INTRODUCTION


GENERAL

2. The Report is endorsed by the Defence Committee from the Australian military viewpoint.

3. The Defence Committee observed that it is in accordance with the Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy approved by the Government on 8th April, 1953, for planning and programme purposes and also with the following extract from the Report of the Melbourne Defence Conference in October 1953, between the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, the Australian Defence Committee and the New Zealand Chief of Staff:

"The maintenance of internal security and national independence in South-East Asia is of great significance because:

(a) The loss to the Communists of Indo-China would probably lead to the collapse of Burma and Thailand, and the development of a direct threat to Malaysia.

(b) Communist domination of South-East Asia would create great economic difficulties for the Western Powers who would be deprived of strategic materials, and also would probably be obliged to help feed rice deficit countries in the area.

(c) The collapse of South-East Asia, together with a deteriorating situation in the Middle East would have strong repercussions in India, Pakistan and Ceylon.

(d) Should South-East Asia be lost, the re-establishment of Western influence in the region would be a difficult, if not insurmountable, problem."
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"A Communist dominated and controlled South-East Asia would so increase the Communist threat to the Anzam countries that the existing and potential Communist threats in the area must be countered."

**COURSES OF ACTION**

4. From a military point of view the report raises the following broad alternative courses of action:-

(Paragraph references are to paragraphs of the report)

(a) Intervention without a ceasefire either -

(i) to secure the Tonkin Delta (paragraphs 11 - 14), or

(ii) should the Delta fall, to hold the line Thakhek - Dong Hoi, with a view to securing Southern Indo-China (paragraphs 15 and 16).

(b) a guarantee to intervene in the event of violation of agreed ceasefire (paragraphs 25 - 27).

(c) The establishment of a "final stop-line" on the Kwa Isthmus, accepting the eventual loss of Indo-China, (Paragraph 28).

In association with any of the above courses, measures to improve the internal security of the free South-East Asian countries should be taken (paragraphs 23 and 24).

**DEFENCE ASPECTS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE GOVERNMENT.**

5. (a) Intervention without a Ceasefire

(i) In the Tonkin Delta

The Report states that -

"The retention of the Tonkin Delta is of the greatest importance to South-East Asia as a whole", (Paragraph 10).

The following extracts from the Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy are relevant:-

"Indo-China is the key to the defence of South East Asia."

"While Indo-China is held, defence in depth is provided for the Australia-New Zealand main support area. Therefore all possible action should be taken by the Allies to bolster the French in their defence of Indo-China, both in cold or limited war."

On this basis, intervention in the Delta would appear to be the most logical course; however, the following factors must be taken into consideration:-
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(A) To stabilise the situation in the Delta would require immediate intervention with substantial forces. This would involve a continuing commitment estimated at three Divisions and about 300 aircraft provided initially by a carrier task force and from air forces based outside Indo-China. (Paragraph 11).

(B) Such intervention would be of little value unless followed by military action to stabilise the situation in the rest of Indo-China. This would, of course, pose an additional and expanding commitment. (Paragraph 13).

(C) Such intervention may not receive United Nations support or be backed by Asian opinion.

(D) The risk of war with China, inherent in action as at (E) above, would be considerable and could, if it eventuated, lead to the loss of the whole of Indo-China and Thailand, and falling back to the Kra Isthmus. (Paragraphs 17 - 20).

(ii) On the Thakhek Line

Should intervention in the Tonkin Delta be decided against, or should the Delta fall before such action can be taken, the line Thakhek - Dong Hoi offers the most likely chance of a successful defence. (Paragraph 15).

The following factors must be considered:

(A) An indication of the magnitude of the forces necessary to defend the position, to protect the Thai flank and to clear Southern Indo-China of subversive elements is given at paragraph 15 of the Report. As in the case of the Delta, this would be a continuing and expanding commitment. It is noted that French forces may not be available to assist in the defence of this position. (Paragraph 16).

(B) The holding of this line, which is subject to a number of limitations, would involve the loss of Northern Laos and may well result in a stalemate on the Korean pattern.

(C) United Nations support may not be accorded for intervention on this line.

(D) The risk of war with China, whilst less than that involved in intervention in the Delta, would have to be considered.
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TOP SECRET

4.

(b) A Ceasefire.

A ceasefire on the terms set out in paragraph 1 of Annex 4 to Enclosure A of the Report would appear to be unlikely. However, if any ceasefire is agreed upon, to be effective, it must be accompanied by a guarantee of intervention. Such a guarantee would involve a potential commitment and to be of value, forces would have to be readily available to implement it either offensively or defensively.

