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HIJACKING OF AIRCRAFT

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Mitchell Sharp, announced that Canada has today deposited its Instrument of Ratification of the Tokyo Convention on offences and certain other acts committed on board aircraft. This is one of several steps being taken by Canada to deal with the problem of the hijacking of aircraft. Canada is also participating actively in efforts within the United Nations and ICAO to deal with the hijacking problem.

Canada participated in the negotiation of this Convention, which was opened for signature at Tokyo on September 14, 1963 and signed by Canada on November 4, 1964.

The Convention is due to enter into force for the first twelve States to ratify it on December 4, 1969. It will enter into force for Canada 90 days after deposit of the Canadian Instrument of Ratification.

The purpose of the Convention is to provide an orderly system for dealing with offences and other acts against the safety of civilian aircraft in flight. It provides that the commander of an aircraft shall have the powers of a peace officer on board his aircraft while it is in flight.

Discussions in ICAO and in the United Nations dealing with the problem of aircraft hijacking have emphasized the importance of the application of the Tokyo Convention as one means of preventing the hijacking of aircraft and of assuring the punishment of those responsible when a hijacking does take place.

The Convention provides that persons committing an offence on board an aircraft may be prosecuted by the state of registration of the aircraft. The Convention also requires that a hijacked aircraft be returned to its operators, that the passengers and crew be permitted to continue their journey without delay, and that the person responsible for the hijacking be taken into custody by the authorities of the State in which the aircraft lands and held so that criminal or extradition proceedings may be brought against him.