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MR WHITLAM'S ATTITUDE ON VIETNAM  
INITIATIVE

Comment by the Prime Minister, Mr John Gorton

Mr Whitlam's statement that there is no military rationale for the presence of Australian troops in Vietnam is illogical and endangers the chances of success of the President's peace efforts.

The rationale for an Australian military presence is that it is necessary to have a military presence until a settlement giving self-determination to South Vietnam is achieved.

A withdrawal of all Allied troops now, merely because an offer of negotiations has been made (and not yet accepted) would be the equivalent of capitulation, an abandonment of the object of securing self-determination for South Vietnam, and an encouragement to the North Vietnamese to refuse to enter into negotiations.

A unilateral withdrawal of Australian troops would have a similar effect and would in addition be an abandonment of our Allies and of the people of South Vietnam.

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CANBERRA,  
9 October 1970