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OVERSEAS TRIP BY MINISTER FOR DEFENCE

Statement by the Acting Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. J. McEwen

Mr. John McEwen, Acting Prime Minister, announced today that the Minister for Defence, Senator Shane Paltridge, would be leaving Australia on 19th January for a visit to a number of South-East Asian countries, Japan and the United States. In South-East Asia the Minister will visit Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam.

Mr. McEwen said that this would be the first time that Senator Paltridge had had an opportunity since becoming Minister for Defence to visit South-East Asia and to acquaint himself at first hand with the problems relating to Australia's defence interests there. In Malaysia he would have discussions with members of the Government on defence matters of common concern. He will also visit units of the three Australian Services which are stationed in Malaysia.

In Thailand he will have discussions with members of the Government and will call upon the Secretary-General of SEATO at the Organization's headquarters in Bangkok. He will also visit the R.A.A.F. unit at Ubon.

In South Vietnam he will be discussing with members of the Government and the United States representatives there the present situation created by aggression from Communist-controlled North Vietnam. He hopes also to visit some of the Australian Service personnel in South Vietnam.

Mr. McEwen said that during his visit to Japan, Senator Paltridge hoped to meet Ministers and Service officers.

In the United States the Minister will have discussions with the Secretary of Defence, Mr. McNamara, the Secretary of State, Mr. Rusk, and other defence authorities. The Minister will also inspect various Defence installations during his visit, including Defoe's shipbuilding yards where the Charles F. Adams destroyers ordered by Australia are under construction and also General Dynamics at Fort Worth where the F111A strike aircraft, which is being purchased by Australia, is under construction.

Mr. McEwen said that on Senator Paltridge's departure, he would be Acting Minister for Defence until the return of the Prime Minister.

CANBERRA,
12th January, 1965.