

M I S C E L L A N E O U S

CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS EMERGENCY FORCE AND THE ICRC

Under its mandate from the Security Council resolution 341 of 27 October 1973, the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) in the Middle East is directed "to co-operate with the International Committee of the Red Cross in its humanitarian endeavours in the area".

The United Nations Secretary-General submitted to the Security Council a report on the first six months (from 26 October 1973 to 1 April 1974) of UNEF activity.¹ That document and the Addenda which cover the period from April to June 1974 explain various aspects of that co-operation. We give below the main relevant passages:

(ii) **Humanitarian activities and co-operation with the International Committee of the Red Cross**

43. Under its terms of reference (S/11052/Add.1, para. 2 (b)), the Force is required to "co-operate with the International Committee of the Red Cross ICRC in its humanitarian endeavours in the area". Accordingly, UNEF has established close contact with the ICRC representatives and has extended its assistance in the negotiations conducted by the parties on humanitarian matters.

44. As set out below, UNEF has likewise been instrumental, in co-operation with the Red Cross as appropriate, in carrying out the exchange of prisoners of war and transfer of civilians, operating supply convoys for the town of Suez and for Egyptian troops on the east bank of the Suez Canal and arranging for the recovery of the bodies of soldiers killed during the October war.

¹ Document S/11248, reproduced in full in *UN Monthly Chronicle*, April 1974.

(iii) Exchange of prisoners of war and transfer of civilians

45. The exchange of prisoners of war, including the wounded, was part of the Agreement regarding the implementation of Security Council resolutions 338 (1973) and 339 (1973) signed by the military representatives of Egypt and Israel on 11 November 1973 (S/11056/Add.3, annex). The modalities for implementation of that Agreement were discussed by the parties at meetings held under the auspices of the Force Commander. The exchange of prisoners of war, which also included evacuation of the wounded from the town of Suez, began on 15 November 1973 with the assistance of the ICRC, which made aircraft available for this purpose. The repatriation of prisoners of war was completed on 22 November 1973.

46. Fifteen subsequently captured prisoners were handed over by the Israeli to the Egyptian authorities on 14 February in the presence of UNEF officers and ICRC representatives. On 25 February another 56 prisoners were repatriated from Israel to Egypt.

47. ICRC representatives and UNEF officers on 4 March 1974 witnessed the transfer in the zone of disengagement of 65 civilians from Israel to Egypt and the return of two civilians from Egypt to Israel. On the same date, 200 students crossed from Israeli-held territory into Egypt.

(iv) Convoys of supplies to Egyptian troops on the eastern bank of the Suez Canal and to the town of Suez

48. At the first meeting held at kilometre marker 109 on the Cairo-Suez road on 27 October 1973 between military representatives of Egypt and Israel, in the presence of UNEF officers, an agreement was reached regarding the transfer of supplies to Egyptian troops on the east bank of the Suez Canal. In pursuance of that agreement, UNEF organized a system of truck convoys, using vehicles made available to UNEF by the Egyptian authorities. On 28 October, the first lorries of a convoy comprising 125 trucks proceeded from kilometre marker 101 on the Cairo-Suez road, through Israeli-held territory, to a point on the west bank of the Suez Canal, where the lorries were unloaded. Members of the Israeli Defence Forces inspected the contents at the unloading point under UNEF and Red

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Cross supervision. Egyptian soldiers crossed the Suez Canal from the east and loaded the supplies into amphibious vehicles for transfer to the east bank of the Canal where UNEF personnel were also stationed to supervise the unloading operation.

49. The parties agreed on 28 October 1973 to an additional convoy of 50 truckloads of supplies which, following the same procedure, started moving across the Canal on 7 November.

50. Pursuant to paragraphs C and D of the Agreement of 11 November 1973 (S/11056/Add.3), the town of Suez would receive daily supplies of food, water and medicine and there would be no impediment to the movement of non-military supplies to the east bank of the Canal. With the agreement of the parties, the convoys to both the town of Suez and the east bank proceeded at regular intervals as from 15 November under UNEF's responsibility and with UNEF drivers. At the request of the Secretary-General, the Governments of Austria, Finland and Sweden provided additional military personnel as drivers for these supply trucks. With the commencement of the process of disengagement of forces, these supply convoys ceased to operate on 26 January 1974.

(v) Search for bodies

51. A meeting between Israeli and Egyptian representatives took place at kilometre marker 101 on 27 January 1974, with a UNEF representative in attendance, in order to co-ordinate the operation for the recovery of the bodies of soldiers killed during the hostilities in the Suez Canal area (Operation Omega). UNEF assistance in carrying out this operation was requested by the parties and by ICRC.

52. It was agreed that teams comprising Egyptian and Israeli representatives as well as a UNEF officer or UNTSO military observer would, as from 29 January, conduct searches on the east bank of the Canal in Egyptian territory and in Israeli-controlled areas. Bodies would also be exhumed from cemeteries in the presence of ICRC officials who would arrange for their hand-over.

53. In order to expedite the operation, and with the agreement of the parties, specially trained dog teams have been used with

success by UNEF since 18 February. The operation, which was to have been concluded on 5 March, was extended by agreement between the parties until 31 March. The bodies recovered have been turned over to the respective national authorities.