INTRODUCTION

Following the attacks on United States destroyers in international waters in the Gulf of Tonkin by North Vietnamese motor torpedo boats, aircraft from United States carriers launched retaliatory attacks against selected targets in North Vietnam. Two squadrons of United States tactical bombers, and five squadrons of fighter aircraft together with in-flight fuelling tankers were immediately sent to South Vietnam, Thailand, and the Philippines; an additional United States carrier task force was despatched to the western Pacific, and a marine brigade was embarked at Okinawa and joined the United States Seventh Fleet in the South China Sea.

2. The evidence available indicates that North Vietnam and Communist China have so far made only precautionary moves. Some jet fighters have been moved into North Vietnam from China.

ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION

3. The military situation in South Vietnam has continued to deteriorate since the beginning of the wet season in May. The size and boldness of Vietcong raids and attacks has increased. This decline may well continue until the end of the wet season in about two months time. It is not considered that the Vietcong have or can quickly develop sufficient logistic support to maintain an offensive on a substantially larger scale. The capacity of the Vietnam Government to turn the tide depends upon Khanh's demonstrating an ability (which he has not so far shown) to give inspired leadership, restore morale and carry through the National Pacification Plan. It is not possible to predict what the effects will be of the constitutional changes on
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16th August when the Military Revolutionary Council elected Khanh President. Continued American large-scale support and the more effective control and co-ordination of the American effort which appears to be emerging since the appointment of General Maxwell Taylor provide the military assistance which is essential to enable the development of stability in the political, military and economic spheres by the national government. The resolution passed by the United States Congress on 6th August, as a result of the events in the Gulf of Tonkin included a declaration that "the United States regards as vital to its national interest and to world peace the maintenance of international peace and security in South East Asia". The resolution also stated the determination of the United States "to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed forces, to assist any member or protocol state of the South East Asia Collective Defence Treaty requesting assistance in defence of its freedom". The United States response is evidence of its determination actuated by both internal and external factors in present circumstances to use appropriate force to counter communist advance in South East Asia, and indicates quite clearly the existence of national American plans to cope with changes in the situation.

4. The North Vietnamese have the capability to intensify their military activities in Laos and South Vietnam at any time. It is, however, unlikely that they will force the issue to the point of risking open intervention by the United States and her allies, especially after the recent demonstration of United States power and determination. While communist intentions and the full significance of their precautionary moves are not yet apparent, the most likely counter action by the North Vietnamese will probably be to step-up activities by the Viet Cong in South Vietnam. They have the capability to increase the flow of men and materials.
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to South Vietnam for this purpose, but a build up would take some weeks and would be limited by logistic factors. At present they do not have the capability for aerial attack on South Vietnam even with the jet fighters referred to in paragraph 2.  

5. Future Chinese moves are uncertain, but in the absence of further United States action it is unlikely that the Chinese leaders would wish to provoke the United States into widening the conflict by overt intervention. In addition to the provision of aircraft, the Chinese will probably provide immediate assistance to North Vietnam by supplying ancillary air defense equipment. The use made by the North Vietnamese of these aircraft would be limited by their capacity to provide pilots, but the Chinese can provide "volunteers." Such action would contravene the Geneva Agreements, but Peking has cleared the way by stating that North Vietnam is free from any restraints imposed by those agreements. The Chinese are also likely to provide other immediate aid including making good the losses in patrol boats.  

6. If the South Vietnamese, with or without United States assistance, use the present weakness of the North Vietnamese naval and air forces to step up their small raids on North Vietnam or indulge in widespread commando para-drops, China might have to weigh seriously the extent of its military assistance to North Vietnam. Overt Chinese intervention will occur if the Chinese considered that the survival of North Vietnam as a communist state is threatened by South Vietnamese/United States operations; in this event a Plan 4 situation could develop.  

