

Supply—National Defence

Now may I deal for a moment with the second stage of the preparation made to accomplish the plan I outlined a few moments ago. It was clearly realized at this time that although we had General Burns' approval of the nature of our contribution before it could be actually dispatched, we must have the approval of the United Nations, the body under whose orders General Burns acts. Nevertheless, in view of the well understood urgency of the requirements, arrangements were immediately made to ready the units and details forming the basis of our promised contribution.

On November 12, to prepare the way for Canada's contribution, 35 army officers and men were sent ahead by air to Naples as an exploratory party to look into the situation there and to take care of all necessary preliminary planning and arrangements for such Canadian troops as might follow.

On November 12, a Royal Canadian Air Force airlift began, concentrating at Longue Pointe, Quebec, the army personnel designated for duty in the service units for the 1st Queen's Own battalion.

The next day, November 13, the main body of the 1st Queen's Own started to move by R.C.A.F. planes to Halifax, in an airlift involving 877 personnel, which was completed in 67 hours.

The hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Harkness) a day or two ago asked me about the cost of this airlift. It is extremely difficult, of course, to dissociate it from other costs of operating these planes in any event, but so far as can be determined for gas, oil and additional expenses of that nature the cost was approximately \$29,000; that is, in addition to their normal duties.

In the meantime, the *Magnificent* had been recalled by the Navy at top speed from Scotland, warned to start refitting en route and be prepared for a quick turn-around. Breasting heavy seas, she arrived in Halifax on the evening of November 13, and by the afternoon of November 18 was extensively refitted, restocked and loaded, with steam up, ready for the order to transport to the Middle East nearly 1,000 service personnel with all their requisite jeeps, trucks, ambulances and other heavy equipment as well as several hundred tons of rations, petrol and other supplies.

The hon. member for Calgary North also asked me what it cost to refit the *Magnificent* for this particular duty. There will be an item in the estimates covering it. It is estimated to have cost about \$50,000 although I cannot give the detailed figures at the moment.

Arrangements were also completed with the Royal Canadian Air Force to airlift the

250 officers and men of the servicing troops so that the whole contingent would arrive at Naples at about the same time, and if this move had gone forward on schedule all these troops would have been there early in the present week. But, just as all the military plans were being completed to carry out the operations to which I have referred, it became apparent that difficulties had developed between the United Nations and Egypt with respect to the composition, the duties to be performed, and other questions having to do with the United Nations Emergency force. While these difficulties were in process of being straightened out General Burns was also reviewing his situation and establishing an altered priority of requirements in order to get his force set up and operating. Fortunately the preparations that we in Canada had been making made it possible for us to meet his altered needs because we had always had in mind that this might occur. We were only trying to be ahead of the gun by getting what we thought was a proper contingent ready.

On Monday, November 19, with the endorsement of the secretary general of the United Nations, General Burns formally asked Canada to meet his priority need for an augmented transport squadron to provide air lift support from the staging base at Naples to points in Egypt. He had only three chartered Swiss airliners and the charter was expiring. There was a further priority need for sufficient service troops to make possible the establishment of his headquarters so that the international police force could start functioning.

Our answer to this request was immediately "yes", and then on November 19 for the first time, as I have said, with the specific approval of both the secretary general of the United Nations and of the United Nations commander we began the third stage of our efforts to support the emergency force.

435 transport squadron of the Royal Canadian Air Force from Namao, Alberta, was released from other duties and positioned at Downsview, Toronto, for immediate dispatch overseas with supporting ground crew, ground handling equipment and aircraft spare parts. 426 transport squadron of Montreal was ordered to prepare to assist 435 squadron in its move overseas and also to airlift to Naples the army service units which had been assembled at Longue Pointe, Quebec, originally to go overseas in support of the 1st Queen's Own.

On Tuesday, November 20, the cabinet met in the morning to formulate the necessary order in council, which was passed, and then the movements overseas were initiated immediately by the departure of a North Star