

VISIT TO SOUTH EAST ASIA 1968

ARRIVAL STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER,  
MR. JOHN GORTON, AT RAAF FAIRBAIRN ON RETURN  
FROM SOUTH EAST ASIA

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17 JUNE 1968

Since leaving Canberra twelve days ago, I have visited four of Australia's nearest neighbours in South East Asia.

It has been, I hope, a valuable journey and has contributed to closer relations with the countries visited, besides demonstrating Australia's continuing interest in the security and advancement of South East Asia.

In Vietnam I was honoured to visit our servicemen at their operational bases. I found them in great shape. Their morale is high and they are doing their job with resolve and confidence in the finest Anzac tradition. Talks held in Saigon with Vietnamese leaders and senior American officials were also helpful.

In Singapore and Malaysia, we discussed a variety of matters, and in particular the future stability and development of the South East Asian region in the wake of the British withdrawal.

I was particularly pleased to be able to visit Indonesia, our nearest neighbour. There, I had lengthy private discussions with President Soeharto which I think will further friendship, co-operation and understanding between our countries. An agreement to increase cultural exchanges were signed between our two countries while I was in Djakarta.

One benefit from the visit is that I now have personal relationships with the leaders of the four countries whose futures are closely related to our own and this should be in itself of benefit in meeting challenges which the future may hold.

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Note: The Prime Minister is now due at Fairbairn between 10.30 and 11.30 p.m. this evening. Because of the late hour, he will not be giving a press conference. The above statement will cover his return. He will be speaking in more detail, and answering questions, when he is Guest of Honour of the National Press Club in Canberra on Thursday.

A. EGGLETON  
Press Secretary to the Prime Minister