thank the chief judge afterward. "One chapter is now closed today," said Mr. Nuhanovic who was 77 at the time and now at age 45 is working with victims of the massacre.

Just a few miles from the Supreme Court in The Hague, General Mladic, the commander of Srebrenica, is standing trial at the U.N. war crimes court on charges of genocide. "There are many other war criminals going free in Bosnia," Mr. Nuhanovic said.

The slaughter at Srebrenica has also haunted the Netherlands. The country has conducted lengthy investigations into the decisions made by its government and its troops. A previous government resigned in 2002, saying it had sent its forces on a "mission impossible."