

15 September 1973

FRENCH NUCLEAR TESTS

France's withdrawal of notice of a danger zone in part of French Polynesia had not ended Australia's anxiety about French nuclear tests, the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Whitlam, said tonight.

The notice, signed by the French Minister for the Armed Forces, appeared in the French Government Gazette of 14 September. It cancelled, as from midnight 15 September, the notice issued on 4 July "prohibiting" ships from entering a broad zone of the high seas around Moruroa Atoll and other islands.

Mr. Whitlam said that if yesterday's cancellation of the shipping notice meant the end of French nuclear tests in the Pacific it would be universally welcomed, but the French Government had given no such indication.

Mr. Whitlam recalled that in 1970 and 1971 a similar cancellation had been followed, after a break of several weeks, by a resumption of testing at a few days' notice. Whether this would happen again this year might not be known for some time.

Mr. Whitlam also recalled that the French Minister for the Armed Forces, M. Galley, was reported to have told a press conference on 31 August that France would not give an undertaking to cease atmospheric tests or to remove its testing centre from Polynesia.

Australia would not slacken its efforts, by all appropriate means, to obtain a permanent halt to all nuclear tests, especially those in the atmosphere, Mr. Whitlam said.
