

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MARCH 27, 1975

STATEMENT DISCOURS



STATEMENT BY
THE SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,
THE HONOURABLE ALLAN J. MACÉACHEN,
MARCH 27, 1975

"INDOCHINA" 10

The Canadian Government and people have been closely following the development of the situation in recent days in Viet-Nam and Cambodia. With respect to Viet-Nam we were, of course, well aware that there had been breaches of the Paris Agreements earlier but these have now reached a point where the armistice seems to have broken down almost completely. We have long been of the opinion that problems such as this should not be solved by force of arms and very much regret that the parties concerned have been unable to find a peaceful political solution in accordance with the Paris Agreements.

Since Canada is not a party to the Agreements, it cannot of course play a political role of any importance in the situation now unfolding in Indochina. However, on a humanitarian basis, we are deeply saddened by the human suffering that has been caused throughout the region and can only hope that a peaceful and just solution can yet be found to alleviate the sad situation. Canada can and should, however, do something to minimize the suffering of the civilian populations in Indochina. In this respect, I am pleased to be able to announce that I have just authorized the contribution of \$1.75 million in support of refugee relief programs of the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Fund and the Indochina Operations Group of the International Red Cross. In addition, given the severe worsening of the refugee situation in recent days, I have instructed my officials to complete the details for a further contribution of a similar size for an additional cash donation to those international organizations concerned with relief to refugees. We are also looking at the possibility of sending relief supplies to the area including, if necessary, food, medical supplies

and temporary housing. Finally, because of the magnitude of the problem, we are contacting relevant international organizations to discuss what other measures can be taken to assist in the alleviation of this sad situation. Although, therefore, we are fully aware that we cannot exercise political influence in the tragic events that now envelope the region, we can take steps on the humanitarian level to assist those who are suffering.

I should like, finally, to take this occasion to provide some details on the situation of Canadians now in Viet-Nam. Of the approximately 80 Canadians registered with our Embassy in Saigon, a group which consists primarily of missionaries and employees of organizations with similar objectives, over half of the group are located in the Saigon area. Twelve Canadians who were working in Kontum and Pleiku provinces were able to move to safer areas before those provinces were given up by the forces of the Republic of Viet-Nam. Canadians in other dangerous areas such as Danang, Qui Nhon, Nha Trang, Dalat and Long Xuyen have now either left for Saigon or are preparing to do so within the next few days. Finally, I might add that we are developing contingency plans in the event that it becomes necessary to assist Canadians to leave Saigon or other areas of the country.