



Statements and Speeches

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CANADIAN PARTICIPATION IN THE UNITED NATIONS EMERGENCY FORCE FOR THE MIDDLE EAST

A Statement by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Mitchell Sharp, in the House of Commons, on November 14, 1973.

An uneasy cease-fire now prevails on the Middle Eastern battlefield, which for 15 days, from October 6 to October 22, and again until October 26, witnessed the most furious and bloody fighting in that beleaguered area in modern times. The most sophisticated and destructive equipment was unleashed in the Sinai desert and on the Golan plateau. The biggest tank battles since the Second World War raged on the ground, while dozens of aircraft were struck down from the skies every day, and in the surrounding waters several naval encounters took place near the harbours of the Eastern Mediterranean. Peaceful navigation and trade were interrupted to the point where even some of the governments of that oil-rich region were forced to ration gasoline. Casualties mounted rapidly, and even now we are uncertain as to their extent, although the total must be unbearably high, especially in relation to the results achieved.

The mounting fury of the fight was possibly the only reason why it so abruptly ceased. The great powers who were supplying arms in increasing quantity to each side fortunately realized that they were being drawn into a dangerous confrontation, with the Soviet Union talking of unilateral intervention on the scene, while the United States placed its own forces on an increased state of alert. It was at this crucial stage that the United Nations Security Council agreed to the establishment and dispatch of an emergency force to supervise a cease-fire and separate efforts to prevent a recurrence of the fighting.

Given the circumstances as I have just recalled them, there could be no doubt in anyone's mind that never had an emergency measure of this nature been so evidently and urgently necessary. While Canada did not seek participation in the emergency force, we were determined that, once we were invited, it would be a success, and I am sure this is a point of view that would be supported by all parties in the House. We were asked at an early stage by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to contribute in a vitally important role. Just two and a half hours ago the Secretary-General of the United Nations was on the telephone to me urging the importance of Canada's participation and urging our participation
