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# AUSTRALIA HALTS SAIGON ARMS AID

## Nonmilitary Assistance to Continue — Training of Cambodians to End

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SYDNEY, Australia, Dec. 27

—Australia stopped military aid to South Vietnam today, ending the last vestige of this country's controversial participation in the Vietnam war.

The step followed the abrupt recall last week of the remaining contingent of 66 Australians assigned to South Vietnamese forces as instructors or advisers. The bulk of the Australian troops in South Vietnam, who at one time numbered about 8,000 were brought home last year.

Twenty soldiers left in Saigon to guard the Australian Embassy were transferred from the army to the diplomatic payroll to remove any suggestion of military collaboration with the South Vietnamese by the new Labor party Government of Prime Minister Gough Whitlam.

### Whitlam Opposed War

Mr. Whitlam, whose party's victory in elections Dec. 2 ended the 23-year-reign of a conservative coalition, had opposed Australian participation in the war.

A civil and military aid program for South Vietnam of \$25-million in Australian currency—equivalent to about \$31.8-million in American money following the most recent revaluation of the Australian dollar last Saturday—had been voted in 1971 by the Government of William McMahon, the former Prime Minister.

Approximately half that amount had been allotted to military equipment for the Saigon forces. Defense Minister Lance H. Barnard, announcing

the end of the program, said that about \$2.5-million of the military aid budget had already been spent.

Nonmilitary assistance will be continued, it was reported. The allotment is to run until 1974.

Training of South Vietnamese military personnel in Australia, under a program instituted by the previous Government, will cease with the departure of a small group now here, the Defense Minister said.

A program for training Cambodian troops in Australia will be abandoned, Mr. Barnard said.

### U.S. to Seek Clarification

WASHINGTON, Dec. 27 (Reuters)—State Department officials were taken by surprise today by the Australian Government's decision to halt military aid to South Vietnam.

Officials said that the first

word of the announcement by the Australian Defense Minister was from press reports. They said that the United States would seek clarification of the new labor Government's move.

Withdrawal of Australian military aid would be a relatively minute loss to South Vietnam, which had been receiving stepped-up United States weapons supplies in anticipation of a cease-fire.

The Australian move might, however, have some impact in Congress here when the Administration seeks funds for continued assistance to South Vietnam, diplomatic observers said.

### Cambodians Are Bitter

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia, Dec. 27 (UPI)—High-ranking officers within the Cambodian Defense Ministry reacted bitterly today to the news that Australia was abandoning plans

to provide training in Australia for members of the Cambodian armed forces.

"The Australian training program was not very big but it helped us to build our spirit to know that that great country had allied itself to our struggle," said an officer. "It seems now that we have been abandoned by a friend."

During 1972, a total of 71 Cambodians received training in Australia. Forty of them were young officers who attended an English and "junior leadership" course at a jungle training center in central Australia. Others attended programs at an officer-cadet school and the Australian Staff College, and about 10 took pilot training courses.

Australia has also provided Cambodia with military aid in the form of radio sets and military vehicles. The fate of that aid is uncertain.