



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF NEWS CONFERENCE WITH RADIO JOURNALISTS,
HMAS SUCCESS, 13 AUGUST 1990

E & O E - PROOF ONLY

JOURNALIST: Good morning sir, you've had a chance to go through and meet some of the crew on all of the ships, how do you perceive the feeling?

Well I was very impressed in the sense that there was not, you know, a wild sort of jingoism. There was a very sober understanding on their part that have got an important mission, there was an understanding there was considerable potential risk involved in what they were about, but overall they were eager to undertake the mission. I think that they would overwhelmingly welcome a situation that by the time they got there, there was no need for their presence and that was a possibility. But I had the feeling that they are indeed very worthy heirs of that position to which I referred when addressing them.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, isn't it yet another case of sending troops to someone else's war?

PM: How do you mean someone else's war?

JOURNALIST: Well, the Gulf isn't in our sphere of influence is it?

PM: Well, people were using exactly that sort of language of appeasement in the 1930s and the world paid a terrible price for that sort of erroneous analysis.

JOURNALIST: But, Prime Minister, some of the, this is the 75th anniversary of the Anzac action at Gallipoli and some of the veterans from that campaign came back this year and said we should never be involved in someone else's war overseas.

PM: Well, that's an interesting observation.

JOURNALIST: You must be disappointed at the number of protesters here today?

PM: There's a very few of them. You think that I should have expected more you mean?

JOURNALIST: That they were here at all.

PM: That question would give your listeners the impression that there was a mass of protesters and you know there wasn't.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, do you think you've got widespread support in the community for this action?

PM: Yes.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, today the El Telegraph Arab newspaper did a survey of the Arab community and found that over 80 percent of Arabs in this country support Saddam Hussain, that's not widespread support is it?

PM: We've only got an Arab community have we? I mean, what a ridiculous question. I mean, we've got 17 million people in this country and you've referred to a publication which covers at the most 300,000 people because 80 percent of 300,000 are against it, therefore the overwhelming majority of Australians are against it. I mean, grab hold of yourself, boyo.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, will the decision to, say, escalate any action by Australian forces by the two frigates that are going there, who'll be taking that, the decision. Will that be taken in Cabinet, by yourself or how will that be done?

PM: No, the Cabinet, of course, will be considering this whole matter and I've made it quite clear that there would be no escalation beyond the role, primary role, of enforcing the embargo. If there was any suggestion of an escalation of that role, that would require a Cabinet decision.

JOURNALIST: ... will we be sending any further troops to the Middle East?

PM: We are not sending any troops to the Middle East. The standard of your questions is remarkable, if I may say so.

JOURNALIST: I'm just wondering, in itself, this invasion, I mean, it's obvious why we're going over, but how does it fit with other things that have been mentioned like, let's say, the invasion of, or the Israel, ... the Six Day War that Israel launched and, you know, nothing was taken against Israel. No action was taken by the international community at the time -

PM: Do you understand what happened in, what year was the Six Day War. I'll just test you out.

JOURNALIST: 1967.

PM: '67 and what were the circumstances of that?

JOURNALIST: Well, I'm just asking you -

PM: Well, I'm telling you that there is absolutely no analogy as was known at the time, that was a pre-emptive strike that was taken in those circumstances against a threat that was accumulating for the obliteration of Israel. And I say that in regard to 1967 and I don't say that in terms of an exoneration of every Israeli action that's been taken in the Middle East over the period of its existence, but you don't pick a very good example when you refer to 1967.

JOURNALIST: Well ... pick another analogy, Mr Hawke, the occupation of East Timor.

PM: I'm sure you can -

JOURNALIST: Surely East Timor didn't make a threat to Indonesia?

PM: Well, mate, I'm not here to have an argument with you. I mean, if you were really interested in asking objective questions I'd deal with you.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, obviously although the Cabinet's going to make the decision, you'll have an extremely important role in the Cabinet. How does it make you feel personally knowing that the lives of 600 Australians are going to be, not totally in your control, but obviously you're going to have a very great influence over how, what happens to them whilst they're over there?

PM: Well, as I said when announcing this decision, it was not one that was taken lightly. I put hours of thought into it, but in the end it was a straightforward decision. You, the world can't afford a situation where a country can simply invade and annex a neighbour and allow that to go unnoticed. I mean, I, it was very interesting for me, as I said the other day, I've just recently been reading in great detail the events of the 1930s and when you read what happened in that period, the crimes of the appeasers were, in a sense, as great as the crimes of Hitler and the Nazis. We wouldn't have had the Second World War if there hadn't been appeasers, but ... would appease once or twice, thrice, and the world paid a very heavy price. So you can't stand idly by and allow those things to happen.

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