

MR. HAYDEN INTERVIEWED ON INDO-CHINA SITUATION

FROM ABC'S 7:00 PM TELEVISION NEWS

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Mr. Hayden:

It's quite clear that there has been a marked deterioration in the situation there. There are chilling prospects if this escalation were to get out of hand. I won't go into the details unless you want me to. But Australians don't have to be alarmed in terms of them being directly implicated but we do have to be concerned because we do have responsibilities as part of the world brotherhood of mankind.

Question:

Is the Government taking the right approach, in your view?

Mr. Hayden:

As far as I can judge, they are doing as much they can. Mr. Peacock is putting Australia's view wherever he can and trying to use whatever influence he has available. I regret that we haven't played a more positive and constructive role through Southeast Asia, especially in Vietnam, because if we had, we would have more clout in this situation. But I don't want to exaggerate that just as I don't want to under-estimate the sort of influence we can exert in this sort of situation.

Question:

You said in Parliament that Australia didn't appear to be carrying out an even-handed policy towards Vietnam and China. Could you expand on that?

Mr. Hayden:

What I was pointing out there was that in the initial comments made by the Prime Minister on this unfortunate conflict, it was reported in the newspapers that he was very heavily favouring China and almost exclusively blaming Vietnam for the conflict. Now, I don't think it's as simple as that. I don't think it is as simple as that. I don't take sides one way or the other. There is no room for barracking in this -- it's too serious. I've tried to sort it out and both sides are making claims and counter-claims. What we've got to recognise is that Vietnam shouldn't be in Kampuchea and China shouldn't be in Vietnam; they are both wrong according to international law. We need to, as much as we can, resolve this.