



PRIME MINISTER

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE RT. HON.
WILLIAM McMAHON, CH. MP, IN THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES, CANBERRA

PRESIDENT NIXON'S DECISIONS ON VIETNAM

9 MAY, 1972

I refer to the important decisions which President Nixon has been obliged to take in the present very serious situation in Vietnam.

These decisions were taken because of the blatant invasion of South Vietnam by the North Vietnamese, supported by outside Governments. Not only has there been this invasion of South Vietnam across the Demilitarized Zone, but the North Vietnamese forces have been carrying on offensive military operations in Laos and the Khmer Republic for a period of years.

The Australian Government strongly condemns North Vietnam and its associates. It is they who must take the complete moral responsibility for these actions.

The United States has made - with full Australian support - every effort to bring about a negotiated settlement of the present conflict. These efforts have met with an absolute refusal by North Vietnam to negotiate seriously. The United States has also tried to de-escalate the fighting by progressively withdrawing its forces from Vietnam. The response from Hanoi has been the launching of a long and carefully planned invasion.

The Australian Government understands and supports the decisions which the President has felt compelled to take.

In our view, the United States had done everything in its power to ensure a negotiated settlement and to maintain the independence of South Vietnam and not to abandon the people of that country. The present decisions by the United States reflect its determination to stand by its international obligations and alliances. The United States must also avoid endangering the lives of its own forces in Vietnam.
