

TALKS WITH THE PRIME MINISTER OF THAILAND

Statement by the Prime Minister, Mr. Harold Holt

The Cabinet met this morning with the Prime Minister of Thailand, Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn, and the Foreign Minister, Mr. Thanet Khoman, and the Minister for National Development, Mr. Pote Sarasin.

Discussions were frank and cordial. They covered a wide range of subjects. We are partners in the SEATO Treaty, each having a vital concern for the stability of South-East Asia and an intense interest and close identity of view about the facts and the significance of the situation in South Viet Nam.

We reviewed together the discussions which we had each had with Mr. Humphrey and Governor Harriman, and also the discussions which the Australian Government held a little earlier in Canberra with the British Minister of Defence, Mr. Denis Healey. We both share a belief in the importance of the continuance of a British presence on the mainland of Asia as a stabilizing and moderating influence, helpful to the peace, security and well-being of the area.

We also shared in a valuable exchange on matters relating to the social and economic development of the countries of South-East Asia. We agreed that it was important to look beyond the immediate need to contain aggressive Communism by military measures and that it is necessary simultaneously to seek social and economic development of the area. In this context we both welcomed the initiatives at the Honolulu talks by the Governments of South Viet Nam and the United States to build up the social and economic fabric of South Viet Nam. In Thailand too, Australia has made substantial contributions, which were fully acknowledged by Field Marshal Thanom, to the development of Thailand under the SEATO Aid Plan and also under the Colombo Plan, and will gladly continue to assist Thailand in her efforts to maintain a sound and rapid rate of development. Further, we each look forward to a continuation in the development of trade between our two countries.

Our situation as friendly allies has been fortified by the discussions which took place.

CANBERRA,
24th February, 1966.