TEXT OF SPEECH BY SINGAPORE'S PRIME MINISTER,

MR. LEE KUAN YEW, IN COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY ON ESTIMATES FOR MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AT THE FEDERAL PARLIAMENT ON SATURDAY, 12TH DECEMBER, 1964.

Mr. Speaker, Sir,

With the introduction of the 1964 estimates on defence expenditure comes the end of an era. I think I could graphically describe this as the end of the year of the Lang Raja Wali. For many years since 1957 Malaya has justly prided itself upon the absence of large armed forces and it took pride in the fact that this army was of small dimensions. Its air force was really more of a civilian nature meant for training pilots, that its navy was really in aid of the Customs to prevent smugglers. That is now all over and the estimates this year puts the increase on defence and internal security reaching about a quarter of the total expenditure for 1955. This is a long way still to go before we reach the situtation of India or Pakistan where over 50 per cent of the budget is on defence alone apart from internal security. As of this given moment our expenditure on defence is about the order of 13 to 14 per cent.

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Sir, I think it is significant to note that although change took place in 1963 in September when Indonesia mounted confrontation into military aggression, general elections then pending necessitated a delay of one year before the estimates reflected the new changed position. I would like, Mr. Speaker, Sir, to draw the attention of the House and the country to a few salient points. I would like to congratulate the Minister of Defence in having had, obviously, these points in mind in the expansion of the defence budget. In Asia the creation of a large standing army inevitably leads to an army take-over. There is no army in Asia which has been expanded and demobilised when a crisis or war is over. In Europe it has been possible to expand one's army in times of national emergency disband them when a war and emergency is over. But not so with the newly independent countries. First, in Thailand, then in Burma, then in Vietnam, then in Pakistan and very soon undoubtedly in Indonesia we shall watch the relentless process of an army which, once expanded, has a logic and momentum of its own that he who holds power by authority of the gun eventually is completely brushed aside and the man who wields a gun instals himself as the ultimate authority. And therefore it was with great interest that I watched the personnel list in the defence estimates and congratulate the Defence Minister for having kept the expansion of the annually recurrent element under sizeable proportions. In terms of personnel the whole of the armed forces will not rise beyond probably 2,000 men and the expenditure is really to be incurred in the annual expense of running

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the war against us by Indonesia, on the modernisation which is envisaged as inevitable. The role of the pre-confrontation army and the armed forces' role post confrontation were two different things. Pre-confrontation, the happy days now perhaps for ever over, the army by which I mean the army, the navy and the air force, was designed really in aid of the civil government, to maintain law and order against rioters and against armed insurrection, Communist guerillas and so on. It is not an army that was trained or equipped to meet armed aggression from a neighbour with 400,000 men under arms equipped with some 2 billion roubles worth of Russian equipment.

What is the role of the Army today? Is it really to build an instrument that can withstand on its own Indonesian aggression. I say, if we attempted to do that, then really we will be ruined. I think we have to get the country to understand that now and for many many years, Malaysia can only withstand Indonesian aggression if she has got friends who are willing and are able -- internationally a climate of opinion must be created which will enable them internationally -- to help Malaysia's survival.

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Therefore, what is the purpose of this increased expenditure, about $50 million envisaged in the annual recurrent increase, and another $50 million by way of reserves moved by the Minister of Finance in a supplementary budget. I

would like to suggest to the Hon. Minister of Defence that perhaps what is really in our long term interest is to have a small, well equipped, hard-striking force so that it can always be, as has been suggested by a member from the P.M.I.P., there on-the-spot in order that the first brush of any incursion shall be seen to the world to have been carried by Malysians against Indonesians and not by allied troops. But, as I have said, let us at the same time make it clear to the whole world that unless we want to ruin ourselves nobody has the right to expect Malaysia with 10 million people to have an army to stand up against 104 million Indonesians.

