PRESS STATEMENT:

MALCOLM FRASER:

July 21st, 1964

Australians must get used to the idea that the problems of Asia are not going to disappear for as long as we can readily foresee. Indeed, the main power struggle between East and West has shifted from Europe to Asia. As a free nation, dependent in the last resort upon allies, we must participate, as we are, and help achieve solutions in which men and nations have an opportunity to work out their own lives. To enable us to play the part the security of the region and of ourselves demands our rapidly mounting defence budget must be maintained.

The help we give our friends in South Vietnam and in the Malaysia dispute is greatly appreciated. Australia stands well with these people. Plans for pacification of the Viet-Cong areas are good. They involve not only military security but sensible administrative and social programs as well. The success to be achieved will depend on the quality of execution. The volume and nature of North Vietnam assistance will also play a crucial part.

In the United States I found a complete determination to assist the Government and people of South Vietnam. Aid appears to be increasing. The United States Mission has been tightened under a most able and distinguished team. While we should look forward to improvements in the coming months we must realise that progress will be slow, difficult and dangerous.

The problem is much more difficult than the one formerly faced by the Malaysians and British in Malaya. There are open supply lines to Communist dominated countries from the Viet-Cong areas which there were not in Malaya. It is also more difficult to identify the Viet-Cong. In Malaya the greater part of the terrorists were Chinese while in South Vietnam the farmer and the Viet-Cong are of the same race.

We should not be deceived by those who say this is only a civil war. The general direction, the sophisticated equipment and the hard core trained personnel came from North Vietnam.
This is the one kind of "war" left to the Communists. Russia knows well that she cannot try to dominate Western Europe because it would lead to nuclear war. The late President Kennedy stood up to nuclear blackmail in Cuba.

The war of subversion remains. Russia has agreed that this too could lead to nuclear escalation but China believes it is a "safe" way for communist powers to destroy the West. Thus South Vietnam is the testing ground. If the communist "war" here is successful the same tactics would clearly be tried in other areas of South-East Asia, Africa and perhaps South America.

This is the underlying reason for the United States determination not to lose and for our resolve to stand and be counted with her.

What happens in South Vietnam will clearly have repercussions in Indonesia. It is basically the same kind of war, on a much smaller scale and pursued for reasons of Indonesia's own. Here it is part of her struggle to make herself the dominant and most powerful nation in the area. To do this she must get the United Kingdom to leave Malaysia, which of course the United Kingdom cannot do under present circumstances. If through some future tragedy Indonesia did win in the Malaysian dispute it would not be the end of the road. This is the kind of appetite that breeds on success and we in East New Guinea or the American base in the Philippines would come under "confrontation" next. Indonesia cannot be allowed to succeed. She has to learn that the price of this kind of adventure is too high and until she has conferences will achieve nothing. Indonesia believes that she can "control" confrontation, for example if she pushed too far and looked like attracting severe retaliation she would probably suggest a conference.

For obvious reasons the United States has had a greater pre-occupation on the mainland of Asia, than with Indonesia and we, the Malaysians and the United Kingdom have had a greater pre-occupation with Indonesia. This tends to put this area into two compartments.