

# PRESS RELEASE



# COMMUNIQUÉ

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

CANADA

MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES EXTÉRIEURES

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## NIGERIA - INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS

The following statement was made by the Honourable Mitchell Sharp, Secretary of State for External Affairs September 13, 1968:

The Federal Government of Nigeria has invited the Governments of Britain, Sweden, Poland and Canada, as well as the UN and the Organization of African Unity, to send observers to Nigeria to visit the areas of military operations and observe the conduct of federal troops. The Government has decided in principle to accept this invitation and to send an observer, and we have so informed the Nigerian authorities today. The Canadian observer will be Major General W.A. Milroy, DSO., CD., who is currently Commandant of the Canadian Land Forces Command and Staff College at Kingston, Ontario.

I might say that we gave this proposal a good deal of thought because it has been our belief that peacekeeping forces and truce observation groups should normally be constituted under the aegis of an international organization, whether it be the UN or some other body. In the present instance, however, we were faced with a specific proposal of a somewhat different and more limited kind and reached a judgement that in the present tragic situation in Nigeria it was our duty to participate if there were a useful role for Canada to play.

We have been following the Nigerian situation with deep concern and anxiety for the millions of innocent people who are affected by the fighting. It was this humanitarian concern that led us to decide to accept the Nigerian invitation. The presence of international observers should help to minimize the possibility of troops disregarding the code of conduct towards civilians announced by the Nigerian Government. Canada's provision of an observer does not mean in any way that we endorse a military solution of this problem, but demonstrates that faced with the realities of this situation, we consider that a Canadian observer can serve a useful humanitarian end.

It will be the Canadian observer's objective to make the observation exercise as effective as possible. For this the fullest freedom of movement, enquiring and reporting will be necessary. The observers will be able to visit, either as a group or individually, all the war-affected areas to witness the conduct of the Nigerian troops. The initiative for visits will lie either with the observers themselves or with the Nigerian authorities. Reports on the observations will be made individually or collectively, with copies being made available to the Nigerian authorities, and in addition of course the Canadian observer will be reporting direct to the Canadian Government.