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XMAS IN THE CANAL ZONE

It's "business as usual" in the Suez Canal, as ships of 23 nations steam to and fro with the Royal Navy docking and handling them at either end; R.A.F. launches escorting them through; and Tommy holding the zone safe. 260 ships a week passing in safety. But even a shepherdess might turn out to be a terrorist in disguise, so she too must be checked. It's a hard, nervy life our men lead - a sort of continuous siege. But at Fanara NAAFI depot there's no shortage of willing workers to see there's no hold up with the Christmas celebrations.

Men from Mauritius give a hand with the birds. Intimidation has forced most of the Egyptian workers to leave British work in the Zone. But the services are making sure that the youngsters still living there will have a grand time at Kabrit R.A.F. station.

As far as possible, Christmas is kept as at home. In the morning there's a service at St. George's Church. Among the congregation is the G.O.C. Lieutenant-General Sir George Erskine and Lady Erskine. It's a peaceful, garrison-life scene, hard to realize that round and about murder stalks to strike in the dark; that there's a reward of a hundred pounds offered for the murder of an officer - a thousand pounds if it should be Sir George himself, seen here with daughter Polly.

But though it's Christmas, the R.A.F. too must keep its watch and at Deversoir, Vampire pilots are briefed for patrol.

Nearby, men of the R.A.F. Regiment man a road block to prevent sneak attacks by fast cars on station buildings.

The canal road traffic keeps the unit busy. An innocent-looking lorry may contain disguised terrorists. It may even carry stolen service property. Nothing must pass unchecked. Day and night the watch goes on - but with time off today for the Christmas dinner - and how well they've earned it!

Solution of the problem still seems far off but it is with confidence and gratitude that we toast our men in the Canal Zone as a New Year dawns on a troubled world.