

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker, I cannot say that the facts as stated by my hon. friend have been confirmed. I doubt very much that the figure he has used represents the actual situation. We do know, of course, that regulars from one of the neighbouring countries were brought to the island six months ago. We do know that contrary to the resolution of March 4, 1964 of the security council, and the notification agreement between the United Nations and Cyprus, some heavy equipment supplied by the Soviet union was received by the government of Cyprus. Beyond that I do not want to go until I have heard the results of this afternoon's meeting.

Hon. D. S. Harkness (Calgary North): Mr. Speaker, I wonder can the Secretary of State for External Affairs give us any information about the reported presence off Cyprus of a Turkish task force with the suspected purpose of landing to relieve a Turkish community? Also, if such a landing does take place is he in a position to tell us what are the instructions to the Canadian troops in Cyprus, in view of the heavy build up of weapons on the part of Greek Cypriots?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker, the evidence before the government does not support the statements made in the press. The existence of Turkish forces reported to us seems to be in smaller numbers. This is not to underplay the situation which may be presented at this time by both communities for one reason or another, particularly in the light of the meeting in the security council which takes place this afternoon. I can add that the secretary general has said that in any event the circumstances do not warrant a reduction in the total numbers of the United Nations force itself.

Mr. D. W. Groos (Victoria (B.C.)): As a supplementary question, in view of the reports in the press mentioned by the hon. member for Red Deer, of very much increased military activity by Greek and Turkish forces in the vicinity of Cyprus, and claims by the countries concerned that these are normal and not extraordinary military manoeuvres, could the minister tell the house whether the UN commander was informed beforehand that these activities were contemplated?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker, I cannot answer that question directly, but I would express the greatest surprise if the United Nations commander had been informed.

[Mr. Thompson.]

Mr. W. B. Nesbitt (Oxford): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a supplementary question to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. In view of these disturbing events in the Cyprus area, and the question of Viet Nam which has been much in the news and in the house during the last week, not to mention a letter from the leader of the opposition in Ghana and the events in Malaysia; and in view of the fact that the Prime Minister suggested this afternoon that debate on the Canada pension plan bill be put off three or four days, would the Secretary of State for External Affairs not agree that a debate on foreign affairs could be held for one day so we could hear a complete, thought out, well prepared, lucid statement from him on these various situations, and so they could be discussed?

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Burnaby-Coquitlam): As a supplementary question may I ask the Secretary of State for External Affairs, in view of the growing indications that there might be military intervention either by Turkey or Greece, and the very difficult situation around Lefka as a result of which Turkey is alleged to have threatened air attacks, is the Canadian government requesting any revision of the status of forces agreement before we in turn agree to extend the mandate and the supplying of Canadian troops for the peace keeping operation? It seems to me we have a responsibility to give every protection to Canadian troops, and that some revision of the status of forces agreement is warranted under the circumstances.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker, my colleague the Minister of National Defence and I have naturally considered this matter. I am not prepared to say at this time what is the purpose of the increased activity on the part of both neighbouring countries. I have indicated, or have implied, that this movement may not be unrelated to the fact that security council is meeting this afternoon on this matter.

I do not think I can responsibly go beyond that at the moment. The United Nations force has been on the island now for almost a year. It has faced very serious situations; but I think as we look back on the year; in spite of the lack of authority on occasions, in spite of legitimate criticisms which have been made about the authority of the force, we would all conclude that the United Nations force on that island has served the interests of peace in a way which causes all of us to be very