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4/7/65

FOR CABINET

Submission No. 719

Copy No. 20

FURTHER MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO SOUTH VIETNAM

I attach a copy of a report by the Defence Committee on the above subject which has been prepared following military staff talks with the United States in Honolulu on the 30th March, 1st April, and in the light of recent discussions between the United States Secretary of State, Mr. Rusk, and the Australian Ambassador. I submit the report for the consideration of Cabinet.

2. Since the Defence Committee's report was prepared further advice has been received from Washington that the United States has decided to :

- (a) Deploy two more marine battalion landing teams, one at Danang and the other at Hue;
- (b) Deploy an additional 4,500 men to establish an Army logistic base in South Vietnam;
- (c) Deploy more United States air units in Thailand.

These decisions have yet to be cleared with the South Vietnamese and Thai Governments as appropriate. Final decisions as regards the role of the forces in the Danang area have yet to be taken and the clarification on this question as sought by the Defence Committee in its report will need to be pursued.

3. This latest advice from Washington also states that it is likely Australia will soon be asked to contribute a battalion for duties in South Vietnam similar to those of the additional marine battalions to be sent there. A formal request for the use of our force therefore appears to be imminent.

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4. Washington has also made a formal request "that Australia and New Zealand should take over the training of the South Vietnamese regional forces" for which 150 more instructors will be required in provincial capitals. It is not clear what this request involves and we are seeking clarification from Washington. In the meantime I am seeking the views of the Chief of the General Staff on the question and will report on these verbally to the Cabinet.

SHANE PALTRIDGE
MINISTER FOR DEFENCE

7th April, 1965.

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