At this moment United States and South Vietnamese forces are engaged in military operations in Cambodia. From the news coming out of that area you will know of the offensives against the base camps, training sites and other installations of the North Vietnamese military sanctuaries along the Cambodian frontier with South Vietnam.

I want tonight to devote my talk largely to the address given by President Nixon on April 30 in which he spelled out in clear terms the reasons for the U.S./South Vietnamese thrusts against the Communist military forces sheltering in Cambodia.

This was a message from a President pledged to a certain program involving the welfare and security of South Vietnam. It might be as well to recall here the simple words he used towards the end of his speech, which you would probably have heard or read. He said, and I quote "...during my campaign for the Presidency, I pledged to bring Americans home from Vietnam. They are coming home. I promised to end the war. I shall keep that promise. I promised to win a just peace. I shall keep that promise. We shall avoid a wider war. But we are also determined to put an end to this war."

He then went on to remind us that, from the room in which he was speaking, John F. Kennedy made the great decision which removed Soviet nuclear missiles from Cuba and the Western Hemisphere. This then was the background against which President Nixon informed the world of his response to the threatening situation in Cambodia. He spoke in clear terms, with firmness and resolve. He gave a stark account of the intolerable position that had arisen in Cambodia, and the implications of that situation for not only the allied forces in Vietnam, but for the cause of freedom throughout the world.

The President made the following points (1) That for the past five years the United States had provided no military assistance and no economic aid whatever to Cambodia – but North Vietnam had not respected the neutrality of the Cambodians; (2) For the past five years North Vietnam had occupied military sanctuaries along the Cambodian frontier with South Vietnam, used for hit-and-run attacks on American and South Vietnamese forces in South Vietnam; (3) North Vietnam in the last two weeks had stripped away all the pretence of respecting the neutrality of Cambodia, and thousands of North Vietnamese soldiers were invading the country from the sanctuaries.

President Nixon said if the North Vietnamese effort succeeded, Cambodia would become a vast enemy staging area and springboard for attacks on South Vietnam along 600 miles of frontier – and a refuge where enemy troops could return from combat without fear of retaliation. The United States, said the President, had three options. One was to do nothing – in which case the
2.

Americans remaining in Vietnam after the next withdrawal would be gravely threatened. The second was to provide massive military help to Cambodia. But massive amounts of military assistance could not be rapidly and effectively utilized by the small Cambodian Army. The third choice was to go to the heart of the trouble – the major North Vietnamese and Viet Cong occupied sanctuaries in Cambodia.

President Nixon then went on to describe plans for the moves against the enemy. A major responsibility for the ground operations was being assumed by South Vietnamese forces. The attacks in several areas including the area of Cambodia known as the Parrot's Beak – just over 30 miles from Saigon itself – were exclusively South Vietnamese ground operations under South Vietnamese command with the U.S. providing air and logistical support. In a second area, American and South Vietnamese units combined to attack the headquarters for the entire Communist military operation in South Vietnam. This key control centre had been occupied by the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong for years in blatant violation of Cambodia's neutrality.

"This", said the President – and I am quoting him – "is not an invasion of Cambodia. The areas in which these attacks will be launched are completely occupied and controlled by North Vietnamese forces. Our purpose is not to occupy the areas. Once enemy forces are driven out of these sanctuaries and their military supplies destroyed, we will withdraw". I end the quote there.

President Nixon then examined the record of events in the Vietnam war. The U.S. had stopped the bombing of North Vietnam. Air operations had been cut by over 20 per cent. The withdrawal of over 250,000 troops had been announced. The U.S. had offered to withdraw all its troops if the Communists withdrew theirs. The U.S. had offered to negotiate all issues with only one condition – that the future of South Vietnam be determined not by North Vietnam, not by the U.S., but by the people of South Vietnam themselves.

The answer, the President said, had been intransigence at the conference table, belligerence in Hanoi, massive military aggression in Laos and Cambodia and stepped-up attacks in South Vietnam, designed to increase American casualties.

