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## PRIME MINISTER

E &amp; O.E. - PROOF ONLY

TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE, WASHINGTON, 16 APRIL 1986

**PM:** Ladies and gentlemen, I thought you would appreciate the opportunity of knowing in advance the contribution that Australia will be making this afternoon in the debate in the Security Council on this issue. And we will be distributing to you a copy of the statement. I have been engaged since I have been here in discussions with my colleague, Mr Hayden, the Foreign Minister and agreed on the position that Australia will be putting. I think it is best captured, if you like - the approach that will be adopted in the Security Council - by this sentence. "If our work this week is not to be a complete failure, yet another sterile exchange without constructive end, it is necessary that all of us, members of the Council and members of the United Nations, should turn our minds actively and without further delay to the discharge of our responsibilities to avoid further tensions and to bring our deliberations to a constructive conclusion". The statement points out the wide powers that the Security Council has under Chapter Six of the Charter. Chapter Six is that which deals with specific settlement of disputes and they will be therefore saying to the Security Council today that we have taken it upon ourselves to make absolutely specific recommendations as to how within the wide range of powers delineated in Chapter Six, the Security Council should act. We are urging ..... themselves of those powers and try to use them to secure a peaceful resolution of the dispute that exists. We refer to the fact that on 14 January of this year the General Assembly, the full General Assembly, adopted by consensus a resolution on measures to prevent international terrorism and we have said it was absolutely necessary that Libya must .. binding commitment to and discharge of those commitments not to resort further to acts of international terrorism and in those circumstances a reciprocal commitment from the United States not to have further resort to force.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, that is the essential thrust of the contribution that Mr Woolcott will be making on behalf of my Government in the debate in the Security Council this afternoon. As I say, copies of that statement are available.

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JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, have you any reason to believe that the United States will support the Australian initiative?

PM: Well let me say this, that the President, in announcing his action, invoked section 51 of the, Article 51 of the Charter which Article is in these terms, and are very relevant to your question. It says that nothing in the present charter shall impair the rights, individually or collectively of member nations, to take action in self-defence. But it goes on to say that until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. So the very section 51, which has been properly referred to by the United States itself, logically goes on to the responsibility of the Security Council, taken those measures, which as I say, are delineated in Chapter 6 to proceed then to a peaceful resolution of the dispute.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, in practical terms, what happens if the UN picks up on our initiative. What machinery then goes into operation?

PM: Well, you will see that when read Chapter 6, and particularly the first article 33, that they indicate a range of methods that are available. Let me refer to them - it says the parties to any dispute, the continuation of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security shall first of all seek a solution by, and then they mention methods of negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements or other peaceful means of their own choice. So that is why you will find that in the statement that I have authorised to be made to the Security Council, we don't deem to take it upon ourselves this is the particular way which the Security Council should use the powers that are designated. It is appropriate that the members of the Council should address themselves to the provisions of Chapter 6, dealing with the specific settlement of disputes, and after debate and discussion, choose that particular method which, to them, seems most appropriate in the circumstances.

JOURNALIST: Have we sounded this out with the American Government informally?

PM: No. The American Government will have be provided with a copy of what we are going to say. But I want to make it clear that we believe, have believed, from the moment I made the statement in the Australian Parliament that the basic obligation on us and on all like-minded members of the international community is now to concentrate on seeking a peaceful method of the resolution of the dispute. That should be the pre-eminent thought of all parties. And consistently with the statement that I made in the Parliament, my Government is now pursuing that same thrust in the Security Council. We believe that it is, a course of action which should recommend itself not merely to the parties immediately involved, but to all members of the United Nations.

JOURNALIST: ... specific suggestions, why should it be taken seriously?

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PM: Well, it would be presumptuous for us to say that we know exactly the right method amongst the range of methods that are mentioned in the charter. We want to take the initiative if you like in emphasising the need now to find a way. And we are saying that we stand ready with other members of the Security Council, and with co-operation with the Secretary-General to participate in those ways. We don't presume to say that we know, by putting ourselves in the minds of all members, what particular method would best recommend itself to the Security Council amongst the range of alternatives that are mentioned in Chapter 6.

JOURNALIST: Can you say explicitly whether you think the United States was wrong to take the military action that it did. And secondly, will you be asking President Reagan not to take any further military action against Libya even if its diplomats and facilities abroad are attacked?

