

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

SPEECH

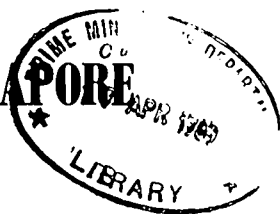
BY

The Rt Hon. J. G. GORTON, M.P.

ON

AID TO MALAYSIA AND SINGAPORE

(Ministerial Statement)



[From the 'Parliamentary Debates', 15 April 1969]

Mr GORTON (Higgins—Prime Minister)—by leave—In the course of my statement to this House on 25th February I said:

... we shall continue our efforts to help with the training of local Malaysians and Singaporean forces which we expect will be increased in size and capacity, and to provide financial assistance for defence aid aimed at assisting Malaysia and Singapore to build up their own defence capacity.

We have been actively pursuing these purposes. I am now happy to say that following discussions with the Malaysian Government we will make a gift to Malaysia of ten of our Sabre aircraft, together with spares, ground support equipment and a simulator for training purposes. When the Sabres are delivered they will be in A1 condition with an operational life before them of at least 6 years. To train Malaysian pilots and ground staff to fly and maintain the Sabres we will send to Butterworth nearly ninety Royal Australian Air Force instructors and personnel. The aircraft with their spares and so on will be by way of addition to our current Defence Aid Programme. The costs involved in operating the aircraft will naturally be borne by the Malaysian Government and the other costs involved will be met from the present uncommitted portion of our Defence Aid Programme for Malaysia. As pilots and ground staff are trained, the Royal Malaysian Air Force will be able to

convert the squadron of Sabres from a training to an operational fighter unit.

We believe that this contribution on our part will be of help to the Malaysian Government in that it will provide an essential transitional step towards the eventual acquisition of supersonic aircraft which we understand the Malaysian Government has as its long-term aim. Further, it will enable this step to be taken without the necessity for the Malaysian Government to divert very considerable resources away from the programme of social and economic development which it rightly regards as essential to the stability of the region. Malaysia is also seeking our help in training operators and technicians for the radars it is acquiring—themselves costly enough—and in basic training for its pilots. These requests are under study—and I merely say at this stage that we will do what we can to help.

We have also had certain discussions with the Singapore Government about directions in which we might aid Singapore defence plans. I mention here only one particular aspect. It is that we have notified our willingness to help the Singapore Government with the training of certain operators and technicians required for the Bloodhound defensive missiles which the Singapore Government is proposing to acquire from the United Kingdom Govern-

ment. These actions on our part should be seen in the context of our continuing association with our four partners in the Five Power arrangement—New Zealand, Malaysia, Singapore, and the United Kingdom—and also of our and their common concern with the security of the South East Asia region. As I made clear in my statement to the House on 25th February 1969, our activities are in no way directed against the interests of any other

country in the region but are intended to strengthen the stability of the whole; this we believe is well understood and accepted. What we are doing now is in fact making one more contribution to our long-standing defence aid programme, the purpose of which is to strengthen the defence capacity of Malaysia and Singapore within the framework of a broad concept of regional security and regional co-operation.