

PRESS RELEASE



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CLOSING OF MISSIONS

The Secretary of State for External Affairs made the following Statement on Motions in the House of Commons on November 3, 1969:

"Mr. Speaker:

I would like to make a brief announcement concerning forthcoming changes in Canadian representation in certain parts of the world.

In Latin America, we are proposing to close our offices in the Dominican Republic, Ecuador and Uruguay. In each case, our resident mission has been headed by a Chargé d'Affaires, with the Ambassador resident in a neighbouring country. The Ambassadors concerned will continue to be accredited to these countries and normal diplomatic relations will be maintained. Visits by the Ambassador and his staff to countries without resident representation will be frequent and regular to ensure that official business between Canada and the countries affected is carried on and Canadian trade and other interests furthered effectively. The closing of these missions in Latin America does not affect the Government's expressed intention to seek closer ties with that part of the world. We are satisfied that the improvement of communications in the Caribbean and South America will enable us to maintain adequate contact with the countries concerned while permitting redeployment of our resident staff in the interests of greater efficiency.

We propose to close the small office we have maintained in Berlin. Our Ambassador in Bonn, who has been head of that mission, will continue to be accredited in that capacity and will, as in the past, make regular visits to Berlin as evidence of Canada's commitment to the security and welfare of that city.

We propose to close our resident High Commission in Nicosia. Our relations with Cyprus and any diplomatic assistance required by our forces there can be provided for effectively through dual accreditation of the Canadian representatives to a neighbouring country.

There is no connection between this decision and the question of our continuing participation in the United Nations Peacekeeping Forces on the island. Canada remains deeply concerned in the search for a solution of the Cyprus dispute and is willing to make whatever contribution it can to the settlement of the problem.

In recent years, the International Control Commissions in Laos and Cambodia have, for a variety of reasons, been unable to perform the functions assigned to them. We have therefore decided that little useful purpose would be served by maintaining our present physical presence in Vientiane and Phnom Penh. Canada remains a member of both Commissions and will fulfil its commitments as before. As these commitments are not expected to be onerous, it is intended that the Canadian Commissioner in Vietnam will serve on the other two Commissions. In Laos arrangements will also be made to maintain local contact with the other members of the Commission. Our modest aid programme in Laos and Cambodia will be run from the Canadian Delegation in Saigon.

These actions have been taken with the utmost regret and after long and careful study. They are dictated by the need for economy and do not reflect any lessening of Canada's interest in the areas concerned or suggest that our relations with them have diminished in importance. The Governments concerned have been notified.

Further economies in the Department of External Affairs will be effected by substantial reductions in resident staff in other posts and missions, by cutting back on planned capital expenditures, by reductions in the cultural, information and military assistance programs and by continuing to scrutinize administrative expenses carefully, reducing them where possible."