



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
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FOREIGN POLICY STATEMENT

Statement made in the House of Commons on January 31, 1956, by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. L.B. Pearson.

Work of the Armistice Commissions in Indochina

... I should say at least a word about the work of the armistice commissions in Indochina, which was referred to earlier in the sitting this afternoon. In that area of the world Canadians continue to make an important contribution to peace through their work with these commissions. Our men—there are some 170 of them in that area, mostly from the Department of National Defence, members of the armed forces—have discharged their extremely difficult and trying duties with great credit to themselves and to their country. In one of the countries, there, namely Cambodia, we have reached the winding-up stage of the commission, and we have been able to reduce the strength of that commission. Elections have been held in that country, and as a result the commission and its members can leave Cambodia with the satisfaction which they must feel at the stability which has been achieved in a country so recently a victim of war.

In Laos, one of the other countries, the situation is not so good. Elections have also been held there, but the communist Pathet Lao forces, which are grouped in the northern provinces of that country, have refused to accept the Laotian Government or the authority of that government and to take part in the election. Hence no reduction there has been found possible either in the numbers of the commission or in its activities up to the present time.

So far as Vietnam is concerned—and that is probably the most important of the three countries—the military phases of the armistice work have been completed and with little disturbance. I think the commission deserves a good deal of credit for that result. The political aspects, however, present a less satisfactory picture. Little progress has been made in that country toward the national elections visualized by the Geneva conference, and which are scheduled to take place in July of this year. If they do not take place it is hard to say what