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(Press Release)

Sec. Gen. concludes X-mas visit to UN Emergency Force

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SECRETARY-GENERAL CONCLUDES CHRISTMAS VISIT TO UN EMERGENCY FORCE

(The following was received here from a UN Information Officer at UNEF Headquarters, Gaza. Although delayed, it is being issued for reference.)

United Nations Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold left Gaza by air Wednesday (25 December) afternoon for Cairo after a two-and-a-half day visit as the Christmas guest of Major General E.L.M. Burns, Commander of the United Nations Emergency Force.

The Secretary-General spent the morning of Christmas Day completing his personal visits to each of the UNEF battalions with a flight in a UNEF Otter aircraft to El Quseima, on the international frontier in the Sinai desert, where a company of the Yugoslav Reconnaissance Battalion is stationed.

Accompanied by General Burns, Mr. Hammarskjold traveled by jeep over desert sand tracks about three miles to the headquarters of the company from which the Yugoslav battalion sends out armored scout cars on patrol. Mr. Hammarskjold extended season's greetings to the company and expressed pleasure at the opportunity his visit afforded him for personal contact with members of UNEF.

After an inspection of the Yugoslav company, Mr. Hammarskjold and General Burns visited the operations tent where the battalion commander, Colonel Kljadic, showed them a map of the terrain patrolled by his troops. "I have followed your operations closely on maps, as I have those of all UNEF contingents," Mr. Hammarskjold told Colonel Kljadic, "but I assure you the work you are doing is more meaningful to me seeing it on the ground."

Also at El Quseima, a small oasis of palm trees, Mr. Hammarskjold and General Burns inspected the Norwegian medical detachment of 15 men. From El Quseima, they flew to El Arish, the principal airfield of UNEF, where they were met by Squadron Leader Keith Sam. Their stay at El Arish was brief and included a look at the hangars and headquarters from which the Royal Canadian Air Force operates the two C-119's, four Dakotas and five Otters that make up the UNEF air transport.

Returning to Gaza, Mr. Hammarskjold visited the headquarters of the Egyptian-Israeli Mixed Armistice Commission where he told Lieut. Colonel Maurice Brown how much he appreciated the work of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization.

(more)

Also in Gaza, Mr. Hammarskjold and General Burns looked in at the men's mess, wished the soldiers a Merry Christmas and thanked them for their contribution to UNEF.

#### UNEF Contributes to Refugee Children

At the airfield in Gaza, Mr. Hammarskjold handed to Henry R. Labouisse, the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, and Roy Lucas, Director in Gaza for UNRWA, a check in the amount of \$3,600 for assistance to a refugee children's program. The money was collected in voluntary contributions from troops and civilians on the staff of UNEF. "Everybody in UNEF is concerned with the human problem of the refugees," Mr. Hammarskjold said, "and this check represents an expression from deep in the hearts of the UNEF people living among them. I am especially pleased with this concrete evidence of the close bonds existing between UNRWA and UNEF," he declared.

Speaking on behalf of UNRWA, Mr. Labouisse said he was "touched by the knowledge of how much UNEF members appreciate the work we are doing in UNRWA and, on behalf of the children to whom this gift will mean so much, I thank you."

#### Christmas Eve Services with Swedish Company

Mr. Hammarskjold and General Burns attended Christmas Eve prayer service in the new chapel of the Swedish Headquarters company in Gaza and later were guests at dinner.

After talking with Swedish soldiers, Mr. Hammarskjold and General Burns drove to the Danish-Norwegian headquarters at Beit Hanun, eight miles north of Gaza. They sat with the soldiers in the large mess hall, bright with the season's decorations; talked with the men in the non-commissioned officers mess; and had coffee and cakes with the officers.

The Secretary-General and his host then drove to Khan Yunis, 23 miles south of Gaza, to the headquarters of the Colombian battalion, where they assisted in the distribution of presents to the soldiers. They also joined the congregation of Colombian soldiers who packed the tent to celebrate midnight mass.

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