

Interim Supply

I would point out that in paragraph 12 of the secretary general's report of last November 6 on the plan for this emergency force the functions of that force were defined as the following, and I quote:

When a cease-fire has been established, to enter Egyptian territory with the consent of the Egyptian government in order to help maintain quiet during and after the withdrawal of non-Egyptian troops and to secure compliance with the other terms established in the resolution of November 2.

That is the end of the quotation but the report went on to say that on this basis, the functions of the force could be assumed to cover an area extending roughly from the Suez canal to the armistice demarcation line established by the armistice between Egypt and Israel.

Elaborating on this point when he was presenting his report to the assembly the secretary general emphasized that the functions and the operation of the force was based on the situation existing at that time where the non-Egyptian forces were in occupation of the territory immediately adjoining the Suez canal. On this occasion the secretary general said, and I quote:

The United Nations forces will have to come in at what is at present the dividing line between the Egyptian and Israeli forces. It is at whatever may come to be the dividing line that it will have to function. As the situation is, that means that United Nations activities will have to start close to the Suez canal, but that after the expected compliance with the recommendations of the general assembly they would end up at the armistice demarcation line.

These views were endorsed by the general assembly and they seem to the government to be a reasonable definition of the functions of the emergency force.

Clearly the primary functions of the force are related to the cease-fire, the withdrawal of non-Egyptian forces which has now been concluded, and in general the maintenance of peaceful conditions in the area. I think it is fair to say that in the exercise of these primary functions the force has helped to create conditions in which it has been possible to make progress toward the attainment of the other objectives stated in the resolutions of the general assembly.

Mr. Green: Before the minister leaves this question may I point out, and I quote his statement on November 29 of last year, in which he listed the functions of the force and ended with these words:

—and to take steps to re-open the Suez canal and to restore and secure freedom of navigation.

Now as I understand it freedom of navigation has not yet been assured through the Suez canal, and I would like to ask whether the United Nations emergency force has dropped that particular function?

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Mr. Pearson: I remember that statement and I can quite agree that in the way it is worded that interpretation could be drawn from it, but if my hon. friend will read the paragraph preceding and the paragraph subsequent to the words he has just read I think it will be clear from the context that I was referring to the function of the United Nations assembly under the resolution. I say this because in the resolution of November 2 one of the functions undertaken by the United Nations did concern the Suez canal, but it was not a function of the United Nations emergency force, as such, to operate in clearing the Suez canal. It was to bring about conditions in the Suez canal area which would make easier a settlement, and that is the exact situation with regard to the force. However, the assembly itself has a duty under these resolutions to deal with the Suez situation.

Mr. Green: The United Nations emergency force never did have any responsibility in connection with the Suez then, and has none today—is that correct?

Mr. Pearson: No, Mr. Chairman; it did have a function when it was deployed along the Suez canal, which was then the dividing line between the conflicting forces—

Mr. Green: I mean with respect to navigation?

Mr. Pearson: No, not with respect to navigation, but it did have a function with respect to maintaining peaceful conditions in the Suez canal when the forces were there; therefore it would have been their indirect function to facilitate communications by maintaining peace; but once the non-Egyptian forces withdrew from the Suez canal it did not have a function of that kind.

The other question was with respect to the use of the United Nations emergency force in the Gaza strip and on that point I am not in a position to amplify what I have already said more than once in this house in regard to the function of the force in this strip. I do not, however, think that I should pass over without comment the hon. member's insinuation, indeed it was his statement this morning, concerning the effect of the United Nations emergency force's presence in relation to the parties to the armistice agreement. I understand my hon. friend said that it seemed as if the force was there to protect Egypt from Israeli incursion—or words to that effect.

My information is that the force is deployed throughout the strip as well as at the demarcation line and that since detailed arrangements were worked out to enable them effectively to prevent and forestall raids across the