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VIETNAM BOMBING HALT

Comment by the Prime Minister, Mr. John Gorton

As you have heard, President Johnson has announced that all air, naval, and artillery activity on or within the territory of North Vietnam will be stopped at 8.00 a. m. Friday morning, Washington time. (That is 11 o'clock EST tonight).

We have been consulted by the Government of the United States, and kept fully informed of developments leading up to this announcement.

It has been the attitude of the Australian Government that a suspension of bombing in North Vietnam would be justified only if in response some corresponding reduction in North Vietnamese military activity was occurring or could be expected to occur.

The Americans have shared with us the information which has led them to conclude that they can be confident there will be such a response. We believe there are good grounds for their judgment and sincerely hope it will be proved right by future events.

A further expected result is that representatives of the Government of North Vietnam intend to enter into serious and direct talks with the Government of the United States, and the Government of the Republic of Vietnam, on the substance of a peaceful settlement.

As these results occur we believe that they hold out real hopes of future progress towards a just peace. We will not be seeking to participate in these talks at this stage.

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CANBERRA  
1 November 1968