



PRIME MINISTER

FOR PRESS

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STATEMENT IN THE HOUSE: JOINT DEFENCE SPACE RESEARCH FACILITY

The House will recall that on 9 December 1966 the Australian and United States Governments entered into an agreement regarding the establishment of a Joint Defence Space Research Facility.

This Facility was subsequently set up at Pine Gape, outside Alice Springs.

The 1966 Agreement was for ten years and has been terminable at one year's notice by either party since 9 December 1975. Failing such notice the Agreement continues in force indefinitely.

The present United States administration has recently asked if the agreement could be extended for a further period of ten years, with either party being able to give one year's notice of termination after nine years from the date of extension or at any time thereafter, failing which the Agreement would continue indefinitely.

My Government has considered this matter. Having regard to the importance (acknowledged by both sides of the House) of the Joint Defence Space Research Facility to the interests of Australia and the United States, to the importance of the cooperation of our two countries under the ANZUS Treaty, and having regard to the requirements for security of tenure at Pine Gap to protect substantial investments in buildings, machinery, skilled manpower and effort, and the requirement to support long term planning in these respects, we have decided to accede to the U.S. Government's request.

We believe that this arrangement will be helpful to the U.S. Government in planning its long term financial commitments for this facility. My colleague, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and His Excellency, the U.S. Ambassador, have today signed notes extending the 1966 Agreement for a further period of ten years. I now table these notes for the information of the House.

The House will notice that the opportunity has been taken to transfer responsibility as cooperating agency for the project from the specialist area of the Defence Research Projects Agency to the general administration of the U.S. Department of Defense.

I have referred to the importance of the facility; the House will know that for security reasons I cannot elucidate on this. I do want to say that a sound and cooperative relationship with the United States is fundamental to this Government's foreign and defence policies, and that the Government, and I believe the great majority of the Australian people, welcome this opportunity to extend our collaboration with our American friends and allies.
