

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Mitchell Sharp, announced today that the Government has extended its participation in the United Nations Force in Cyprus for a further six months. Canada's 575 man contingent will continue to serve at least until December 15, 1973 when the question of a further extension of the mandate of the Force will again be considered by the United Nations Security Council.

In making the announcement, Mr. Sharp stressed general Canadian support for United Nations peacekeeping operations which meet established Canadian criteria, such as the existence of a continuing political authority, clear terms of reference and freedom of movement for personnel. In contrast with the International Commission for Control and Supervision in Vietnam, the peacekeeping force in Cyprus, operating on the basis of these established criteria, has been particularly successful in its task of preventing outbreaks of violence between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities. This, in turn, has assisted in maintaining stability in the North East Mediterranean where fighting in Cyprus at one time threatened relations between Greece and Turkey.

While paying tribute to UNFICYP's achievements in keeping the peace, the Minister expressed concern over the seemingly indefinite requirement for maintaining the Force on the Island. Mr. Sharp stated that the Government shared the hope of the United Nations Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim that serious efforts would be made by Greek and Turkish Cypriots to reach an early political settlement. He voiced Canadian support for action the Secretary-General might take which would facilitate movement towards a settlement. He also noted that the Secretary-General, in his June report to the Security Council, indicated that a review of the Force's activities and manpower levels would be conducted at an early date by the U.N. Secretariat.

The Force in Cyprus is composed of personnel from Australia, Austria, Britain, Denmark, Finland, Ireland and Sweden as well as Canada. Since 1970, when it was reduced by half, the United Nations has maintained the Force at approximately 3,100 personnel. Canada provides the second largest contingent. The Canadian unit currently serving in Cyprus is the 3e Battalion, Royal 22e Regiment, from Quebec.