I, therefore, note with regret that the provision for increase in the territorial army is not as great as I think it could be if we wanted to mobilise what could be a very large reservoir of patriotic strength. Once we have conceded that in a full scale conflict Malaysia cannot be expected to have armed forces that can withstand Indonesia, then I think we should accept the position that really the army should be a mobile one, supported by a large volunteer group largely for the maintenance of internal security in aid of military operations. No on envisages a full scale Indonesian attack on Malaysia anywhere in the immediate future. In fact, if they did mount such an aggression it might be a very quick solution to some of our intractable problems. But I think it must be uppermost in the minds of all those concerned with security that if we are not careful this constant

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sending over of 50 or 100 men will be a drain on our resources. It has been suggested not only by sending there men over, that you engage some thousands of troops for weeks on end to ferret some 60 to 70 paratroopers, but in the end we might end up with having to feed five to ten thousand Indonesians at the rate of $3 per day and if we treat them as gently as we have been doing, as armed combatants in something which is accorded the status of war, then I think it would not be too difficult for the Indonesians to contrive to send more hungry people over in order that they can live at Malaysia's expense, at $3 per day. And I think, then, the defence budget will be eclipsed by the prisons budget.

It is my submission that our best interests will be served if we expand the territorial army on a week-end basis, ready and available to act in support of military operations to be carried out by the regular armed forces in conjunction with allied forces.

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I would suggest that the lesson we learn from our neighbours in Asia is that if we are to continue as a democracy, then it is far better for us to have a well-paid, well-equipped army, small and compact, not too heavy a drain on the resources of the country than one like Indonesia. Once you reach the Indonesian situation -- even if President Sukarno were twice the man he is, and from all accounts he is quite a man -- he has not got the strength to reduce that army.

Four hundred thousand ill-paid and not very well equipped army presents a political problem of immense dimensions. His political manoueverability and viability has gone. In any decision such as the one he reached, to carry confrontation in place of West Irian, that of what to do with this army now that the West Irian problem was over, must have been one of the most fundamental factors in launching him off on another external adventure.

We should contrive in so far as it is humanly possible to ensure that we do not join the ranks of our neighbours. I do not think that there is any immediate danger, but I think if we can learn one lesson, it is this: that an army in Asia in order to be the instrument of a democratically elected government must be one which is so devised as not to itself become a political proponent for power. The only reason why the Ceylonese Government has survived in spits of all the hazards it has been through in the last few years before it was democratically elected out of office, was the composition of Ceylon's armed forces. A nice admixture of Buddhists and Christians, Berghers, Ceylonese and Hindus, insured that the army could not become the vehicle of any religious or communal group. I think it might have been fortuitous that the British bequeathed upon Ceylon such a manageable instrument.

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From our point of view it is far better for us to face a democratically elected government, however recalcitrant, however obtuse, but one which is always having its mind on social and economic problems, seeking to resolve these problems in order to prolong its tenure of office, because the advent of military rule is the beginning of the last phase.

For us, perhaps, the most significant lesson we must draw is that the danger to Malaysia does not come from either military defeat and conquest or economic boycott leading to bankruptcy. Confrontation presents us with a grave problem designed ultimately to disintegrate Malaysia from within.

If we are caught in the Indonesian trap of accentuating our internal conflicts, race, language, religion, if we are caught in the second trap of diverting more and more of our resources from economic and social programmes into the expansion of our armed forces, then we go down the slippery slope, at the end of which lies disintegration.

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The solution so far as is open to us lies in solidarity and prosperity, solidarity of all the component groups in Malaysia, all the communities in all the States, to keep up the economic growth which alone makes it worthwhile to fight and die for Malaysia.

Therefore, when we come to consider the defence expenditure, I think it is imperative that the realities of situation be understood by all, not only in this Chamber but in the country. First, that it cannot be expected to have an army, a navy and an air force which on its own can hold off our bigger and more powerful neighbour; second, that we must be permitted to have allies who can come to our defence and who must be enabled to have freedom of action by the right international climate being created, by understanding of what is involved in South East Asia, that these European forces are not weapons to prolong a colonial era now gone, but is in aid of a newly independent nation threatened by a bigger and more rapacious neighbour.

12th December, 1964.

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