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Singapore's Chief Warns U.S. Against Hasty Vietnam Pullout

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Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore told American officials and Congressmen today that any hasty American withdrawal from Vietnam would mean the loss of the entire region.

The 44-year-old Prime Minister of the island republic was understood to have made the point in his private talks here that in spite of domestic dissent over the war, the Johnson Administration had to demonstrate the capacity to "match your will to Hanoi's."

He was understood to have maintained that not until North Vietnam was convinced of American determination, would it show signs of being ready to end the war.

In private conversations with Administration officials and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and House Foreign Affairs Committee, he was understood to have advanced the view that Hanoi was carefully watching the American political scene.

Mr. Lee was understood to have suggested that it was doubtful that North Vietnam would modify its terms for peace before the American Presidential election in 1968. He was understood to have observed that if he were in Hanoi's position, he would "just sit this one out."

In his public statements and in a communiqué issued with President Johnson this afternoon, the Prime Minister stopped short of endorsing the Administration's policy on Vietnam. He said in the communi-

qué that he hoped there would eventually be a settlement in Vietnam that "would enhance the prospects of peace and security for the rest of south and southeast Asia."

The Prime Minister, who has charmed Americans with his wit and his directness of speech, expressed Singapore's "readiness to play her part in constructing a regional framework for common prosperity and mutual security" in Asia.

Mr. Lee was understood to feel, however, that the non-Communist nations of the region were no match at present for Communist China's power. He was said to have stressed the need for "outside underpinning" for the regional security system until the non-Communist nations had gained more cohesiveness and strength.

This was Mr. Lee's first visit to the United States since he led Singapore to independence on Aug. 9, 1965. The Cambridge-educated Prime Minister successfully combated Communist opposition in Singapore, which has a population of about two million, 75 per cent of whom are ethnically Chinese. He has also negotiated withdrawal of the British from the strategically situated naval bases at Singapore.