

## FRENCH A-BLAST IN AIR REPORTED

Australia Believes Testing  
in Pacific Has Begun

By United Press International

CANBERRA, Australia, Monday, June 17 — Prime Minister Gough Whitlam said that France apparently exploded a nuclear device in the atmosphere southwest of Tahiti early today. He termed it "regrettable."

"The Australian Government has reason to believe that France exploded a nuclear weapon device in the atmosphere over Mururoa atoll this morning," Mr. Whitlam said in a statement to the press.

"It was a matter of deep concern to the Australian Government and people that France is proceeding to yet another program of nuclear testing in the Pacific."

The test, he said, might result in deposits of radioactive fallout in Australian territory.

"The feelings of the Australian Government and people had been made known in the past and nothing has changed in these feelings since last year," he said. "It was more regrettable that the test had been made under a new

French Government."

France has been conducting tests above Mururoa atoll, 800 miles southeast of Tahiti, for more than six years. This was apparently this year's first such test. Last year, Australia and New Zealand both registered strong complaints against the French tests, and sent ships into the test zone in an attempt to block them.

French officials said that the purpose of the tests was to perfect warheads for medium-range missiles, to be based in underground silos in France and aboard the French fleet of nuclear-powered submarines.

President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, in his first major policy decision since his election May 19, gave the Pacific command a go-ahead last weekend for the controversial nuclear tests. But, in an apparent effort to silence domestic and foreign critics, he announced that all future tests, as of 1975, would be conducted underground.

He also cut one test out of the series of explosions at Mururoa and ordered an overall reduction in Government spending on atomic testing. Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber was dismissed a week ago today as Minister for Reforms because of his outspoken criticism of the tests.