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NAMIBIA: PEACEKEEPING MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, and the Minister of National Defence, the Honourable Bill McKnight, today announced that the majority of Canadian Forces personnel will return to Canada from Namibia tomorrow, as part of a phased withdrawal involving a number of national contingents.

Minister McKnight plans to greet the 189 logistics troops, who have been serving with the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG), on their arrival in Calgary.

"Both the United Nations and the people of Namibia are to be commended for the success of the peacekeeping mission," stated Mr. Clark. "I might also add it is most encouraging to see a mission completed on time and within budget." Stable conditions in Namibia have allowed the withdrawal of UNTAG's military component to begin before its mandate expires in March, enabling the UN to cover the cost of an earlier increase in the number of police which had proven necessary.

"We can all be proud of the Canadian Forces contribution to one of the largest and most successful UN operations to date," Mr. McKnight said. Nearly 500 troops served in two rotations with the Canadian contingent, which reached a peak strength of 260 and provided logistical support to UNTAG's military, police and civilian components in central and southern Namibia.

After a difficult start marked by fighting between nationalist guerrillas and South African-controlled forces last April, the UNTAG peacekeeping operation played a major role in creating conditions in which free and fair elections could be held in November. At that time, in addition to the Canadian Forces, there were 100 Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers, 50 Canadian election supervisors and 12 technical experts serving with UNTAG. Canada also provided 4000 ballot boxes for the elections. The election supervisors and experts have already

returned to Canada, along with about 30 military personnel. After the return tomorrow of the main group of Canadian soldiers, the RCMP officers and approximately 25 military personnel will remain in Namibia until March.

The work of the Constituent Assembly elected in November has progressed extremely well. The Assembly has unanimously endorsed in principle a draft constitution which provides for an entrenched bill of rights, an executive presidency responsible to a bicameral legislature elected by proportional representation, an independent judiciary, regular multiparty elections and abolition of the death penalty -- all in accord with the UN constitutional principles of 1982 strongly supported by Canada. Final approval of the constitution is expected later this month, with complete independence to follow in March.