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VISIT OF U.S. MISSION

Statement by the Prime Minister, Mr Harold Holt

President Johnson's special representatives, General Maxwell Taylor and Mr Clark Clifford, arrive in Canberra tomorrow morning. Accompanied by Ambassador Clark, they are to commence talks with me and some of my senior colleagues at the Lodge at noon. We will have a working lunch and continue our talks through the afternoon.

If necessary we shall meet again in the course of Sunday. Other Ministers present will be the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade and Industry, Mr McEwen, the Treasurer, Mr McMahon, the Minister for External Affairs, Mr Hasluck, and the Minister for Defence, Mr Fairhall.

This visit will be part of the series General Taylor and Mr Clifford are making at the request of President Johnson to the group of countries represented at the Manila Summit Conference of October last year. One of their purposes will be to canvass the desirability, time and place of another such meeting. We had agreed at Manila that it was desirable we should confer again. The question of another meeting has been discussed informally by me with four of the national leaders who attended the Manila Conference with whom I have come into direct personal contact in the course of the year - Prime Minister Ky, Mr Holyoake, President Park and President Johnson. We feel that it would be useful to meet again, but it has been my own view that this meeting should occur after the Presidential election has been held in South Vietnam.

Tomorrow's meeting comes within a sequence of exchanges, not only between Australia and the United States, but in various forms between the countries represented at Manila. The Foreign Ministers of all the countries met in Washington in April and there have been subsequent discussions between Ambassadors, in addition to extensive diplomatic communication.

Australian/American consultations are continuous at the diplomatic level, supplemented from time to time by visits of Government leaders or representatives to the United States or to Australia. The present visit falls in this latter category.

As President Johnson has publicly indicated, the purpose of this particular visit is to follow up the assessment made by Secretary McNamara from his recent mission to Vietnam, and to discuss fully with the Manila Conference group of nations all aspects of the situation there. We welcome it as a practical and further expression of the known desire of the United States Government to conduct its policies in relation to Vietnam in full consultation with its allies.

The visit will be most valuable in sustaining at the top levels of government of the participating countries a close exchange of views about the conduct of our combined effort to bring an end to communist aggression and to

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promote peace and progress in Vietnam.

Mr Clifford and General Taylor have a high place in the confidence of the United States Administration and of the allied governments. We give them a warm welcome to Australia as friends and partners in the tasks we share with their country and our other allies.

CANBERRA,
28th July, 1967.