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DUPLICITY CHARGED IN AUSTRALIAN CABLES TO HANOI, SAIGON

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["Focus on Australia"]

[Excerpts] The Australian Senate yesterday passed a motion claiming that the Australian Government had acted with duplicity in its communications with South Vietnam and North Vietnam. In the House of Representatives this morning, the leader of the opposition, Mr. Fraser, renewed his request of earlier this week that Prime Minister Whitlam release communications the Australian Government has carried on with its diplomatic representatives in Hanoi and Saigon. The opposition spokesman on foreign affairs, Andrew Peacock, claimed during a debate on Tuesday that essential differences existed in the tone of the cables relayed to the respective embassies. Peacock said he had seen copies of the cables which made it clear that the government was adopting a double standard in its dealings with Hanoi and Saigon. Both cables, he said, stressed the need for the implementation of the Paris accords to settle differences between the two sides, but the cable to Australia's representative in Hanoi had gone on to say that for public relations purposes it had to be said that pressure was being applied to the Saigon government to get them to implement the Paris agreement.

In response to the request from Fraser that the cables should either be made public or shown to him in private, Whitlam said his refusal to reveal the contents of the diplomatic messages stood, that he had nothing to add to his remarks of earlier this week that Australia had adopted an even-handed attitude in its dealings with the respective government, and that Australia's main interest was to provide humanitarian aid to the refugees of Indochina. Australia, he told the House, did not have any allies in Indochina, but Australia's involvement on the side of the south had ended when his government was elected in 1972.

Despite Whitlam's spirited denial that any essential differences existed in the cables sent to Hanoi and Saigon, there is no doubt the incident has embarrassed the Department of Foreign Affairs. Its secretary, Alan Renouf, last night ordered a full inquiry into the leakage of the top secret documents to the opposition. This follows the revelation yesterday by the opposition's foreign affairs spokesman that, contrary to some suggestions, he had not seen the cables during his recent visit to Saigon, leaving the unmistakable impression that the leak had taken place in Canberra.

HISTORY OF THE VIETNAM WAR ON MICROFILM