



PRIME MINISTER

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ALLEGATIONS OF C.I.A. ACTIVITY IN AUSTRALIA

We have seen over the last four weeks efforts to expose some of Australia's most closely held secrets and to publicise allegations based on hearsay or worse, to the embarrassment of Australia's relations with the United States - our closest ally.

Accordingly, I believe it is important that I make a statement on these matters and attempt to put them in a proper perspective. Any public discussion which disregards Australia's interest is of serious concern to the Government. Those who are opposed to our alliance with the United States have naturally sought to exploit this issue for their own purposes.

The situation I have described has been precipitated by the allegations of one Christopher Boyce, a twenty-three year old communications clerk, who was on trial in California and has since been convicted of selling United States secrets to the Soviet Union. His allegations about C.I.A. activities in Australia were an attempt to rationalise his crimes.

The Government has examined relevant parts of the transcript of the Boyce trial which in fact add little or nothing to the allegations which have already appeared in the media. I shall arrange for a copy of this transcript to be placed in the Parliamentary Library for the information of honourable members.

We have since seen some former members of the C.I.A. making, for their own motives, hearsay allegations, some of which would appear to come within the ambit of what is known as "disinformation or the attempt to gain political ends through false and misleading information.

It has been the Government's longstanding policy to avoid comment on matters involving intelligence and security. There are good reasons for this policy in that the mere act of denying specific allegations can often provide important leads and be damaging to our and our allies' national security. I do not therefore intend to deal with specific allegations which have been made.

As part of our defence relationship with the United States, there have grown up extensive arrangements for exchanging information and views with a wide range of U.S. Government agencies including those in the intelligence and security field. Under these arrangements officers from U.S. agencies are declared to the Australian authorities and work with various Australian agencies. Of course, Ministers with relevant responsibilities know who they are.

Australian officers are engaged in similar declared capacities in Washington. These arrangements are long standing and have been and still are, of great value to Australia. They are an important aspect of the close and intimate relationship which we have with the United States. Through these arrangements we have access to and exchange valuable information with the United States on a wide range of international strategic developments as well as security and intelligence matters - such as espionage and international terrorism to name two examples - which contribute in the broadest terms to the protection of Australia and the Australian community.

There is also a long established convention that close allies do not conduct covert activities within each other's territories. Such activities are not necessary between friends. In this connection I wish to reassure the nation that I have carefully reviewed the activities of the United States Government in Australia and have found them to be fully consistent with the interests and policies of the Australian Government and people. I am satisfied with the assurances I have received from elements of my own Government and from President Carter personally through his Ambassador, that neither the United States Government nor its representatives are involved in improper or inappropriate activities here. Our joint activities with them are important to the national security of both countries. Furthermore, we are most happy with the results we are obtaining from these activities.

I appreciate that some honourable gentlemen opposite enjoy deceiving themselves with conspiracy theories, and would like to believe that it was the C.I.A. rather than the Australian electorate which put them out of office. Such views are, however, not merely politically self-serving, but naive.

They will also be aware that, in recent times, the activities of the C.I.A., unlike most other foreign intelligence services, have been kept under close scrutiny by the United States Congress; and that allegations of improper activity will be investigated as a matter of routine by the Congress.

The Leader of the Opposition has called for a Royal Commission into the allegations which have been made. I believe that such an inquiry is totally unnecessary. I note that the Leader, when Prime Minister, sought and was advised of the names of representatives of United States intelligence agencies then in Australia. He was apparently then satisfied with the information he received because after detailed inquiry he took no further action in relation to it.

The Royal Commissioner on Security and Intelligence, Mr Justice Hope, who was appointed by the Leader of the Opposition in August 1974, has recently completed a most extensive series of investigations and reports on all aspects of Australian intelligence and security. His investigations included the activities of foreign intelligence services in Australia. There is nothing in the Royal Commissioner's reports which give any substance to the allegations relating to C.I.A. activity which have occupied so much attention over the last four weeks.

Mr Justice Hope has made recommendations to increase the effectiveness of our internal security arrangements. These concern the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation in particular and are aimed at ensuring that it will be better equipped in the future to meet its responsibilities for investigating and providing intelligence about threats to the internal security of the nation. Mr Justice Hope's recommendations have already been the subject of detailed study and I shall be making a statement to the House after my return from the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in London about the Government's decisions.

As I have already said in this House, I look to the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation to provide timely advice on all matters which might affect the security of this country, including improper activities by any foreign intelligence service in Australia.

It is my belief that the Director-General of A.S.I.O., Mr Justice Woodward, carries out this responsibility creditably and faithfully. Similarly, the Leader of the Opposition, whose Government appointed Mr Justice Woodward, has recently re-affirmed in the House his confidence in the Director-General.

Improper activities by the representatives in Australia of any foreign government have in the past and would in the future be regarded just as seriously by my Government as they have been by previous Australian Governments.

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