

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Hon. Mitchell Sharp, made the following statement today:

I have received a number of enquiries in recent days about the role Canada is being asked to undertake in Viet-Nam and about the Government's position on the matter. I would, therefore, like to summarize the position in both of these respects.

First of all, I want to emphasize that in the role being contemplated for a new international commission in Viet-Nam, there is no question of maintaining peace through the use of arms. If it is decided to provide Canadian military personnel for the commission they would not be a military formation but would be specially selected individuals who have the required expertise to observe and report on the implementation of the cease-fire agreement. They would be part of mixed observer groups drawn from each of the four participating countries. At the present time it is not clear how many would be involved.

The second point I wish to emphasize is that the Government has taken no decision on whether to join and cannot do so until the cease-fire negotiations have been completed and full information on the proposed arrangements is available.

Over the past four years the Government has indicated on many occasions in public statements of policy and in diplomatic exchanges its basic position that it would consider constructively any request for Canadian participation in truce supervisory arrangements when, in its opinion, based on the lessons of the past and the circumstances of the request, an operation held the promise of success and Canada could play a useful role.