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PRIME MINISTER

PRESS STATEMENT NO. 52

15 February 1973

"INTELLIGENCE UNIT"

Mr. Whitlam sent the following letter today to Mr. Snedden in reply to his telegram yesterday:

Dear Mr. Snedden,

I refer to your telegram concerning events subsequent to and consequent on Mr. Brenchley's article in the "National Times" on Sunday 11 February regarding "a 'top secret' Australian electronics intelligence unit" in Singapore.

This article appears to have been in breach of a 'D' Notice issued by the Menzies Government. In these circumstances I would hesitate to discuss the "electronics intelligence unit" publicly or on the record. Presumably it was on this basis that you yourself quite properly declined to answer questions about it at your press conference yesterday.

Nevertheless, since reports of the "electronic intelligence unit" have now been published, I feel at liberty to remind you that the Gorton Government, of which you were a member, decided that Singapore was an inappropriate place for these activities to be conducted and that they should be transferred to Australia. My Government is pressing on with that decision. I would be happy, with my officers, to refresh your memory on the decisions taken by previous Liberal Governments and acquaint you with the present situation.

(.....)

I received your telegram only this morning but know that you released it to the press last night. Accordingly, I am also releasing this letter to the press, with the exception of the preceding paragraph. As for the detailed questions you raised, you will agree, I am sure, that the conduct of my relations with the press is for me and my staff to determine.

Yours sincerely,

E.G. Whitlam (sgd.)