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VIET NAM : FURTHER TROOP WITHDRAWALS  
Statement by the Prime Minister, Mr John Gorton

The President's announcement means that he believes the Vietnamisation programme is proving successful, and that he can make further troop withdrawals without running military risks.

It does not mean any abandonment of the objectives to attain which the United States and we, ourselves, entered the war as, indeed, the President has pointed out.

When the announced withdrawals have been completed, the United States forces will have been reduced to a level about 50,000 below that at which they stood when the Australian Government increased its Task Force to the present level.

It is the belief of the Australian Government, after careful study of this matter in Cabinet on the basis of reports jointly submitted by the Ministers for External Affairs and Defence that, when the military situation in Vietnam permits the next substantial withdrawal, then, in consultation with the Government of the Republic of Vietnam, some Australian units will be included in the numbers scheduled for such withdrawal.

I have talked with the President of the United States about this and he expressed himself as happy to agree with our view.

It is impossible, at this stage, to forecast when such further withdrawals might take place.

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CANBERRA,  
16 December 1969