



UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL



Distr.
GENERAL

S/11310/Add.4
25 October 1974

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

FURTHER PROGRESS REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE UNITED NATIONS DISENGAGEMENT OBSERVER FORCE

1. Following my last progress report on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) (S/11310/Add.3), the Force has continued to carry out the tasks entrusted to it in supervision of the Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian forces and the Protocol to that agreement in accordance with Security Council resolution 350 (1974) of 31 May 1974.

Composition

2. The composition of UNDOF on 25 October 1974 was as follows:

Austria	498
Canada	121
Peru	353
Poland	93
Military Observers (transferred from UNTSO)	88
Military Police	11
Headquarters staff, including forward headquarters	38
	<hr/> 1,202

3. In response to a request by the Secretary-General, the Austrian Government made available an engineering platoon to assist in the construction of winter accommodation for UNDOF troops. This unit, which arrived on 12 September 1974, consists of one officer and 23 other ranks.

Location

4. The Austrian battalion headquarters and the Polish engineer and transport elements are still in Kanakir near the Syrian town of Saassa, 40 kilometres south-west of Damascus. Work is in progress on the new camp for these two units at Faquar, 8 kilometres east of the B line of disengagement. The Austrian engineering platoon has already moved to the new camp and it is expected that the

camp will be ready for occupation by the end of November. The Peruvian battalion base camp and the Canadian logistic unit and signal elements remain in Camp Bolivar, in Israeli-held territory, a few kilometres south of Quneitra. UNDOF headquarters continues to be located in the UNTSO building in Damascus with some of its elements, i.e. civilian administration, logistics and personnel, located in another building.

Deployment

5. There have been no major changes in deployment since my last progress report. The Austrian battalion continues to man positions in the northern part of the area of separation while the Peruvian battalion is still deployed in the southern portion. Following the review to which reference was made in paragraph 4 of my last progress report (S/11310/Add.3), some UNDOF positions have been withdrawn; new ones have been established with a view to carrying out the tasks of the Force more effectively. In addition, plans are presently being prepared to establish more positions as well as increasing the patrolling activity in the area of separation. The full implementation of these plans will necessarily depend to a large extent on progress made in clearing the many minefields which still exist in the area.

Minefields

6. The continued existence of large and uncleared minefields within the area of separation constitutes an ever present hazard to both UNDOF troops and the Syrian civilian population. Negotiations are continuing with both parties to enable Syrian army units to carry out another large-scale mine clearing operation, such as that conducted in June 1974. However, no progress has as yet been made. In the meantime, UNDOF's small mine clearing unit is fully engaged in mine clearing operations in areas near UNDOF's positions. Syrian police and civilians have also continued to clear mines in limited areas.

Activities

7. During the period under review UNDOF continued to implement the Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian forces and the Protocol to that Agreement in accordance with its mandate. It has made regular bi-weekly inspections as well as special inspections of the areas of limited armaments and forces. In carrying out this task, it has continued to receive the full co-operation of both parties. UNDOF has also received complaints from each party; these have been investigated and reported to the party concerned. In addition, UNDOF has drawn the attention of the parties to violations it has itself observed with a view to having corrective action taken.

8. At the request of the Syrian authorities UNDOF exercised its good offices on behalf of three Syrian civilians under Israeli detention since 16 and 18 June 1974. In agreement with the Israeli authorities, the three civilians were handed over to UNDOF personnel on 16 September; they were subsequently transferred to the custody of the Syrian authorities for their return to the Madj El Shams area.

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9. The marking of the B line, which was still proceeding at the time of the last progress report (S/11310/Add.3, para. 9), has been completed. In the case of both the A and the B lines however, additional markers are required in some areas to make those lines more readily identifiable on the ground. Work on this is proceeding.

10. UNDOF continues to receive full co-operation from both parties. The situation within the area of separation and in its immediate vicinity remains calm although each side continues to maintain substantial military forces in relatively close proximity to one another.

11. On 29 July 1974 an Austrian soldier was seriously injured as a result of a mine accident on Mount Hermon. With the assistance of both parties, the wounded soldier was successfully evacuated. However, a helicopter which had been made available by the Syrian authorities to assist in the evacuation crashed on Mount Hermon while attempting to land in difficult conditions. Fortunately, there were no injuries.

12. On 9 August 1974 a United Nations aircraft, flying from Ismailia to Damascus in the established air corridor, crashed as a result of anti-aircraft fire north-east of the village of Ad Dimas. All nine Canadians aboard the aircraft were killed. The Interim Force Commander convened a Board consisting of a Chairman and two officers drawn from UNDOF to inquire into and report on the circumstances surrounding this incident which resulted in such a tragic loss of life. The Board has completed its report, which will be examined in conjunction with other national investigations not yet submitted. In the meantime, on the basis of the interim recommendations made by the Board, efforts are currently being made to work out procedures to avoid the recurrence of such an incident.
