



**DEPARTMENT OF
FOREIGN
AFFAIRS**

NO

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CHINESE NUCLEAR WEAPONS TEST

The Prime Minister, Mr Whitlam, said today that the Australian Government had received confirmation that the Chinese Government had exploded a nuclear weapon device in the atmosphere over its territory yesterday.

The Australian Government understood that the Chinese explosion had been somewhat less than a megaton in size, and that it appeared to have occurred at Lop Nor at about 4 p.m. yesterday.

Mr Whitlam said that it was a matter of deep concern to the Australian Government that the Chinese Government had conducted a further nuclear test which was likely to lead to the deposit of radio-active fallout not only within its own territory but over a wide area including, in the longer term, Australia.

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations with China in December 1972, the Australian Government had made known to Chinese leaders its opposition to Chinese nuclear weapon tests on a number of occasions. On 10 April 1973, the Government made a formal protest to the Chinese Government expressing Australia's strong opposition to the conduct of nuclear weapon tests and reaffirmed the Australian Government's view that atmospheric nuclear weapons testing was contrary to international law; during his visit to China in May 1973 Dr Cairns re-stated the Australian position to Premier Chou En-lai; he himself had issued a statement expressing deep concern following the last Chinese nuclear test on 27 June 1973; and soon afterwards formal

notes of protest had been delivered both to the Chinese Foreign Ministry in Peking and the Chinese Embassy in Australia. Most recently, he had vigorously re-stated the Australian position during his meeting with Chairman Mao Tse-tung on 2 November 1973.

Since China did not accept the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice and was not a party to the 1928 General Act for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes, it was not feasible for Australia to initiate proceedings against China in the Court. Nevertheless, the Australian Government considered that the Chinese Government, as well as the French Government, had a clear obligation towards the international community to prevent the dangers of environmental pollution. The present Australian Government had consistently opposed nuclear weapon testing by all countries and would continue to work vigorously for a complete cessation of such testing.