FM ACHN
TO RAYNG/FOCAF
RUEAKKE/ANA WASHINGTON
HUMFKL/P/FOCAF FLAG
INFO RBMC/ANRUK
RAYNSC/FOIC EA
RAYFN/NOIC NA
ZEN/NOIC QLD
ZEN/NOIC SA
ZEN/NOIC VIC
ZEN/NOIC TAS
ZEN/NOIC WA
RAYNXT/NOIC PNG
RAYCAL/J NOIC PNG
BT

UNOLOU FOLLOWING STATEMENT BY MINISTER ISSUED 1300K

2. THE RAN AIRCRAFT CARRIER HMAS MELBOURNE HAS BEEN INVOLVED
   IN A COLLISION WITH THE US NAVY DESTROYERS

RUSG FRANK E. EVANS

APPROXIMATELY 650 MILES SOUTHWEST OF MANILA IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA,

USG EVANS WAS CUT IN TWO IN THE COLLISION BUT THE EXACT NUMBER OF
CASUALTIES ARE NOT YET KNOWN. PRELIMINARY REPORTS FROM THE COLLISION
SCENE INDICATE THAT THERE ARE 197 SURVIVORS FROM THE AFTER SECTION
OF THE EVANS WHO HAVE BEEN TAKEN ABOARD MELBOURNE. EVANS WAS LAST
REPORTED TO BE CARRYING 273 OFFICERS AND MEN. THERE WERE NO
CASUALTIES ABOARD HMAS MELBOURNE. MELBOURNE AND USS EVANS WERE
INVOLVED IN AN ANTI-SUBMARINE PHASE OF THE SEATO MARITIME EXERCISE
"SEA SPIRIT". THE SEA WAS CALM AND IT WAS A BRIGHT MOONLIT
NIGHT. AT APPROXIMATELY 3.15 AM LOCAL TIME (6.15 AM EASTERN
AUSTRALIAN TIME) MELBOURNE ORDERED THE EVANS, WHICH WAS AHEAD OF HER
IN THE ANTI-SUBMARINE SCREEN, TO CHANGE COURSE TO A RESCUE DESTROYER
ASTERN OF HER. EVANS APPLIED ON A COLLISION COURSE AND DESPITE
URGENT ACTION BY MELBOURNE A COLLISION OCCURRED. THE CAPTAIN OF
MELBOURNE, CAPTAIN J.P. STEVENSON, WAS ON THE BRIDGE AT THE TIME.
IN THE COLLISION EVANS WAS CUT IN TWO. THE BOW SECTION SANK
ABOUT 10 MINUTES LATER. MELBOURNE WAS ABLE TO SECURE THE AFTER
SECTION OF THE DESTROYER TO HER SIDE AND SAILORS AND
OFFICERS MADE A SEARCH OF HER AND ALL PERSONNEL WERE TAKEN ONBOARD
MELBOURNE. THE CAPTAIN OF THE EVANS, COMMANDER A. S. MCELMOORE AND
THE SHIP'S EXECUTIVE OFFICER WERE AMONG THE SURVIVORS.
AFTER THE SEARCH WAS COMPLETED THE AFTER END OF EVANS WAS CAST OFF.
MELBOURNE HAS BEEN HOLED ABOVE THE WATERLINE. HER FLIGHT DECK HAS BEEN DISTORTED AND THE CATAPULT IS UNSERVICEABLE. SHE IS ABLE TO MAKE A SPEED OF BETWEEN EIGHT AND 10 KNOTS. TEMPORARY REPAIRS WILL BE MADE TO THE SHIP BEFORE SHE RETURNS TO AUSTRALIA.

THE NAVAL BOARD IS AWAITING FURTHER REPORTS BEFORE DECIDING MELBOURNE'S IMMEDIATE PROGRAMME. THE CHIEF OF NAVAL STAFF (VICE ADMIRAL V.A.T. SMITH) HAS SPEAKEN BY TELEPHONE FROM CANBERRA TO THE FLAG OFFICER COMMANDING THE AUSTRALIAN FLEET (REAR ADMIRAL G.J.B. CRABB) ABOARD MELBOURNE. ADMIRAL CRABB IS DISCUSSING WITH A US NAVY ADMIRAL THE ACTION NEEDED TO BEGIN AN ENQUIRY TO ASCERTAIN THE FACTS. THE NAVAL BOARD WILL CONSIDER PROPOSALS REGARDING THE NATURE OF THE ENQUIRY AND WILL DECIDE WHAT ACTION THE RAN WILL TAKE.

MESSAGES OF CONDOLENCE ARE BEING SENT TO THE AMERICAN AUTHORITIES.

SEATO AUTHORITIES HAVE CALLED OFF THE EXERCISE.

R3 ANA

SEATO AUTHORITIES HAVE CALLED OFF THE EXERCISE.

3 ANA WASHINGTON REQUESTED TO ADVISE AMBASSADOR.