



PRIME MINISTER

MACQUARIE NETWORK WEEKLY BROADCAST
BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE RT. HON.
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D E F E N C E

I want to speak to you now about the defence and security of Australia.

Most of you know that not so many years ago we relied for our defence on the might of the armed forces of Britain and America. World War Two and other events, such as the large-scale British withdrawal East of Suez, and a changed American approach to its role as world policeman, have changed all that.

There has been another significant change. For literally hundreds of years the Asian nations remained unchanged and unchangeable. In contrast, dramatic changes are now occurring in Asia.

China is becoming a world power. Make no mistake about that. And there can be no doubt that, as part of her policies, she is continually promoting insurgency in other countries. For example, in Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia. These are all close to us.

Even in these conditions, some people argue that we should not spend so much money on defence because, they say, there isn't much chance of a direct attack on Australia now.

My answer is that any person who is prepared to take a risk with the defence of this country is acting in a way that is completely intolerable. The unexpected can happen, and we have to prepare for it.

In defence you cannot prepare overnight. You cannot rely on a crash programme. Highly-trained troops with good equipment are essential. Let me give you a couple of illustrations of how quickly conditions can change.

You will remember confrontation between Indonesia and Malaysia and the possibility that this could spill over into Papua and New Guinea - even closer to us than Indonesia. You will remember Communist-inspired insurgency in the North of Malaysia and in Thailand. You will remember the recent border conflicts between India and Pakistan and between China and India. And now we have the most serious invasion of all - the blatant and unprovoked attack by the North Vietnamese against the South Vietnamese.

We know, too, of the growing presence of the Russians in the Indian Ocean, and the assistance Russia has given to the North Vietnamese.

We in the Government are not prepared to expose our own country to similar unexpected attacks. Consequently we must prepare to meet threats expected or unexpected as they emerge. And we must be prepared to help our neighbours to the North who are a shield against attack.

There is a further point to be emphasised. No country can in all circumstances go it alone. No country can successfully retreat into isolation. So we have the additional responsibility of maintaining our treaties and our alliances.

Of these the most important is with the United States under the ANZUS Treaty. This Treaty is crucial to our long-term defence planning because it could be our most important guarantee in the most critical circumstances. Only a fool or a traitor would want to throw it away.

It is true that in our defence preparations we must increasingly strive for self-reliance and self-sufficiency. But we have to be realists in a world in which no nation can stand alone. The two, that is, our treaties and maximum self-reliance are linked together. They go together.

Let us go back to ANZUS. Remember it is basically a military treaty. It would be deadly dangerous to try and turn it into a human rights declaration, as some people want to do.

ANZUS is also a two-way traffic. We can't expect everything and give nothing. We must command respect for our own efforts and willingness to help our friends. That is why we have agreed to have defence installations at the North-West Cape, at Pine Gap and at Woomera. I assure you there is nothing sinister or underhand about them. They are part of our defence partnership with America. And we are not doing anything that would make Australia a target in another nation's cause. We are thinking of our own security and our co-operation with the United States in mutual defence.

Finally, let me speak about National Service. This is the only way at present to keep the Army up to the minimum strength required to meet our defence needs. So this is the question we have to ask. Whose judgment would you trust about the size of our armed forces? Our military advisers or those who are pledged to abolish National Service in a bid for political popularity?

To abolish National Service now would upset the whole balance of our forces and would reduce the nation's military strength to a dangerous degree. We will have none of this.

We, in the Government, are realist and national. We are not adventurers. We have a duty to you and to our allies. So defence must always be the primary concern of all loyal Australians.

And we in the Government are determined to keep it that way.