7. The USSR would probably not wish to see the situation aggravated or the conflict widened. The USSR might, however, provide North Vietnam with some increased military assistance, including the replacement of the Soviet-type patrol boats destroyed in the United States attacks.
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PROVISION OF AUSTRALIAN ASSISTANCE UNDER SEATO PLANS

8. South Vietnam is a Protocol State under the SEATO Treaty and considerable planning has been developed covering its defence. Subject to a request by the South Vietnamese Government, the area would be regarded as part of the territory to be defended by SEATO in an emergency. It is a dominant strategic area for the defence of South East Asia and should it fall to the communists, it is likely that Laos and Cambodia would rapidly follow and that the problem of maintaining the freedom of Thailand would be substantially increased. Should these areas be lost, the future of Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines would be very uncertain.

Counter Insurgency Plans

9. The SEATO Military Advisers have already prepared a plan (Plan 7) to counter communist insurgency in South Vietnam if SEATO is requested and agrees to intervene, and Australia has nominated for planning purposes two destroyers/frigates; its battalion group of 28 Commonwealth Brigade in Malaya and an air transport squadron in support of the plan.

10. A plan to counter communist insurgency in Laos (Plan 5) had been developed by SEATO prior to the signing of the Geneva Agreement in 1962 which provided for the neutralization of Laos. In many respects this plan has been overtaken by events. However, it would provide a basis for deployment into North East Thailand should communist insurgent activity in Laos increase. Under this plan Australia has declared for planning purposes her battalion group of 28 Commonwealth Brigade, one Sabre squadron, and two destroyer/frigates.

11. In a Plan 5 or Plan 7 situation our naval and air force contributions could be made available and deployed without complications. Our ground force contribution to these plans consists of the Australian element of 28 Commonwealth Brigade. The whole of this brigade is declared as United Kingdom and

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New Zealand have also declared their elements to Plan 7.

Logistic support for the Brigade is provided by the United Kingdom. If for any reason the United Kingdom was not able to, or decided not to, participate in these operations, it would not be practicable to detach and move the Australian element without considerable delay. In these circumstances it would be more expedient to move a force complete with its own logistic support force from Australia.

**Limited War Plans**

12. The SEATO Military Advisers have also prepared two plans to meet overt communist aggression in South East Asia. SEATO Plan 4 is a plan for the defence of South East Asia including Pakistan and the Philippines against a combined attack by Communist China and North Vietnam. Plan 6 is a plan for the defence of Protocol States against an attack by North Vietnam. An outline of these two plans is attached at Annex A.

13. Australian forces nominated with Cabinet approval, for planning purposes to SEATO Plans 4 and 6 are as follows:

(a) Ground Forces -

**Under SEATO Command**

1 Infantry Battalion Group
(Serving in the 26 Commonwealth Brigade).

1 Battle Group with Combat and Logistic Support Forces (planned strength 8000 personnel)
(Now in Australia)

**Under National Command**

1 Battle Group (planned strength 4,700 personnel, but at present deficient in some combat and logistic support units)
(Held as a Reserve in Australia).
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(b) Air Forces - Under SEATO Command
2 Light Bomber Squadrons
(1 stationed at Butterworth, Malaya.
1 stationed at Amberley, Queensland)
2 Fighter Squadrons.
(stationed at Butterworth and Ubon)
- Under National Command
1 Medium Transport Squadron
1 Maritime Reconnaissance Squadron
(both in Australia)
1 Control and Reporting Unit
(stationed at Butterworth)
1 Light Transport Squadron
(partly deployed in South Vietnam)

(c) Naval Forces - Under National Command
2 Destroyers/Frigates
Carrier "MELBOURNE" with 2 escorts.
(To remain under National Command, but to operate under appropriate Naval Commander when in the SEATO area).

14. As we have previously advised the deployment of the Australian forces declared to limited war plans 4 and 6 will require a proclamation calling out limited numbers of the Citizen Forces and reserves on or before the date when the decision is taken to commit Australian forces. In addition it may well be necessary at that stage to introduce some form of selective national conscription with a liability for overseas service.

