

PRIME MINISTER'S TOUR OF SOUTH-EAST ASIA

66/063

Statement Released by the Prime Minister,
Mr. Harold Holt on his arrival in Bangkok, Thailand.

26th APRIL, 1966

This morning I was with Australian servicemen commemorating Anzac Day at their operational base in Vietnam.

Less than two hours later, this afternoon, I was with the Australian Air Force Squadron at Ubon.

The fact that I was able to visit Australian Forces in Vietnam and Thailand in this short space of time is a forcible reminder of the proximity of events in South-East Asia and consequently of the vital importance of the efforts which have been made, both bilaterally and jointly, within the SEATO framework for building-up defence preparedness.

Australia is determined to be a good ally and its Government is fully alive to its responsibilities.

These include Australia having a military capacity enabling timely and effective contributions to collective regional security.

Australia is at present meeting commitments in Vietnam and Malaysia.

Relations between Australia and Thailand have quickened and expanded remarkably in recent years.

It was a great honour for Australia to receive a State visit from Their Majesties the King and Queen in 1962.

I look forward to the audience which His Majesty is graciously giving me on the present trip.

I also look forward to meeting again your Prime Minister and the Ministers of his Government who earlier this year paid an official visit to Australia.

In the discussions between the two Governments in Canberra we found an identity of views on Vietnam, both Governments recognising the essential nature of the conflict as Communist aggression through infiltration, terror, subversion and direct military attack.

My visit to Bangkok will enable us to carry this discussion forward, in the intimate manner of close allies.

I shall have the benefit of the views of the Thai Ministers and in turn will give an account of my visit to Vietnam.

I have come away from Saigon reinforced in my views of the crucial nature of the struggle in Vietnam and fortified by the steadfastness and determination I found there.

Australia and Thailand work together as friends and partners in regional and international agencies for social and economic development, including the Colombo Plan, the Asia Development Bank and ECAFE, the latter having its headquarters here in Bangkok.

We have the same approach to regional co-operation for economic development, technical aid and the sharing of skills,

In our bilateral associations and through international instrumentalities Australia has become fully acquainted with Thailand's notable record of domestic achievements in economic and social progress.

It is a matter for satisfaction that in a modest way, Australia has participated, through programmes of economic aid in this record of growth of developments.

It is Australia's intention to continue with these joint enterprises which are planned and carried out with the efficient and purposeful co-operation of the Thai Government.

I look forward with much pleasure to my short stay in the beautiful and historic city of Bangkok with its happy blend of the charm of tradition and the revolution of modernisation.
