

Senate Estimates – Questions on Notice – Cancellation of Long Tan Commemoration Service

In response to questions taken on notice earlier today we have established the following:

- **Is DFAT aware of comments made by Commander Harry Smith (reported by ABC) that “it was mentioned some weeks ago when I was in Canberra that Hanoi was worried about the number of people expected”?**

DFAT is aware of Mr Smith’s comments through the ABC reporting. DFAT staff did not meet Commander Smith in Canberra in advance of the commemorative service.

- **Did anyone from DFAT express to Mr Smith the view that Mr Smith articulated in the ABC article?**

No

- **Had DFAT been advised that the notification was coming prior to 10am on 16th August?**

No

- **How was the official notification conveyed by the Government of Vietnam?**

16 August 2016, 10am (1pm Canberra): Consulate-General Ho Chi Minh City staff member received informal advice that there may be problems with Long Tan commemoration service and the mission should contact the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Hanoi for advice. Head of Mission (HOM) Hanoi immediately sought an urgent meeting with representatives at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

2:30pm (5:30pm Canberra): HOM Hanoi met with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) Director-General of the South East Asia Department, Nguyen Thanh Tan, who confirmed the commemoration service had been cancelled. HOM Hanoi requested formal written advice.

5pm (8pm Canberra) on 16 August: The Consulate-General in Ho Chi Minh City received a diplomatic note from the Department of External Relations of the Ba Ria-Vung Tau provincial government to the Consulate-General in Ho Chi Minh City formally advising the decision to cancel the Long Tan commemoration service.

- **How was the Foreign Minister advised of the formal notification? What was the process?**

16 August 2016, 10.30am (1:30pm Canberra): HOM Hanoi advised by phone the informal advice to:

- Office of the Minister for Foreign Affairs

Around 3:00pm (6:00pm Canberra): Following his meeting with Ministry of Foreign Affairs Director-General of the South East Asia Department, HOM Hanoi confirmed by phone with the Office of the Minister for Foreign Affairs that the commemoration service had been cancelled.

8:54pm (Canberra): Deputy HOM Hanoi advised the Foreign Minister’s Office by email that the diplomatic note had been received.

10:41pm (01.41pm Canberra): Cable from HOM Hanoi to Canberra.

We are still working to confirm details to answer the remaining questions.