Deployment Problems of Ground Forces
15. The Commonwealth Brigade has been declared for planning purposes to Plan 7 (Insurgency in South Vietnam) and also to Plans 4 and 6 (Limited War Plans). In Plan 7, the Brigade would be stationed in South Vietnam while in Plans 4 and 6 it would be deployed in north east Thailand. These deployments have been accepted by SEATO but the difficulties which would
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arise if Plans 4 and 6 were implemented after Plan 7, have recently been under discussion. It would be difficult to disengage the Brigade from South Vietnam and move it to Thailand, and from the Australian point of view it would in these circumstances be preferable from a military viewpoint to send additional ground forces (our battle groups) to South Vietnam to build on the Brigade already established there. The United Kingdom on the other hand, with some support from New Zealand, has proposed in the ANZAM Defence Committee that the Brigade be nominated for deployment to north east Thailand under all three Plans. This view has been resisted by the Australian Defence Representatives on the grounds primarily that under a Plan 7 situation there would well be no military requirement to deploy the Commonwealth Brigade to north east Thailand, and also because it was felt to be essential to have a plan ready to deploy the Brigade to South Vietnam should military necessity arise. The Brigade has been stationed in Malaya against the contingency of Communist insurgency or aggression for almost 10 years and should the requirement arise in South Vietnam, it is the force best placed as an immediate Commonwealth contribution. This question was discussed at the ANZAM Defence Committee meeting a few weeks ago and the differing attitudes of the three Commonwealth Countries have not yet been resolved. From the Australian point of view it appears desirable to prepare alternative plans for the initial deployment of the Commonwealth Brigade and subsequent build-up of ground forces in whichever area the military requirement first arises, i.e. either north east Thailand or South Vietnam. The view of the United States Military Commander as to the best disposition of the Brigade would be of fundamental importance.
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National Movement Plans in Support of SEATO

16. A national plan (Plan DOWAGER) is being developed to move and subsequently maintain specified forces declared to or operating in support of SEATO Plans 4 and 6. The Plan covers the first Australian battle group with its logistic support and elements of its combat support group together with RAFF helicopters, personnel, and associated stores and equipment. This force would be moved to Thailand by S+45 in order to be capable of sustained operations by S+60, S-Day being the day the appropriate SEATO authority directs the execution of the SEATO Plan. (Plan DOWAGER is for deployment to Thailand but convoy timings could be met to South Vietnam. The requirements for prepositioning and real estate in South Vietnam have not yet been considered).

17. For the initial deployment of these forces (up to S+60) some sixteen selected merchant ships from the Australian register would be required together with adequate Boeing 707 aircraft to provide 3 sorties a day to S+15, 2 a day from S+16 to S+37, and 1 a day from S+38 to S+60 in addition to the Services owned movement resources i.e. H.M.A.S. SYDNEY, two Army LSMs and the C130 Squadron. Subsequent maintenance for this force would require the continuous use of one or two merchant ships. If some ships envisaged in the plan were not readily available and other charter arrangements had to be made, deployment timings could be adversely affected. The above provision does not take into account the deployment of a second Battle Group in Plan 4 which could arrive in the theatre about S+90 and would require ten selected merchant ships for its deployment some of which would have been used in deploying the first battle group. Additionally, for this second battle group, Boeing 707 sorties would be required at the rate of approximately two sorties a day from S+55 to S+90.
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18. The achievement of these timings would also depend upon the following factors which are being examined in the further development of the plans:

(i) the pre-positioning of some vehicles, stores and equipment in the theatre of operations prior to S-Day with the posting of personnel to attend to their care and maintenance;

(ii) the ready availability of merchant shipping and the chartering or requisitioning of ships and aircraft from their civil operators;

(iii) The attitude of merchant seamen and wharf labourers to the loading, embarkation and sailing of convoys.

19. The above deployment timings for Plan DOWAGER fall short of those currently laid down in Plans 4 and 6 which envisage the commitment of the Australian battle group by S+30. The appropriate military authorities in SEATO are aware of this delay in the development of the Australian ground force contribution; it is not practicable to improve on these timings with the Australian movement resources currently available. As a result of a study now being made of the strategic mobility of the Australian forces it is expected that proposals will be made for improvement in these movement resources.

