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C A B I N E T M I N U T E

Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee

Canberra, 18th May, 1965

Decision No. 975(FAD)

Submission No. 786 - Deployment of Australian Forces to South Vietnam.

The Committee considered a submission by the Minister for Defence covering a report by the Defence Committee on the deployment of an Australian Army Battalion and supporting elements in South Vietnam. The report had been prepared on the basis of information submitted by a Planning Team following its recent discussions in Saigon with the United States Military and South Vietnamese authorities on deployment proposals for the Australian forces and associated arrangements. The leader of the Planning Team supplemented the report of the Defence Committee by a detailed outline of his discussions in Saigon and his observations of the area in which it was proposed to deploy the Australian forces. The Committee also had before it the text of the directives which would be issued to the Commander of the Australian forces in South Vietnam and to the Commanding Officer of the Australian Infantry Battalion.

2. The Committee -

- (a) agreed that the Australian battalion and its Logistic Support Company be deployed as proposed in the Bien Hoa area under the operational control of General Westmoreland, Commander, United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam.

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2.

## Cabinet Decision No. 975(FAD) Cont'd.

- (b) noted that the Australian force would not operate directly under Vietnamese command, that the Commander of the Australian force would have overall command of Australian units and personnel but be under the operational control of the United States Commander, that the Australian Infantry Battalion would be brigaded with and under the operational control of the appropriate United States Brigade echelon and that these command arrangements were acceptable to the Vietnamese authorities.
- (c) noted the composition of the Australian Army Force which would operate in South Vietnam.
- (d) endorsed the proposed role of the Australian Force as stated in paragraph 6 of the Defence Committee report attached to the submission.
- (e) noted, in respect of role (c) in paragraph 6 of the Defence Committee report, that where the United States and Australian forces operate in conjunction with South Vietnamese units in this role, a firm United States assurance had been given that the United States Commander would first satisfy himself as to the military feasibility of the operations to be undertaken.
- (f) agreed with the general line of the directives to be issued to the Commander of the Australian Force and to the Commanding Officer of the Australian Battalion, and, in particular, noted clauses 10 and 14 of the Commander's directive and clause 7 of the Commanding Officer's directive relating to right of appeal.
- (g) noted that satisfactory provisions were being made covering the status of the forces in Vietnam and that the logistic and financial arrangements for the support of the force were proceeding satisfactorily.

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3.

Cabinet Decision No. 975(FAD) Cont'd.

- (h) noted the plans proposed for the movement of the Australian force and equipment to South Vietnam and received an assurance that the air and sea escort protective arrangements contemplated for HMAS Sydney were considered to be adequate and satisfactory.

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Committee Secretary.

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