



SAIGON

ARRIVAL STATEMENT MADE BY THE PRIME MINISTER,
MR. JOHN GORTON

7 JUNE 1968

Thank you for the warmth of your welcome and for your generous remarks about my country. I received with great pleasure the invitation which the Government of Vietnam kindly extended to me soon after I became Prime Minister of Australia.

I was anxious to make an early visit to Vietnam because Australia's continuing commitment of men and material to support the freedom and development of the Republic of Vietnam occupies so large a part of our thoughts and affects at so many points our Governmental policies.

I believe that my discussions with the leaders of your nation, and the personal contacts I shall make with them, will contribute to strengthening the friendship between our two countries.

I see this visit as reaffirming Australia's support for Vietnam. It is also part of the process of consultation which takes place frequently, and at all levels, between representatives of our two countries, and our allies, and which does much to consolidate and improve our common efforts. Such consultations are of particular importance when, at the same time as conversations are taking place in Paris, North Vietnamese aggression is continuing here.

I look forward to meeting my countrymen who are now fighting and working by your side - the soldiers, sailors and airmen of the Australian Force Vietnam, our aid experts, and the members of our medical teams whose humanitarian work exemplifies the co-operation between our two countries in many fields of endeavour.

I welcome this opportunity to pay personal tribute to the valour of the Vietnamese people and to the achievements of the Vietnamese Government in these tragic and difficult times. Australians have admired what your people have achieved in adopting a constitution, electing a representative Government and laying the foundations of national reconciliation and reconstruction regardless of the dangers and complex stresses of war. We have admired your courage and determination in doing this despite the campaign of terror designed to deter you. We salute your soldiers for their sustained defence of their homeland, and their courage in face of the present offensives.

Our deep sympathies go to all those - civilians and soldiers alike - who have suffered because an unwanted and bitter war has been brought deliberately and callously into their midst. In the face of the enemy's aim to destroy you it has been your constant purpose to defend and, at the same time to build a nation.

Few countries have been faced with such a formidable task. No country has been more determined to achieve its goals. Our purpose is to help you to achieve them.

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At Manila in 1966, the allied nations clearly expressed their hopes and objectives for a peaceful settlement of the war in Vietnam,

Our aims have not changed, and no military, political and diplomatic efforts by Hanoi will undermine our resolve to achieve a lasting peace under which the people of Vietnam will live in freedom and justice.