

of our plans in this respect became apparent last Monday when our destroyer, the *Terra Nova*, sailed from Vancouver for the west Pacific. I should like to make it absolutely clear to the House and to the world that the *Terra Nova* is not part of Canada's contribution to the International Commission of Control and Supervision. The *Terra Nova*, which carries supplies for 60 days and which can be resupplied at Pacific ports, has a double purpose. One purpose, a normal part of our naval operations, is to carry out extensive training exercises. The other is to provide us with a sealift capability in the event we should wish to evacuate Canadian personnel by this means. It has been made clear to all concerned that the *Terra Nova* will not enter the territorial waters of either South or North Viet Nam. In fact, most of the time she will be several hundred miles from Viet Nam. We are also keeping at least one Hercules aircraft either in Saigon or within three hours flying distance at Bangkok. At present we have two of our Hercules aircraft in Southeast Asia, one at each of these airports.

My most pleasant duty in Montreal last Friday was to introduce the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) to our Canadian contingent. Following the tradition of the late Lester Pearson, no Canadian has done more than our Prime Minister to enhance Canada's international reputation. His visit to our Canadian forces on the eve of their departure was symbolic of the importance which he attaches, and which the government attaches, to their mission.

At one o'clock on Saturday, January 27, a Canadian Forces Boeing 707 left Montreal for Viet Nam carrying Canadian personnel who were leaving to take part in the 12th peacekeeping and truce-supervisory mission upon which Canada has been engaged since the second world war. On board that first aircraft were 130 military personnel, 15 men and women from External Affairs and eight Canadian newsmen. The same day a Canadian Hercules aircraft from Trenton took off for Viet Nam carrying initial supplies and support cargo to Saigon.

• (1730)

Before the departure I said to our Canadian forces that I hoped to be able to visit them personally in Viet Nam before the completion of their tour of duty. I had to say, because of the exigencies of government, that this was being expressed as a personal wish rather than as a plan that had been formulated. But I do hope that, accompanied by others who may wish to go, we can visit our Canadian personnel before the end of their tour.

I believe all hon. members know that our personnel and supplies have reached Saigon safely and in good order. On each day since their arrival I have been in direct contact with Major General McAlpine and his senior officers. This morning I spoke personally on the telephone from National Defence headquarters to General McAlpine in Saigon, and I am therefore able to report directly to the House that our commander in Saigon advises that the Canadian contingent is in excellent shape and all personnel are actively engaged in preparing to take up their new duties.

I have brought with me to the House this afternoon a transcript of my conversation with General McAlpine. I

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believe that the House will be particularly interested in some aspects of it because it provides the most immediate and direct information available about our Canadian personnel in Viet Nam.

General McAlpine told me, and this is a direct quote:

Our arrival operations went well. We arrived in Saigon on schedule. We opened our headquarters at 800 hours on January 29th in accordance with the requirements set by the agreements and protocol.

General McAlpine went on to say that Commissioner Michel Gauvin is currently making arrangements for the International Commission to conduct their first reconnaissance of the regional headquarters' sites. He advised that three reconnaissance missions were being planned for tomorrow into the regions of Hue, Danang and Pleiku. I asked how many Canadians would be involved in these reconnaissance missions and he confirmed that there would be a total of six, four military and two personnel from External Affairs.

Later in the conversation I told General McAlpine that we were continuing with plans to send a second aircraft carrying additional Canadian personnel on February 10 and that we would keep to this plan subject to the possibility of conditions deteriorating. I asked him specifically if there was any reason that he could see why we should not proceed with our plans to send a second aircraft. His direct and clear reply was:

I can see no reason why the second aircraft should not come out.

In another part of our conversation General McAlpine said:

The troops are getting along extremely well with their colleagues from the other three countries on the International Commission and I think they should work well when we get together in the future on the key sites.

He said:

To sum up, things are progressing very well. We are making up our operating procedures now and our support arrangements are becoming firm, and I can assure you we can meet all the obligations in the agreement and protocol.

This is a final direct quote from my conversation with General McAlpine this morning:

I certainly do not intend to hazard my troops until their safety can be assured by all parties to the agreement.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Richardson: My reply, understandably, was that that is the kind of assurance we wish to have. Although none of our Canadian forces have yet proceeded to their stations in the Vietnamese countryside I am certain that hon. members will be interested in the proposed deployment of the International Commission in South Viet Nam. The headquarters of the commission is to be in Saigon and there are to be seven regional divisions throughout South Viet Nam, with regional headquarters established in each region. Each of the four national members of the commission will provide five personnel to each of the regional headquarters.

In addition to the seven regional sites there will be 55 team sites throughout the regions. Depending on the nature and function of the individual sites, each of the four participating nations will contribute either two or three observers to the individual site. As well as the