

Oral Questions

proposed agreement that they are being asked to participate.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, may I follow up the question because I think it is basic to the possibility of the commission working well. Has Canada been asked by all the parties to the unfortunate war or have we been asked by only one of the parties, and if we have so far been approached directly by only one of the parties, will the government undertake not to dispatch forces from Canada until it has a clear invitation from all the parties who are to be signatories to the agreement?

Mr. Sharp: I can be quite categorical. We will not dispatch any troops unless we have had a clear invitation from all the parties to the proposed truce which will be expressed in a formal document that we hope will be signed on Saturday in Paris. We will not send any troops or any observers of any kind until we are satisfied that we have been invited by all the parties.

Mr. Speaker: The Chair will recognize the hon. member for York South for a further supplementary question and then the hon. member for Prince Edward-Hastings for his supplementary.

Mr. Lewis: To follow that up, Mr. Speaker, may I then ask the Secretary of State for External Affairs whether he expects that the government may likely dispatch forces this weekend and, if not, is it not possible for parliament to have the debate he suggested next Monday before any forces are sent from this country?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, in the protocol, which we did not negotiate but which has now been submitted to us, it is contemplated that members of the supervisory commission will be in place in Viet Nam within 48 hours after the signing of the agreement. We are not bound by this document; we did not negotiate it. The question we have to decide is whether we accept the obligations. However, we do think it highly desirable that as soon as possible after the truce is signed we discharge our responsibilities as I have outlined them in the statement I made today. Therefore it is our intention, if in fact we are invited by signature of the agreements on Saturday by all four parties, to begin without delay to send some men or some observers to Viet Nam. So the answer is that over this weekend it may well be that some of the Canadian observers will be travelling to Viet Nam.

VIET NAM—CEASE-FIRE AGREEMENT—SIZE OF
CANADIAN ELEMENT IN SUPERVISORY COMMISSION—
STATE OF READINESS AND EQUIPMENT

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Hastings): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of National Defence. As Canada has now indicated its willingness to serve on the cease-fire supervisory force, at least for the first 60 days, and as the days immediately following next Saturday are the most critical for the success of the cease-fire, would the minister advise the House now as to the size of the force Canada has ready to dispatch as of Saturday, if the proper clearances are completed, when that force will be ready to leave, and what kind of arms it will be equipped with?

[Mr. Sharp.]

Hon. James A. Richardson (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, in answer to the first part of the question, it looks now as though the total number of personnel that Canada will be asked to provide is 290. That includes support personnel as well as those who will be observing. As the Secretary of State for External Affairs said, we will be ready to send the first plane as soon as the agreement has been signed on the weekend. As to armament, this is not an armed force but some of the personnel, perhaps all of them, will carry a sidearm, a pistol, for personal protection.

VIET NAM—ACTION TO SECURE FREEDOM OF LLOYD
OPPEL, BELIEVED TO BE HELD NEAR HANOI

Mr. Donald W. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question with reference to our agreement to send a supervisory force to Viet Nam. Can the Secretary of State for External Affairs assure the House that during negotiations leading up to the cease-fire, in which we all rejoice, every effort has been made to secure the freedom of the Canadian missionary, Mr. Lloyd Opper, who was taken prisoner in Laos last October and is now believed to be held near Hanoi?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): As I have said, Canada was not involved in the negotiation of any of these agreements. Needless to say, we are not in the war in Viet Nam. However, we have been endeavouring to obtain the release of this missionary.

VIET NAM—CEASE-FIRE AGREEMENT—ESTABLISHMENT
OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH NORTH AND SOUTH

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. In view of the fact the statement he has made contemplates increased contacts and relationships with both North Viet Nam and South Viet Nam, will steps be taken to establish diplomatic relations so that we can have an adequate staff to look after matters in these countries?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the question of the establishment of diplomatic relations with North and South Viet Nam is under review now.

[Translation]

VIET NAM—CEASE-FIRE AGREEMENT—SUGGESTED
PROVISION OF ADDITIONAL MEDICAL PERSONNEL

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the hon. Secretary of State a supplementary question.

Besides examining the possibility of sending military personnel to Viet Nam, did the minister also consider increasing the medical personnel to help the wounded of that country recover?

[English]

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Yes, Mr. Speaker. We are already providing some