The President went on – and I quote – "This attitude has become intolerable. We will not react to this threat to American lives merely by plaintive diplomatic protests. If we did, the credibility of the United States would be destroyed in every area of the world where only the power of the United States deters aggression". He continued that the leaders of North Vietnam were on notice that the U.S. would be patient in working for peace. "But", he said, "we will not be humiliated. We will not be defeated. We will not allow American men by the thousands to be killed by
"an enemy from privileged sanctuaries".

Today, the President said, we lived in an age of anarchy both abroad and at home. We saw mindless attacks on all the great institutions which had been created by free civilisations in the last 500 years. In the U.S. great universities were being systematically destroyed. Small nations all over the world found themselves under attack from within and without. If, when the chips were down, the U.S. acted like a pitiful helpless giant, the forces of totalitarianism and anarchy would threaten free nations and free institutions throughout the world.

On Tuesday night, the Prime Minister told Parliament that the U.S. decision was taken on operational military grounds and was designed to protect the lives of Allied servicemen. Our own Australian forces were not engaged in the operation, and he saw no prospect that they would be. But the effect of the operation could well be to make all Allied forces in South Vietnam, including our own, more safe. We wished to see a neutral Cambodia, the Prime Minister said—a country which was not used by anyone as a base or a battleground. Australia would try by diplomatic means to bring this about, and to bring about a method of international inspection designed to ensure that respect for the neutrality of Cambodia was real and continuing.

The action taken by the U.S. and South Vietnam was action to protect the servicemen against attack by an enemy which was increasingly occupying a neutral nation. The Government understood the reason for their action—but found it odd that the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Whitlam, should on behalf of his Party viciously criticise it. It was worth noting that not one member of the Opposition, at any time, had criticised the violation of Cambodian neutrality during the last five years by North Vietnam. But now that counter-action had occurred, our Allies were criticised. They were charged with widening the war; they were charged with being in the wrong. Such comments, the Prime Minister continued, were support for the theory that Communist forces should be allowed to operate as and when they liked; that they should be excused for invading and occupying neutral countries; and that it was wrong to take action to stop them. By giving that support, continued the Prime Minister, they showed a willingness, even a desire, to accept defeat or surrender of Allied forces in South Vietnam.
Australia's three services were now better equipped and better housed than ever before in our history, the Member for Wannon and Minister for Defence, Mr. Malcolm Fraser, said today.

Mr. Fraser was commenting on recent decisions to acquire just under $166 million worth of defence equipment for the armed services.

He described how the capacity of our forces would be improved by the new equipment program.

Our maritime capability, he said, would be improved by the two additional Oberon submarines to be purchased. The Government was also continuing with the design studies for a new class of light destroyers.

Our strategic mobility would be boosted by a logistic cargo ship which would carry the Army's landing craft and other equipment supplies.

Our tactical mobility would be increased by the 11 helicopter gunships, as well as the 84 light observation and 42 utility helicopters to be purchased.

Doubling of the RAN's Skyhawk aircraft to 20 would give a significant lift to our offensive capability.

The Government had also authorised the Army to order up to $60 million worth of capital equipment to improve the equipment in the Regular Army and the Citizen Military Forces, including additional armoured personnel carriers.

Ten years ago the Army comprised only three battalions with a total Regular force of some 21,900, said Mr. Fraser. Today there were nine battle-proved battalions and in addition three squadrons of Special Air Service forces, totalling around 44,500.

Ten years ago, the main operational elements of the RAAF comprised 10 squadrons. Today there were 14 operational squadrons. In 1960 RAAF strength was about 15,500, and now it had grown to 22,800.

The Navy had grown in the decade from 21 ships in commission in 1960 to more than 55 in commission or on order today. Naval strength had grown from just over 10,600 fulltime personnel then to 17,400 today.

The last decade had seen the greatest building program for the services in Australia's history, said Mr. Fraser.

Other major works proposals were under consideration.

Mr. Fraser said over the past ten years the Government had spent $413 million on capital works and real estate procurement programs for the services and the Department of Supply.

A further $56 million had been provided for houses for servicemen under the Commonwealth—States Housing Agreement. In the current financial year additional amounts of $49 million and $10 million would be spent.