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CANADA TO WITHDRAW TROOPS FROM CYPRUS

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Barbara McDougall, and the Minister of National Defence, the Honourable Marcel Masse, announced today that Canada has decided to withdraw its peacekeeping contingent from the United Nations Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) in mid-1993. Canada has been serving in UNFICYP since 1964 and currently has 575 troops involved. Until 1992, with Canada's contribution to the former republics of Yugoslavia, Canada's largest peacekeeping force was in Cyprus.

"Peacekeeping must never be considered as an end in itself or as a substitute for political leadership, honourable compromise and negotiation," said Mrs. McDougall. "Whether or not Canadian troops remain in Cyprus, it is the Greek and Turkish Cypriots who bear the ultimate responsibility for resolving the dispute."

"Canadian peacekeepers have made a long and successful contribution to keeping peace in Cyprus for 28 years; it is time for other nations to step in and do their part," said Mr. Masse. "Our soldiers will continue to use their expertise to advance the cause of peace elsewhere around the world."

Over the years, the government has carefully reviewed the situation in Cyprus and encouraged a permanent resolution to the conflict. The Secretary of State for External Affairs has held numerous consultations on the Cyprus issue with the UN Secretary-General, the main parties to the conflict and the countries contributing troops to UNFICYP, including Britain, Denmark and Austria. Mrs. McDougall also visited the region in spring 1992 and met with key leaders to discuss prospects for resolving the conflict.

"In deciding to withdraw our troops, we are not saying that the United Nations should put an end to its peacekeeping mission in Cyprus," said Mrs. McDougall. "That is a matter for the Security Council, the Secretary-General and the parties involved to consider. We will continue to support the Secretary-General's ongoing efforts to find a peaceful, negotiated solution. I once again call upon the parties involved to implement Security Council Resolution 789 and to work with the Secretary-General."

Canada will be maintaining its peacekeeping contingent in Cyprus through the next round of UN-sponsored negotiations scheduled for March 1993. Canadian troops will be withdrawn in close consultation with the UN, commencing after June 15, 1993.

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BACKGROUND

CYPRUS

After successive Ottoman and British administrations, Cyprus gained independence in 1960 with a complex constitution based on a balanced status for the island's Greek and Turkish communities, with Greece, Turkey and the U.K. as guarantors. Turkish Cypriots make up 18 per cent and Greek Cypriots 80 per cent of the population.

In 1964, fighting between the communities led to international involvement: the United Nations Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) was created to keep the peace.

Following a right-wing Greek Cypriot coup in 1974 and subsequent Turkish intervention, Cyprus was divided in two; most Turkish Cypriots moved to the northern part of the island, and nearly all Greek Cypriots moved to the south. UNFICYP maintains the cease-fire and patrols a buffer zone that runs across the island. The Force's mandate comes up for renewal once again on December 15, 1992.

The Canadian contingent of peacekeepers, which has been stationed on the island since 1964, now numbers 575. Since 1972, the Canadian infantry battalion has been responsible for the critical Nicosia sector.

Since the creation of UNFICYP, there has been a series of intercommunal talks brokered by the UN Secretary-General. However, little progress toward a settlement has been made. Canada believes that the mission of good offices launched by the UN Secretary-General in 1988 remains the most appropriate vehicle in the search for a solution. Canada continues to actively encourage the parties in the dispute to devote greater effort, imagination and political will to finding a permanent solution to the conflict. These views have been communicated clearly to Cypriot President Vassiliou, head of the Greek-Cypriot community, and Turkish-Cypriot leader, Rauf Denktash, during their visits to Ottawa in April 1990 and April 1991 respectively.

Over the past year, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Barbara McDougall, has held discussions with the UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali on Cyprus. In her meeting with the UN Secretary-General in January 1992, Mrs. McDougall emphasized that

Canada could not continue its commitment forever to open-ended peacekeeping missions that provide little real incentive for parties involved to resolve their disputes and are a heavy financial burden. She also told the UN Secretary-General that without some signs of progress in the political situation in Cyprus, Canada would be withdrawing its troops.

The Secretary of State for External Affairs has met the main parties to the conflict in Cyprus on several occasions, emphasizing the importance of working with the UN Secretary-General to reach a permanent solution to the conflict. In spring 1992, Mrs. McDougall visited the region to assess the situation and to review Canada's peacekeeping operation. During her visit, she met with key leaders to discuss prospects for resolving the conflict.

Mrs. McDougall has held discussions on the Cyprus issue with the U.S. and countries contributing troops to UNFICYP, including Britain, Denmark and Austria. In June 1992, Denmark announced that it would be withdrawing its peacekeeping contingent from Cyprus by year's end. Britain and Austria have announced plans to reduce the number of military personnel in Cyprus.

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Where Canadian Peacekeepers Serve

Present Peacekeeping Commitments, the Year Canadian Participation Began and the Number of Canadians Involved:

Coalition Forces in Somalia, 1992	900
UN Protection Force, I/Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR I), 1992	1,200
UN Protection Force, II/Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR II), 1992	1,200
UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), 1992	213
UN Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL), 1992	11
European Community Monitoring Mission, Yugoslavia, 1991	12
UN Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM), 1991	15
UN Mission for the Referendum in the Western Sahara (MINURSO), 1991	33
UN Iraq-Kuwait Observer Mission (UNIKOM), 1991	45
Office of the Secretary-General in Afghanistan and Pakistan (UNGOMAP), 1990	1
Multinational Force and Observers, Sinai (MFO), 1986	28
UN Disengagement Observer Force, Golan Heights (UNDOF), 1974	180
UN Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), 1964	575
UN Truce Supervisory Organization, Middle East (UNTSO), 1954	13

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