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PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH ALAN JONES, 2UE, 13 AUGUST 1990

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JONES: Prime Minister, good morning.

PM: Morning Alan.

JONES: I suppose we should say something about the reason you are a bit late heading off, what a colossal victory by Wayne Grady?

PM: Yes. Well that was another golf conflict wasn't it. I mean it was one where this time that Australian Wayne Grady was fighting against the Americans and he displayed a lot of character and I thought the manner of his victory was just superb. He was very modest in victory and acknowledged that he got some good breaks, the others didn't quite get the same, but a lot of character and I'm glad you mentioned the nature of the bloke himself too. He's a lovely man and as you say has had some personal and family difficulties, but he's a great credit to Australia.

JONES: Yes he is. Prime Minister onto the Middle East. What is your latest intelligence as the Australian Prime Minister on the Middle East position, as we speak.

PM: Well it's no reason still for great optimism. The most encouraging development of course in the recent twenty four hours or so I believe Alan is the decision by the great majority of the Arab States to come in along side the rest of the world in providing forces and their support for opposition to the Iraqis. That removes any possibility for Saddam Hussain to misrepresent the position in the Gulf as one where its the American imperialists and their few friend attacking an Arab leader. That's gone now with that decision and I think that's the most important development.

JONES: Yes, the forces, the combined international forces seem to have Iraq surrounded, but of course he now has all these insurance policies by way of citizens of the West in Iraq. That really loads the dice fairly heavily against some people doesn't it?

PM: Yes, we can't deny it, it would be stupid, it would be dishonest to deny that there is considerable risk involved in that situation. And of course there are a number of Australians involved. I think the world has taken the view however that this man must not be allowed to get away with this aggression and annexation because once before in this century we have seen the price of appeasement and it is a terrible and unacceptable price.

JONES: Yes, if I could just inject perhaps a negative note into your decision and I don't think either of us would be critical of someone like Tom Uren who's a very idealistic man in many ways. I just thought that even he argued against the going, nonetheless, I thought made some point of merit when he said it's alright for politicians to beat the band and answer telephone calls from their mates, but there's very little compassion for the veterans when they come back. Do you think we look after our veterans enough. Any government, your Government, the Fraser government, the governments before that?

PM: I don't think you can ever do too much. But all I can say is that I take an enormous amount of pride in the statements of Sir William Keys who as the leader of the RSL with whom I've worked for the great majority of my time as Prime Minister and he's been unequivocal in his comments about what we've done and I'm not in that respect trying to score points about that. Because with what we've done there hasn't been any opposition at the political level to it. So you can always I guess do more, but

(transmission break)

JONES: I think we might.... Are you there... You there Prime Minister. I know he's most probably gone into a ditch. He's actually driving to Garden Island. We'll just check, I think we might have lost that line.... it does appear as if we have. We might just come back. I just wanted to ask the Prime Minister if we can just get him back, and we just might be able to do that, what exactly he's going to say to the troops. So it's an important day, HMAS Adelaide, HMAS Darwin heading off to that enormously difficult trouble spot in the Middle East and as he said you can't deny the fact that there are Australians at risk there and you are dealing with a man who must be stopped. He said the previous price of appeasement was a world war and now this man is encircled. The Iraqi leader, President Hussain. We'll just take a break and see if we can get the Prime Minister back. He is in his car.....

JONES: Can I just ask you say, - before - without anticipating anything your going to say today, but what message are you going to deliver to the Australian men?

PM: It's very brief. It's not an occasion for a long speech or high flying rhetoric, it's a sincere statement on behalf the people of Australia, of the importance first of all, of the mission they are about and the confidence we have in them. As I will be saying they are the heirs to a great tradition and we know that they will discharge their important responsibilities in a manner which will give pride to Australia.

JONES: Difficult decision for a Prime Minister isn't it, sending young Australians into a battle field miles away from home?

PM: Not easy and it's one that I spent a lot of time thinking about and consulting about. But in the end I had not doubt at all as to what the right decision was.

JONES: From your discussions with George Bush and others what does your instinct and judgement - after all that's about all you've got to rely on in this - what does your instinct and judgement tell you, that it's going to be a long drawn out process. Or that there might be some solution to it more

PM: to go on instinct and judgement in this case because if you are relying solely on rational considerations you could in fact come to a conclusion as to what the most likely outcome was. But clearly in this case we are not simply dealing with a leader who acts entirely rationally and therefore it's very very difficult to come to a conclusion. On all the evidence of how it's accumulating you should say that it should not take very long.

JONES: Once Syria and Turkey sort of made the move that they made, he must surely come to the realisation that he's lost all support of that kind. On the other hand he's trying to mobilise the Arab people against that international decision, that in the past in certain parts of the Middle East has proved to be.....

PM: Yes, though what we must remember is that there are a lot of subordinate people from the Arab countries, including(lost transmission)..... and your going to have permeating through these Arab countries in the Middle East a lot of people who can speak with first hand knowledge of the nature of that regime.

JONES; Sure. Good to talk with you and thank you for your time.

PM: Thank you very much indeed Alan.

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