

PRIME MINISTER'S TOUR OF SOUTH-EAST ASIA

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Final

Press Conference given by the Prime Minister,  
Mr. Harold Holt in Bangkok, Thailand

26TH APRIL, 1966

Ladies and gentlemen, this gathering had actually been arranged when it was thought I would not be having any discussions with you at the airport on my arrival, but we did have, as you will recall, a short interview there, and perhaps what I should do today is just give you a brief account of what has been covered today and then give you an opportunity to ask me anything you like about these activities.

We shall not have a great deal of time together as you will have already gathered, as my Australian colleagues with the press have discovered, there has not been very many time slots left on the programme for me by those who have made the arrangements.

We find that today has been another very crowded one.

This morning I was able to return the visit to the Prime Minister and to meet him and his colleagues in the Cabinet.

You may remember that when he was in Australia he and two of his senior ministerial colleagues had discussions with us in the Cabinet Room at Canberra and I regard it as a very fortunate development that so soon after our talks there, after an interval in which very important developments have occurred in this region of the world, and following so closely on my own visit to South Vietnam and other visits by Ministers here to other countries in the region, we have been able to have a very informative and, I think I can claim, mutually valuable exchange of views.

Following those talks our Ambassador here, Mr. Loomes had a working lunch at which I was able to meet several of the senior diplomatic representatives from the United Kingdom, the United States and New Zealand together with many of our own senior officials and that provided a useful opportunity for further talks.

After lunch we made the journey by heli-copter to His Majesty's palace where we had the advantage of a very interesting talk with the king.

He asked me to convey his greetings and good wishes to the people of Australia and expressed his appreciation for the co-operation which we have developed between our two countries.

Tonight I am to be entertained to dinner by the Prime Minister and this will round off for me what has been a very pleasant and I think quite valuable visit to Thailand.

Tomorrow morning we leave for Kuala Lumpur to begin another phase of my tour of those areas of South-East Asia in which Australian troops are stationed.

QUESTION: What impression have you formed regarding Thailand's security position in relation to the Communist insurgency in

the north-east?

MR. HOLT: Well we did discuss these matters but I don't think that as a guest in the country it is for me to offer my assessments publicly of the local situation.

I would say that the Government is very sensitive to the danger and pressures which come from Communist infiltration.

They are aware of developments in various parts of the country and I gathered that the Government was capable of dealing effectively with them.

Q. In the course of your discussions with the Thai Government was the possibility raised of further strengthening under the aegis of SEATO a bigger Australian force in Thailand.

MR. HOLT: I don't know who has been conveying an impression that at any stage I referred to an enlarged Australian force, I think that if you will study the language of any comment I have made it does not give rise to that interpretation.

I have indicated the extent to which we have announced the contribution which we have announced in the various places.

I haven't sought to enlarge on that or to enlarge our contribution.

Q. It was reported in one of the papers this afternoon that you may send more troops to Thailand?

MR. HOLT: I don't know where the report emanated but there is no foundation from any comment which I have made.

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