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R E P O R T N O . 13

DIRECTORATE OF HISTORY

CANADIAN FORCES HEADQUARTERS

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R E P O R T NO. 13
DIRECTORATE OF HISTORY
CANADIAN FORCES HEADQUARTERS

19 December 1966

Canada and Peace-keeping Operations
Yemen - U.N.Y.C.M.

Purpose and Sources Used

1. The purpose of this report is to record the Canadian contribution to the United Nations Yemen Observer Mission (UNYOM) in the Yemen from 4 July 1963 to 4 September 1964. The United Nations supplied an "umbrella" under which it was intended the United Arab Republic and Saudi Arabia would cease military confrontation in the Yemen and would commence political discussions leading to a solution of their differences. The sources used in the compilation of this report include open publications and departmental headquarters files. The only papers of the Secretary of State for External Affairs that have been utilized are those appearing on the departmental files.

The Dispute

2. Two of the monarchist governments that remained in the eastern Arab world, Saudi Arabia and Yemen, were involved in 1962 in a rift with Egypt, which was under the rule of President Nasser. Nasser's policy included an intensive radio propaganda campaign against both Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

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3. Yemen, the most backward of the Arab monarchist states, was racked by rebellion on 17 September 1962. The rebel leader, Colonel Abdullah al-Salal, overthrew the monarchy of the Imam Mohammed al Badr and became president of the new republic. Nasser promptly recognized the Yemen Arab Republic. By the end of December 1962 the new republic was recognized by the United Nations and the United States of America. The revolutionary government controlled the cities and towns in the centre, the south and on the western sea coast, but the Yemeni tribesmen, who were intensely royalist, or anti-Salal, still resisted the new regime and controlled the north-west and north-east mountains and the deserts of the east. In order to contain the republican holdings and possibly overthrow Salal's government, Saudi Arabia was supporting the Yemeni tribesmen by the shipment of arms and other military supplies. Nasser's United Arab Republic (U.A.R.) sent arms, military personnel and supplies to consolidate the Salal regime.¹

United Nations Interest

4. In early 1963 U Thant, the Secretary General of the United Nations, became disturbed about the situation in Yemen and the external forces at work. The intervention of Saudi Arabia and the U.A.R. constituted a threat to the peace of the entire area. U Thant consulted with the representatives of the U.A.R., Yemen and Saudi Arabia and with their approval sent Ralph Bunche, the United Nations Under-secretary, to Yemen and the U.A.R. on a fact-finding mission in February and March 1963. Bunche was given authority to proceed to Saudi Arabia if he considered it

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necessary. The government of the U.S.A. sent Ellsworth Bunker, a retired U.S. diplomat, who had contributed to the solution of the problems in New West Guinea (West Irian), to Saudi Arabia on a "somewhat similar but unconnected mission".² Both Bunche and Bunker reported to the Secretary-General. As a result of the talks that they had with the heads of state of Yemen, U.A.R. and Saudi Arabia, agreement was reached on the terms of a disengagement.

5. U Thant reported to the Security Council on 29 April 1963 that each of the three governments confirmed "their acceptance of identical terms of disengagement in Yemen".³ This agreement was to terminate all support and aid from Saudi Arabia to the royalist forces in Yemen and to deny the use of Saudi Arabian territory to the royalist leaders; the U.A.R. undertook to begin a phased withdrawal of its troops from Yemen. During the withdrawal phase U.A.R. troops were to be held at their bases and were not to take part in field activities. In addition to the specific commitments of the U.A.R. and Saudi Arabia it was agreed that a demilitarized zone would be established 20 kilometres on each side of the Yemen-Saudi Arabian border, and impartial observers would be stationed in this demilitarized zone to check on the observance of the terms of disengagement. The observers were to have authority to travel beyond the limits of the demilitarized zone to certify the actions of Saudi Arabia and the U.A.R. in conformance with the cessation of support and the troop withdrawals respectively.⁴

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6. At the end of April Major-General Carl Von Horn, Chief of Staff of the United Nations Truce Supervisory Organization (UNTSC) in Jerusalem, was selected to proceed to the Yemen area for consultation and consideration of the size of the group that would be needed to fulfill the projected United Nations role. In this reconnaissance and planning mission General Von Horn was accompanied by a Canadian Army officer, Major E.R. Sharpe.⁵ However the Permanent Mission in New York was asked to inform the U.N. Secretariat that approval, given by the Canadian government, for Major Sharpe to accompany General Von Horn did not imply approval of Canadian participation in Yemen operations. Such further approval would only be given after consideration by the Canadian government of a formal request from the Secretary-General.⁶

7. The Secretary-General reported to the Security Council that in his preliminary assessment a requirement existed for "not more than fifty observers" and that they "will be needed for three or four months, at the most". He also considered that for transportation and patrol purposes three or four helicopters, and the same number of aircraft of the Otter type, and some jeeps and lorries "should suffice".⁷

8. On 3 May 1963 the Department of External Affairs advised Air Chief Marshall F.R. Miller, Chairman, Chiefs of Staff (C.C.C.S.), that Canada should anticipate being asked to supply Otter aircraft, with officers and crew, for the Yemen operation. He suggested that preliminary studies

