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FURTHER AUSTRALIAN MILITARY ASSISTANCE FOR
THE DEFENCE OF MALAYSIA

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

Mr. J. McEwen, the Acting Prime Minister said this evening that members of Cabinet have been closely following recent developments in the Malaysian area and have given consideration to a request for further aid received from the Malaysian Government.

"The Australian Government has now decided to extend further military assistance for the defence of the area," he said.

Mr. McEwen said that the Australian Government viewed with concern the substantial continuing build-up of Indonesian forces in Borneo and the steady increase in infiltration across the Malacca and Singapore Straits into Malaya and Singapore. This heavy build-up has been reported to the President of the U.N. Security Council by the Malaysian Government, which has advised the Security Council of the seriousness of the threat of more intensive Indonesian attacks against Malaysia in 1965.

These developments had already required the British Government to deploy considerable reinforcements to the area.

In view of all the circumstances and in accordance with the pledge previously given, the Australian Government had concluded that the deployment of additional Australian field units into Borneo in the defence of Malaysia was now necessary.

He said that an Australian engineer squadron had been for some time assisting in road and airfield construction in the Borneo territories.

An Australian force is now to serve in this area, in company with Malaysian and British forces.

This would be the Australian battalion in the Commonwealth Strategic Reserve in Malaya. On this arrangement, this battalion would now serve in Borneo in rotation with Malaysian and British units. In addition, an Army Special Air Service unit from Australia would be made available to carry out appropriate military tasks in the defence of Malaysia. This unit will also serve, as required, in rotation with British units in the Borneo territories.

Mr. McEwen said that, in addition to the current defence aid programme which would continue throughout this year, further aid proposals for the development of the Malaysian Armed Services were also under examination by technical experts. The result would be placed before the Australian Government in the near future.

Mr. McEwen said that he had been in communication with Sir Robert Menzies while the situation was under study.

Mr. McEwen stressed the Australian Government's deep concern at the atmosphere of tension and conflict which the Indonesian "confrontation" policy had produced. The Australian Government would continue to use all its influence for a peaceful outcome in full awareness that the progress and economic development of the region of South East Asia depended on conditions of security and stability.

Mr. McEwen said that the Australian Government believed that the restoration of peace in the area would depend on observance of the principle of respect for the political and territorial integrity of the member countries of the area. Mr. McEwen recalled his statement of 18th January that the Australian Government continued to hope for changes in Indonesian policy which would allow peace, security and prosperity to be established in the area.

Mr. McEwen said that these new decisions were relevant to the Australian pledge to support Malaysia in defence of her territorial integrity and political independence. "Malaysia," he pointed out, "is our Commonwealth partner and near neighbour."

Mr. McEwen recalled that Australian forces have been stationed for some ten years in the Malayan area as part of the Commonwealth Strategic Reserve, and have already been engaged on sea, land and in the air, pursuant to the policy of maintaining the integrity and independence of a Commonwealth country.

"Some six ships of the R.A.N.," he said, "have been engaged in patrolling and other duties in Malaysian waters."

The Australian Army battalion group had made a significant contribution in dealing with the Communist guerillas on the Malayan Peninsula and had more recently acted against Indonesian infiltrators in Malaya. The RAAF had fighter aircraft, helicopters and transport aircraft stationed in Malaya.

Mr. McEwen said that, as is known, in addition to the deployment of forces, Australia had also provided military aid in the form of equipment, ammunition, training in Australia, and secondment of Australian officers to the Malaysian Armed Services, with a view to assisting the development and expansion of these Services.

CANBERRA,

3rd February, 1965.