PM: The position of the Australian Government is made quite clear in the Parliament and in this statement. We have indicated the fact that there is a very considerable body of evidence which establishes that Libya has been involved in the direction and support of international terrorism against innocent civilians including Americans. And that was deplored. And we have indicated that we understand that in those circumstances why the reaction has taken place. But we, in fact, are saying that the use of force is not going to resolve this issue. And that is what we are saying and we are not going to be, as I said in my departure from Australia, I am not going to be put into some squalid auction of levels of support for or against particular positions because that may help you to write a headline. It doesn't help to resolve the dispute. And that is what we are about.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, what did Mr Hayden mean yesterday when he said that Australia was willing to play a mediating role in the dispute between ...

PM: No, that position has been reflected in the statement that we are together authorising and will be made by Mr Woolcott in the Security Council, and that is Australia doesn't seek itself to take on specifically a role of mediator. What we do insist, though, as I have said, we regard ourselves as having a prime responsibility as a nation, our prime responsibility as a nation is to put in the Security Council the pre-eminence of positive approaches to settling this dispute. And we are saying that we stand ready as a member of the Security Council to, and the United Nations, we stand ready to play our role along with others. We don't seek a special role for ourselves.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, having drawn attention, or having about to draw attention of the Security Council to Chapter 6 and all those various alternatives, does Australia have a favoured position, when the debate starts what are we going to say? Are we going to say ...

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PM: We are going to say what I have said here, and you will see when you read the statement that my observations or synthesis of it, if you like, accurately reflects what is there. And that is that we don't think, it would be presumptuous to say in advance, this is the best way. We say here are a range of options that are available, mentioned in Article 33. Let's as members of the Security Council, address ourselves to the issue in terms of the available options. And we would find ourselves informed by that discussion and debate. What we want to do, and what we think we have the obligation to do, is to say get the focus right. We are not concerned about trying to dwell upon the past, but to say look the way through is by looking to Chapter 6 and all of us addressing our minds to the obligation which the Charter imposes upon us all - to look to that method. And I remind you, as I have said, that Article 51, which has been invoked, by its very language, refers back to that obligation.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, among those options would you see any merit in the Security Council setting up a small group of nations to actively try to find some route to settlement.

PM: If that appears from the discussion as the most likely way. I mean, it is pointless trying to say in advance that this is the best way. You have got to get the feel of the people involved, see what may recommend itself as the most likely method. This is why Article 33 doesn't say look here is the way because they recognise that different disputes are likely to land themselves to different methods of resolution. And so you need to be there to be part of the debate, the feeling, the view of people as to what particular method would be the most appropriate. If that particular method was the one that emerged, then certainly we would see that as appropriate. And if it were the wish of those involved, Australia would stand ready to play whatever part was asked of it. We seek not to impose ourselves upon the Security Council as the mediator. But what we do insist upon is our right, and what we believe is our obligation to put before the Security Council, the collective responsibility of that body under the Charter now to find a peaceful resolution of this matter.

JOURNALIST: Do you think the United States might find it presumptuous of Australia to suggest mediation in the first place.

PM: I can't see that the United States, or anyone for that matter, can find it presumptuous that where Section 51 has been invoked that Australia or anyone else should point out the logical implications. If you look at Section 51 it takes you straight back to Chapter 6.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, you have seen the evidence as I understand, you have had long experience negotiating, do you believe it is possible for the United States to negotiate with Gaddafi, a man that the President has called a madman.

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PM: You will see, let me Ken, go to the particular section of the contribution that we will be making, which I think picks up your point. Where our Ambassador to the United Nations will be developing the points I have made, he says "I do not necessarily wish to make firm proposals as to the exact method" as I have been saying here, that the Council itself might employ. But we identify a number of relevant points. And there is this observation "Finally, Mr President, I note that the parties themselves could bring the dispute to a speedy end by making and strictly observing genuine and binding commitments to the Security Council about their future conduct. These commitments would include, on the one hand, a pledge concerning the strictest respect for and adherence to the terms of UNGA resolution 40/61" that is one to which I have referred, of January of this year, "which unequivocally condemns terrorism and calls on all states to refrain from organising, instigating, assisting or participating in terrorist acts. They would include on the other hand a reciprocal commitment to refrain from recourse to armed force. The Council could examine urgently how such commitments might be undertaken by the present parties and by all states concerned". So you can see what has been said there is that it would be appropriate to expect a readiness to negotiate and to involve itself in such discussions on the part of the United States in a situation where that binding commitment were given by Libya.

JOURNALIST: Sir, your aides are quoted here by Radio Australia as saying that Libya and the United States might be persuaded to negotiate through the auspices of an acceptable intermediary. My question is, why would Libya consider Australia to be an acceptable intermediary?