AUSTRALIAN ASSISTANCE OTHER THAN UNDER SEATO PLANS

20. There is a range of possibilities under which Australia may be asked by the United States in conjunction with an Asian country for assistance either bilaterally or under SEATO although not necessarily through the formal machinery of the SEATO Council. These possibilities include:

(a) an increase in both the internal and external threats to South Vietnam;
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(b) a request by Thailand for allied support in
the light of developments in the area.
Possible force contributions are discussed in succeeding
paragraphs. These would be drawn from forces earmarked for
SEATO plans.

Army
21. Although the request for Australian forces may be
made bilaterally rather than as a result of a resolution by
the SEATO Council the forces nominated for existing SEATO
insurgency plans would be the normal and appropriate response.
In the case of the ground forces this would be the Commonwealth
Brigade. As indicated above, capability of this force would
be dependent on United Kingdom (and New Zealand participation.

22. Plans have also been prepared for the deployment of
self-contained Australian forces in a counter insurgency role
as follows:

(a) Plan SPAGHETTI - a self-contained company group
of 320 which could be moved by a combination of
military and civil aircraft in seven days and
could be maintained by air from Australia. It
could be reinforced by a SAS squadron; or it
could be an initial contribution, deployed in
advance of a larger force;

(b) Plan AROMATIC - a battle group with combat and
logistic support on a scale required for insurgency
operations totalling some 4,500 all ranks, including
an RAAF contribution of 250, which would be deployed
by chartered shipping and aircraft in addition to
the Services Movement resources. Details are at
Annex B.
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23. The ground forces involved in both the above plans would come from Australia from the forces earmarked for SEATO limited war. The Australian Army forces already deployed in Malaysia and those contemplated to meet a covert situation in New Guinea (Plan PYTHALION - outlined at Annex C) would not be affected.

Air Forces

24. Sabre Fighter/Ground Attack Aircraft - Of the two squadrons of Sabres based at Butterworth, which have been declared to SEATO for limited war operations, eight aircraft are presently deployed to Ubon, the RAAF's planned operational base in Thailand in limited war. The aircraft at Butterworth are available for the air defence of Malaya. Given Thai consent it would be possible to build up rapidly the aircraft at Ubon to full squadron strength. At present only air defence weapons are held at Ubon; the reaction time for the squadron to undertake air/ground operations could be greatly improved by pre-positioning bombs and rockets from Butterworth at Ubon.

25. Canberra Light Bomber Aircraft - One squadron is already located at Butterworth and the other is based in Queensland. Both could deploy rapidly to Tan Son Nhut, near Saigon, their operational base under SEATO limited war plans. They have little application in conditions short of limited war other than in the deterrent role.

26. Caribou Light Transport Aircraft - Transport aircraft are essential for operations in South East Asia and the Caribou is a particularly suitable aircraft. Six RAAF Caribou aircraft are in process of positioning in South Vietnam. Six extra aircraft would be available by mid December, 1964 but the limitation on their availability is the shortage of trained crews. If Australian Army combat forces were deployed to South East Asia the Caribou aircraft deploying now in South Vietnam would be required for their support. If these aircraft...
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were not available six additional Caribous could be deployed to South East Asia without disruption of the remainder of the Air Force crew training programme but Army field training with these aircraft would virtually cease with the balance of the aircraft left in Australia. If it were decided to implement the contingency plan (Plan FYGMAHION) for possible operations against Indonesian covert activities in New Guinea all remaining Caribou aircraft would be required to support the ground forces. There would then be no Caribou transport aircraft resources either to continue RAAF and Army training in Australia or to support the detachment in South East Asia.

27. **Iroquois Helicopters** - Helicopters are an essential element in ground force mobility in South East Asia. Four Iroquois helicopters are already deployed to Malaya, twelve are in Australia and eight more are due for delivery by November, 1964. As the helicopter squadron is still in its formative stages its ability to deploy is limited by availability of aircrew and ground support equipment. By October it should be possible, if necessary, to deploy a further six Iroquois to South East Asia from Australia. This number could not be increased substantially before June, 1965 when additional crews would become available. Six helicopters would be required to support Australian combat forces should they be deployed in South East Asia on the scale envisaged in Plan AROMATIC. Should Plan FYGMAHION (the New Guinea contingency plan) also be implemented, the helicopters required could be provided only at the expense of RAAF and Army training in Australia. As a general principle the deployment of RAAF helicopters should be in the same area as our ground forces. Dispersal in small detachments is a wasteful method of helicopter employment.
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Naval Forces