(c) Establishment of a "Final Stop Line" on the Kra Isthmus

The loss of the Tonkin Delta could leave the Kra Isthmus as the only alternative defensible position in South-East Asia against Chinese Communist aggression. Intermediate positions would, at the best, serve only to impose delay on the enemy.

Present Anzac planning includes the establishment of a defensive position on the Kra Isthmus. As stated in the report of the Melbourne Defence discussions of October, 1953:

"The vital importance of maintaining a foothold in Malaya would hinge on our ability to block any advance into that country. Therefore it is vitally important that there should be in existence plans for the deployment of trained and equipped Forces for the re-inforcement of Malaya. All the facilities necessary for their operation and logistic support should also be available. To this end, there should be a clear understanding between Governments as to the sources from which these Forces and facilities would be provided within the time required."

The deterioration of the situation in the Delta and its likely implications emphasise the urgency for decisions by the Australian Government on the recommendations of the Melbourne Defence Conference of October, 1953.

USE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

6. It is noted that should war with China be precipitated by Chinese Communist Aggression in South-East Asia, air attack should be launched immediately aimed at military targets, and that to achieve a maximum and lasting effect nuclear as well as conventional weapons should be used from the outset (paragraph 18).

POSSIBLE AUSTRALIAN CONTRIBUTION

7. The possible contribution Australia could make, under present circumstances, towards collective action in South-East Asia would form only a small proportion of the total forces required...
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required, and the initiative rests with the United States and the United Kingdom who would be required to provide the major contribution.

The contribution Australia could make from existing forces would be as follows:

**Navy**
- 1 Aircraft carrier for approximately six months each year;
- 2 destroyers or frigates constantly, if relieved from Korea.

**Army**
- The two battalions now in Korea, provided they can be released. However, these could not be maintained without special recruitment.

**R.A.A.F.**
- 1 Medium Bomber (Lincoln) Squadron at present based in Malaysia.
- 2 Fighter/Ground Attack (Meteor) Squadrons subject to the release of No. 77 Squadron from Korea and the personnel of No. 73 Wing from Malta.
- 1 Transport (Dakota) Squadron, subject to release from Korea.
- 1 Airfield Construction Squadron.

9. In regard to measures to improve the internal security of South-East Asian countries, views have already been expressed, from the Defence aspect, on the forms of assistance which Australia might provide. These include provision of military equipment and the training of South-East Asian personnel in Australian Service Establishments.

**EFFECTS OF COLLECTIVE ACTION ON AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE POLICY AND PROGRAMME**

9. In the Melbourne Defence Conference report, it was stated:

"The formation of a Commonwealth Far East Strategic Reserve is highly desirable and should be undertaken as soon as the release of forces from Korea permits." (Paragraph 25)

Any commitment additional to the above Forces, and the R.A.A.F. Squadrons in Malta, would require special measures to provide them.

10. It is noted from D.P.C. Agenda No. 31/1954 relating to the re-balancing of the Defence Programme that the Government has in mind the relation of the following considerations:

(i) The existing commitment in Korea,

(ii) The relation of the proposed strategic reserve in Malaya. Any Australian Army contribution could only be made with Permanent Forces.

(iii) The effect on the raising of an Expeditionary Force, and on the time required for its deployment.

Communist domination of Indo-China would immeasurably
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increase the threat to Malaya and accordingly current plans for its external reinforcement in the event of war would not be effective.

CONCLUSIONS

11. (a) Without a ceasefire and if intervention presents prohibitive implications, the eventual loss of Indo-China must be accepted. (Paragraph 5(a) above).

(b) In the event of the loss of Indo-China the defence of a "final stop line" on the Kra Isthmus, against Communist aggression would become imperative. Any other action taken should not be allowed to prejudice this aim. (Paragraph 5(c) above).

(c) It is noted that in the event of war with China, the use of nuclear as well as conventional weapons is envisaged. (Paragraph 6 above).

(d) The possible contribution Australia could make under present circumstances, towards collective action in South-East Asia would form only a small proportion of the total forces required, and the initiative rests with the United States and the United Kingdom who would be required to provide the major contribution. (Paragraph 7 above).

(e) Subject to (d), the contribution Australia could make from existing forces would be as shown in paragraph 7 above. It should be noted that the availability of elements of this contribution is subject to their release from present commitments. Any commitment additional to the forces shown in paragraph 7, and the R.A.A.F. Squadrons in Malta, would require special measures to provide them. (Paragraphs 7 and 9).

(f) Communist domination of Indo-China would immeasurably increase the threat to Malaya and accordingly current plans for its external reinforcement in the event of war would not be effective. (Paragraph 10).

(g) The deterioration of the situation in the Delta and its likely implications emphasise the urgency for decisions by the Australian Government on the recommendations of the Melbourne Defence Conference of October, 1953. (Paragraph 5(c) above).
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