PM: Well, there is a total lack of logic if I may say so in your question, because we are not saying that we are saying that we are the acceptable intermediary. I made it quite clear in what I have said here, it is in this statement. And neither is there any implication in that that we are the acceptable intermediary. I don't why you jumped to that conclusion.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, if we were asked by the UN Security Council to act as a mediator, would your Government accept that?

PM: We have got some rules that travel well across the ocean about not answering hypothetical questions, but in this case I am prepared to add to what I have said before. And that is that we will be saying in the statement that we stand ready to play a role, any role, that is asked of us by the United Nations, through the Security Council, in its consideration of the matter. We are not saying that we are any more appropriate than anyone else. But as a nation which has consistently confirmed the centrality of the peaceful resolution of international disputes, we stand ready to play a part with others, if asked. We don't seek to elevate ourselves to some position of primacy in this matter. We will do whatever is asked of us. But where we do assert a position, and as Ambassador Woolcott will be today, is to say it is absolutely essential that the Security Council now directs its attention to the future to see how we can remove the circumstances which have given rise to this current crisis.

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JOURNALIST: Does Australia have the qualifications to act as a mediator?

PM: Well, I don't know how many times I have to do this. People keep coming back and saying Australia as a mediator. Please understand, and I am not going to say it again, we are not putting ourselves forward and saying Australia is the mediator. What we are saying is that mediation or one or other of the avenues mentioned in Chapter 6, Article 33, of which mediation is one, that they must be addressed by the Security Council. If, in the view of the Security Council, they would wish to call with others upon Australia to assume some role, we stand ready to play a role.

JOURNALIST: When do you expect the Security Council to arrive at a decision?

PM: I am not sure Paul. The debate will certainly be going on this afternoon. We will be making our contribution this afternoon. I can't say with certainty when they will come to decision.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, have we consulted other members of the Security Council before taking this issue?

PM: The basic discussion as to the form of the statement has been between myself and the Foreign Minister, the Ambassador to the United Nations, Mr Woolcott, has been involved in some discussion on the phone with my representatives. Now how far he may have been involved in discussions with others on the Security Council I am not in a position to say.

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JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, you came here to talk about trade. Is this Libyan taking up valuable time and do you think this is going to affect those trade discussions at all?

PM: It is obviously valuable time that has been involved, but I want to emphasise - and I appreciate the question very much Greg - I want to emphasise that we've bought a very substantial body of experts and officials (they are not mutually exclusive, you know) with us. And we also have here in Washington people who have been working on those issues. That work has been continuing through this .... We will be in a position to be totally well equipped to deal with what you rightly say is the major purpose of our visit here. There will be no interference with, or diminution of, the work that is to be done on that major purpose of the visit.

JOURNALIST: Do you think that job would be made easier if Australia was more overtly supportive of the US position on the Libyan attack?

PM: I don't think anyone would respect, including the United States, would respect us if we formulated positions in regard to issues - if we said what we thought they would like to hear. And in a bargaining framework the United States accepts what is the fact - that we are a good friend and a reliable ally under the relationship and the commitments which found it. And we will make a statement and adopt a position which we regard as correct. I have done that from the moment that I made the statement in the Parliament and it is also reflected in the statement to be made to the Security Council. The positions that we will be putting to the United States in regard to the issue of agricultural trade stand in their own right. We have a compelling case to put. And one which I believe will be understood and I would hope acted upon sympathetically by the United States.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister .... initiative that is being put - it is a fairly obvious solution, I suppose, and it might have occurred to some other country to approach the United Nations... Given the work load that you already have on your plate - the problems of agricultural trade - why do you feel it necessary for Australia to raise at the Security Council - given the nature of it

PM: When you are a member of the Security Council - we sought to be, we are - that membership gives you responsibilities. We don't say, well, we sought to become a member of the Security Council so we can walk around the world and say, look, how clever we are. We got elected to the Security Council. Membership of the Security Council gives you obligations, imposes obligations upon you. We will discharge them.

JOURNALIST: But the Government has copped some criticism - the Foreign Minister has copped some criticism for attempting to find solutions, for example, the Cambodian situation.

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PM: I don't think he has copped any lasting criticism either from the countries in the region most directly involved or in a broader sense internationally. And I certainly am not conscious of any criticism of Australia's position. None has been conveyed to us in recent terms because of the position that we have adopted in regard to seeking - attempting to find a solution in that extremely difficult region to which you refer. I'm not conscious of any continuing criticism. And I go back to the point. If you are going to be a member of the Security Council you can't have that membership and not accept the obligations that it rightly imposes upon you.