28. H.M.A.S. SYDNEY is available at seven days notice. It may be necessary to provide a surface escort for SYDNEY and the merchant ships in Plan M.I.A.T.I.C. during part of the passage to South East Asia; and to provide harbour defence measures while at their destination ports. Fuelling arrangements for the two merchant ships at Manus Island and at destination ports would be made. The surface escort for these vessels while in South East Asian waters could be provided by the two R.A.N. escorts serving in the Strategic Reserve. Assistance in harbour defence measures, if required, could be provided by the four R.A.N. minesweepers, if diverted from their present tasks off Borneo. The escorts and minesweepers could also be made available for patrols off the South Vietnamese coast. The R.A.N. has six minesweepers. This allows four to be maintained at sea. In a PYLIAUION situation four minesweepers would be required in New Guinea waters.

Command Arrangements

29. Australian forces provided under SEATO plans would come under the agreed command arrangements set out in those plans. These provide for effective command to be in the hands of the United States who, as the appointed Nation, nominates the Force Commander, and the Field Force Commander for all areas in which Australian forces would be engaged. In the case of forces which might be requested by the United States in conjunction with an Asian country, command arrangements would be made in the light of circumstances prevailing at the time. It is expected that these would be similar to those contemplated for SEATO plans.

Survey of the Situation

30. From the assessment in paragraphs 3 to 7 above, the most likely North Vietnamese reaction to the Tonkin Gulf incidents...
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would appear to be an intensification of Vietcong activities in South Vietnam. Such intensification would not necessarily result in a SEATO Plan 7 situation as such but the United States may decide to request force contributions from Australia and other countries probably bilaterally rather than through the formal machinery of the SEATO Council. In effect we would be faced with a stepping up of the cold war and Australia would be able to offer worthwhile ground force and air support to the United States if requested. The range of this assistance is outlined in paragraphs 21-27 above.

31. Australia could sustain the effort proposed for such cold war tasks for as long as required except for Caribou aircraft where some wastage must be expected due to flying conditions and to enemy action. To meet this wastage and our training commitments in Australia, and to provide against the contingency of operations in New Guinea, it would be necessary to acquire additional Caribous. These would be available on a lead time of approximately six months but crews if required would only be available at the expense of other commitments. If the United States were to request further light air transport support assistance in South Vietnam early provision should be made for the additional Caribous and the necessary crew training.

32. Should the situation in South East Asia further deteriorate the United States may decide to request additional contributions. An Australian contribution up to the full extent of the naval, ground and air units shown in paragraphs 21 to 26 above, could be made in the circumstances. It is assumed that any United States request for Australian combat ground forces would be preceded by the committal of a substantial United States combat ground force. The situation would have reached serious proportions for such a sizeable Australian contribution to be required, and the despatch of our forces could form a useful advance deployment should conditions worsen to the stage of limited war.
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33. Considerable SEATO planning covering the defence of South East Asia has been developed which forms the basis for deployment of SEATO forces from participating nations to meet a range of likely situations. Australia has declared for planning purposes substantial forces to each plan. If called upon to make available our planned contributions under SEATO limited war plans 4 and 6 (listed in paragraph 13 above) Australia would be unable to maintain any effective force contribution to the defence of Malaysia. In the event of limited war it would be necessary to concentrate in the war area those of our forces provided for cold war tasks. Forces already deployed in Malaysia and in South Vietnam should therefore become part of any major Australian force committed to the South East Asian area. If this were not done Australian resources to provide a contribution to a limited war may prove inadequate.

34. Australia faces the possibility of becoming involved in operations in three widely separated areas; The South East Asian mainland such as South Vietnam, in Malaysia and in Papua/New Guinea. We do not have the military resources to become seriously involved with combat forces in all three areas. Therefore any substantial contribution to mainland South East Asia even in an insurgency situation would be at some expense to our present contribution to the defence of Malaysia, and could affect our ability to provide forces for Papua/New Guinea.

35. The situation in Malaysia where we have important forward bases is not improving. A hostile Indonesia could be a threat to our lines of communication if we were obliged to provide sizeable forces to a worsening situation in South East Asia.
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36. Planning to counter sizeable overt Indonesian aggression against Malaysia (which is considered to be unlikely) has been developed in the British plans SPILLIKIN and REMLEY which have been considered in the ANZAM forum. Agreement has still to be reached between the ANZAM countries on the political objectives of these plans, on whether the operations envisaged will achieve those objectives and on the internal situation in Indonesia with which we would be faced after REMLEY had been concluded. These matters will take some time to resolve. Up to the present the United States has not been brought into this ANZAM planning.

37. The developing situation in South East Asia and the possibility of concurrent demands arising for our forces to meet a Malaysian situation and to meet a SEATO situation in South East Asia indicate the desirability of a greater coordination of military planning between the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. If called upon to fulfil our commitments in SEATO limited war Plans 4 and 6 Australia would be unable to maintain any effective force contribution to the defence of Malaysia. Australia would also face logistic problems in deploying our element of 28 Commonwealth Brigade to any operations under SEATO if Britain declined to participate in those operations.

38. It is essential that these situations be discussed more fully with the United States before any further commitments are accepted. It is also necessary that Australia's potential obligations if Plans SPILLIKIN and REMLEY were implemented, should be brought to the notice of the United States in accordance with the Understandings entered into last year between President Kennedy and the Minister for External Affairs arising from the provisions of the ANUS Treaty. Because Plans SPILLIKIN and REMLEY are basically British plans and
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because of our involvement in ANZUS military arrangements as indicated above, the military discussions with the United States could only be fully satisfactory if at some stage they were extended to take account of the views of the United Kingdom and New Zealand. In the past the United States has maintained consistent opposition to such planning, and there have been new indications in the last few weeks that it may feel itself inhibited in planning talks if Great Britain were present. On the other hand, the United States recognizes that it is in the interests of all concerned to see that Britain is tied in as much as possible to the defence of the ANZUS region.

39. The possibility of the Americans taking part in joint contingency planning for operations to counter Indonesian overt aggression (which would be an important part but not the whole of the subject matter appropriate for Four Power military planning) was discussed recently with the Prime Minister by United States political leaders. Our latest advice indicates that the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific will visit Australia soon for initial discussions on ANZUS planning. This might provide a suitable opportunity to discuss further with the Americans the nature of our SEATO commitments, possible action outside SEATO and the relationship of our commitment to Malaysia to our ability to contribute militarily elsewhere in South East Asia.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

40. To sum up, if the North Vietnamese decide to react to the Tonkin Gulf incidents the most likely counter-action would be a stepping-up of Vietcong insurgency in South Vietnam. If we are asked to contribute forces by the United States we can provide assistance in a range of forms from our existing forces; these should be taken from those forces declared to SEATO plans. There is a need for early military discussions with the United States. At this stage it is not considered that any major
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build-up of our defence effort beyond present approvals is required to enable us to respond to possible United States requests for assistance.

41. Greater overt participation in South Vietnamese insurgency operations by North Vietnamese forces would increase the risk of limited war breaking out in South East Asia. Our initial commitments under limited war plans would require the call-up of some elements of the Citizen Forces and Reserves (see paragraph 14). At the same time the introduction of selective national service may well be necessary in order to meet the probability of increased force commitments if the war continued or developed.

42. Recommendations cannot be made immediately on the increases needed in our defence effort to meet a growing cold war threat leading to an increased risk of limited war. We have pointed to the probable need for improved strategic and tactical mobility and other measures may be required to improve our military capability. The availability of adequate recruits and the re-engagement of men in the forces remain key factors in the further expansion of our forces. As a first step towards the new Defence Programme, a revision is being made of the strategic basis of defence policy to provide an up-dated basis for the development of additional defence requirements. These will then be planned and programmed for in a new programme for the three-year period commencing 1965/1966. This will provide for a progressive expansion of our forces and ensure a proper balance between the strategic requirement, the available resources of manpower and the requirements of capital equipment, maintenance and works.

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