



No. 34

February 17, 1992

McDOUGALL ANNOUNCES ADDITIONAL \$2 MILLION CONTRIBUTION FOR HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO COUNTRIES OF THE FORMER U.S.S.R.

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Barbara McDougall, today announced an increase in Canada's humanitarian assistance to countries of the former U.S.S.R. An additional \$2 million is being donated to the Canadian Red Cross, particularly for new humanitarian relief efforts in Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Moldova.

The new contribution comes in response to the January 30 appeal for \$52.7 million, launched by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. It brings to \$8 million Canada's contribution to the international campaign to aid the countries of the region through their first critical winter of independence.

"The recent Washington conference on economic assistance to the former Soviet Union proved the need for co-ordination and careful targeting of aid. I believe we are accomplishing these goals," said Mrs. McDougall. "This new contribution responds to specific needs identified by the International Red Cross. I am confident the Red Cross is the organization best placed to ensure that our aid reaches its destination."

The \$2 million will be used by the Canadian Red Cross for the purchase of medicines and medical supplies targeted for children in hospitals, pregnant women and the elderly.

The government has already provided \$6 million to the Canadian Red Cross for its relief program in Ukraine, Russia, the Baltic States, Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan.

The Canadian Red Cross welcomes cash donations to its Solidarity Assistance Program at any of its branch offices.

- 30 -

For further information, media representatives may contact:

Media Relations Office
External Affairs and International Trade Canada
(613) 995-1874

BACKGROUNDER

UPDATE ON CANADIAN HUMANITARIAN AIRLIFT TO THE FORMER U.S.S.R. AND BALTIC STATES

Medical Assistance

- This announcement brings to \$8 million Canada's contributions to the Canadian Red Cross's Solidarity Assistance Program of humanitarian relief in the countries of the former U.S.S.R. and the Baltic States.
- Of the \$6 million previously announced, \$4.5 million was earmarked for Russia and Ukraine, \$1 million for the Baltic States, \$250,000 for Armenia and \$250,000 for the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan.
- Red Cross personnel have conducted detailed needs assessments in each region targeted to receive Canadian supplies.
- The funds are being used for the purchase of approximately 180,000 kg of medicines and medical supplies for the most vulnerable groups: children in hospitals, pregnant women, and the elderly in and outside institutions. The Canadian airlift will enable hospital and home support for more than 435,000 patients for the next 12 months.

Operation Boreal

- The supplies are being airlifted from Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Trenton directly to their destinations by Department of National Defence (DND) aircraft.
- The International Federation of Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies and their local Russian, Ukrainian and Armenian field offices are providing truck transportation on the ground and are accompanying each shipment to its destination.
- The airlift to Ukraine is complete. Between January 27 and February 7, five planeloads of goods were delivered to hospitals in Kiev, Vinnitsa and Chernigov.
- The first of five shipments of supplies to Russia leaves CFB Trenton February 19. By the end of this month, DND aircraft will have also airlifted supplies to Perm, Chelyabinsk, Kirov, Ufa and Tomsk.
- Canada's humanitarian airlift to the Baltic States will be completed by March 4, with planes delivering aid directly to Tallinn, Estonia; Riga, Latvia; and Vilnius, Lithuania.
- The airlift to Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh is scheduled to take place March 6.
- In addition to the Canadian humanitarian airlift of medical supplies, the Canadian Forces has airlifted two shipments of European Community powdered milk to Moscow.

February 1992

BACKGROUNDER

HOW CANADIANS CAN HELP

Canadians have always responded generously to international appeals for assistance in times of emergency and disaster. Some citizens have often found unique and successful ways of making their own contribution to those in need, and their efforts are worthy of praise.

While donations of goods are made in the spirit of generosity, it is the consensus of experts in the field that in-kind gifts can sometimes lead to more headaches than relief.

- It is often impossible to ensure the quality of donated goods.
- Transportation costs can be extremely high, and, if the goods are inappropriate or in the wrong proportions, the money will not be well spent.
- Relief personnel on the ground can lose valuable time sorting and distributing items that are frequently available locally, or much closer to the area in need, at less cost.
- Donations of out-of-date medicines and medical supplies can do more harm than good. Food and clothing may be inappropriate for the region. In some parts of the world, items such as used clothing and blankets may be subject to import regulations requiring fumigation or wrapping.
- An emergency situation is not the time to start trying to establish a distribution network in unfamiliar territory.

In general, individuals wishing to help are encouraged to make financial contributions to internationally recognized, non-governmental agencies that have the experience and the contacts necessary to distribute aid quickly and efficiently. These organizations conduct detailed assessments and develop lists of items most desperately required. They can often buy the goods at special prices, ensuring that each dollar donated is well spent.

February 1992