

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, October 30, 1973

The House met at 2 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

ANNOUNCEMENT OF PARTICIPATION BY CANADIAN TROOPS IN UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING FORCE IN MIDDLE EAST

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the Security Council of the United Nations demanded on October 25 by resolution 340 that an immediate and complete ceasefire be observed in the Middle East and that the parties return to the positions they held on October 22 when an earlier Security Council resolution had first called for a ceasefire. In the resolution of October 25 the Council decided to set up immediately, under its authority, a United Nations emergency force. Canada was asked to participate in this force by a note from the Secretary General dated October 27 and in a further note of October 29 the Secretary General confirmed that this request was acceptable to both sides to the conflict. The government gave this request the most serious and urgent consideration and toward this end a team of officials from the Department of External Affairs and the Department of National Defence joined the Canadian delegation to the United Nations to consult with officials of the United Nations Secretariat about the precise nature of the contribution requested from Canada.

According to the report of the Secretary General, which was adopted by the Security Council on October 26, it is intended that this force be of a temporary nature to assist in facilitating conditions under which negotiations toward a settlement can take place. The force is to supervise the implementation of the ceasefire and the return of the parties to their positions of October 22. It will use its best efforts to prevent a recurrence of the fighting. The force is an impartial peacekeeping force composed of formed military units which will be interposed between the parties; it will thus operate on the assumption that the parties to the conflict are taking all necessary steps to comply with the relevant decisions of the Security Council. The force will be under the command of the United Nations, vested in the Secretary General and under the authority of the Security Council. The command in the field will be exercised by a force commander appointed by the Secretary General and responsible to him. The force is to be of a defensive character only and is not to use force except in self-defence.

The force at full strength will probably number about 7,000 men. Aside from Canada, Austria, Finland, Sweden and Ireland have been requested to provide troops and the

first contingents of Austrians, Finns and Swedes arrived in Cairo from Cyprus on October 26. The only areas of operation contemplated at this time are the east and west banks of the Suez Canal system from Port Said through Ismailia to Suez. In the fulfilment of its tasks the force will have the co-operation of the military observers of the United Nations Truce Supervisory Organization.

On October 27 Canada was asked by the Secretary General to provide the logistic component of the force including, in particular, air support, transport, communications, ordnance and related logistic facilities. The Secretary General considers it vital to the efficient and effective operation of the force that Canada provide the logistic support.

Canada has consistently stressed a number of conditions for its participation in peacekeeping operations and observer missions. A basic condition is met by the fact that the United Nations will be the continuing political authority to which the force reports. Moreover, the Secretary General will make his reports public. He has listed the following essential conditions for the force. It must (a) have the full confidence and backing of the Security Council; (b) operate with the full co-operation of the parties concerned; (c) function as an integrated and efficient military unit; (d) enjoy freedom of movement and communication and other facilities that are necessary for the performance of its functions, and (e) be granted all relevant privileges and immunities provided for by the United Nations convention on privileges and immunities.

Given these conditions which lead us to hope the force should be an effective one and able to contribute to a climate in which negotiations between the parties can take place, the Canadian government has decided to inform the United Nations Secretary General, in response to his request, that Canada has agreed to participate in the United Nations emergency force for the Middle East for the initial six-month period described in the Secretary General's report. I am further informing the Secretary General that the Canadian contribution will consist of a logistics component in accordance with his request and with the conclusions reached after discussion of details of this contribution between Canadian and UN officials. Finally, I am informing the Secretary General that we intend to conclude with him financial and other arrangements to regulate Canadian participation and that the treatment accorded Canada should be no less favourable than that accorded to other contributing countries.

We shall be placing on the order paper a resolution seeking the approval of parliament for the government's decision to participate in the UNEF.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe.