



PRIME MINISTER'S TOUR OF SOUTH-EAST ASIA

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SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. HAROLD HOLT,  
TO THE AUSTRALIAN 105 FIELD BATTERY AT BIEN HOA,

VIET NAM

23RD APRIL, 1966

Major, Gentlemen :

I have had an opportunity today to see our own Australian serving men on the spot and I am very glad to be able to bring to you not merely the good wishes of your fellow countrymen, but the pride we feel in the reputation you've built for Australia by your service in this area of the world.

We regard this as a critical battle area. We regard the issues for which you are fighting as amongst the most important that any group of countries could fight for in this day and generation.

This is literally in our judgment one of the great critical battle areas for the forces of freedom in the world today, and Australia has made a valuable contribution. Although our numbers have been small, the assistance to morale, the actual achievements in the operations of war in which you have been engaged have been greatly appreciated by the people and government of South Viet Nam and certainly they have been greatly valued by our Allies of the United States and of the other forces who are fighting in this area of the world.

I came here knowing that you had built up in the infantry and the artillery a splendid reputation, but I can assure you that the comments made to me by the Prime Minister, by the Head of State, by the Head of the American forces, have all confirmed the high reputation which we had gathered you had established for yourselves here. You have served with distinction to yourselves and, of course for pride in your own country.

We think of this area as one in which not only is a battle to be fought and won for the freedom of the people who are wanting to live out their own lives in peace, but here is an opportunity in this part of the world, through the civic jobs that you have been carrying out, to establish that the age-old enemies of mankind can be conquered. And this is perhaps the most rewarding part of your duties, other than those in the actual military operations themselves.

Now I am going to say a few words to you on Anzac Day so I won't give you too much of a bash here this afternoon, but although I was a very poor gunner for a few months in the A.I.F. myself, I think I recognise a good regiment of artillery when I see one and I congratulate you, Major Tedder, and all your men, on a first-class artillery battery representing Australia in South Viet Nam.

I know how much you are all looking forward to getting back to Australia. You will find a wonderful welcome for you on your return and until then good fortune in your operations and a happy journey on your way home.