



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE - 4 MARCH 1985

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PM: I have had conveyed today to the representatives of the government of the United States and New Zealand that Australia as the host government for the proposed July meeting of the ANZUS Council, it was decided that that meeting should be postponed indefinitely. That decision had been made necessary as a result of the situation that has arisen following the decision of the New Zealand Government in regard to the United States Naval vessels. It became clear as things developed that it was unlikely that that meeting could in any practical sense go ahead. The United States conveyed to me in Washington that they could not see the attendance at such a meeting as practical. We could understand that position. And indeed I would say that I believe that the New Zealand Government itself must have foreseen following its decision that this position would be likely to arise. We, of course, have the pre-eminent responsibility as a government to ensure that the essential security interests of Australia are protected. This will be done by appropriate bilateral arrangements between us and the United States and between us and New Zealand. And I believe that I will be in a position later this week to make announcements as to those arrangements that will be made. Throughout this position that has arisen following the decision of the New Zealand government, I and my Government have been committed at all points to trying to ensure the protection of Australia's national security interests. WE have been consistent at all points throughout and I ask that people contrast the consistency of the Australian Government position with the nonsensical and inconsistent and political opportunism of the Leader of the Opposition. He has said today, that, he has argued all along that Australia should use every pressure available on both the United States and New Zealand to ensure and indeed an earlier meeting take place because the role of Australia now ought to be one of mediating, trying to get the parties together. I hope it will not have escaped your attention, I believe it will not escaped the attention of the Australian public, that indeed Mr Peacock was last year was pursuing exactly the opposite position. He was saying that Australia should move in, discard New Zealand and work for the establishment of a bi-lateral relationship. I content myself with quoting from the transcript the Leader of the Opposition's speech on the 16 October which goes to the AM program where it was said, "...the Opposition Leader, Mr Peacock has made foreign policy one of his first targets, and his guns are aimed

directly at New Zealand." Mr Peacock said, "... a Liberal Government would give New Zealand just three months," this is on the 16th of October, "would give New Zealand just three months to lift its ban on nuclear warships and if New Zealand elected not to do anything in this time...", he said then a Liberal Government would try to negotiate a new bi-lateral treaty with the United States to replace the ANZUS pact. So his position then was let's shoot New Zealand down, let's have a bi-lateral pact. Now he is saying we should be negotiating with the United States and New Zealand. The facts are clear and they are unarguable and that is that it is totally impractical in the current circumstances that such a meeting can proceed. Therefore in those circumstances, it is, as I repeat, the pre-eminent responsibility upon this Government which I will discharge, of ensuring that this country's security are protected by the appropriate arrangements to be made between us and the United States and between us and New Zealand. I would add finally that it is the common position of the three treaty partners, that the treaty remains in place but until such time as normal operations can be resumed under the treaty then we will ensure that our interests are protected in the only way that they can be done appropriate bi-lateral arrangements.

JOURNALIST: Will this mean separate meetings with the US and New Zealand?

PM: Yes, it will.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, this time Australia is making decisions as the host country, so is the situation, this time Australia and not the United States is punishing New Zealand?

PM: No, it is not a question of Australia punishing New Zealand. It is a total misinterpretation of the situation. My statement makes it clear that as a result of the decision by New Zealand itself, and the reaction of the United States, that it simply would not be practical for a meeting to go ahead. The United States made it clear that it could not attend a meeting in these circumstances, we understand that position and I repeat I believe that New Zealand must have foreseen that once it made that decision, you can't have a continuation of a alliance relationship if an essential element of that relationship comes to an end. It is not a question of punishing. Indeed, we will continue to have bi-lateral relations with New Zealand.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, given the fundamental difference of opinion over nuclear ships between the United States and New Zealand, how is it that you can say here, that it needs to be emphasised at this point, is not in dispute between any of the ANZUS partners?

PM: Well, because it is the fact. And if facts are clear and simple and straightforward, they should not be in dispute. Because the United States says the treaty remains, we say the treaty remains, New Zealand says the treaty remains.

JOURNALIST: What is the treaty now, Mr Hawke?

PM: Well the treaty is a document which sets out relationships between the three treaty partners. Now one of the treaty partners has made a decision in regard to the defence relationship, that an element of that, that is the availability of its ports to the naval vessels of another, that is the United States, will not be there. And in those circumstances what has been regarded as an essential element of the defence relationships is not operating. The United States has responded to that. And so, in those circumstances the actual operations, previous operations, existing operations, of the treaty are not in fact operating. That does not mean that the treaty itself does not exist. I mean I would have thought that that is self-evident.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, are you saying it exists but is not operating?

PM: I am saying it exists but is not operative in respect of the significant elements of it, which had previously been operating and without being exhaustive, the tri-lateral exercises are not operating, there has been a decision to cease the exchange of intelligence. These important aspects are simply not operative now.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, in addition to the ANZUS treaty as it now exists, will you now be seeking a mutual defence pact with the United States?

PM: I don't believe that that is a necessity because what the United States has made clear is that they regard the relationship between the United States and ourselves as still operative. Perhaps I can make it best, most clear to you, by reading to you what the Secretary of State Shultz said on the 20th of February, which goes precisely to this point. He issued a press statement which included the following statement. "I am pleased by the announcement of Prime Minister Hawke of Australia on 19th of February that his Cabinet had reaffirmed Australia's support for the ANZUS Alliance and for the full responsibilities that the alliance entails. We note that the Prime Minister describes ship visits and US/Australian joint facilities as continuing fundamentals to the Australian/United States alliance relationship. We welcome these reaffirmations of Australia's commitment to its ties with the United States." Now when you take that into account, his statement of the 20th of February, with what was also said by the President of the United States when we were there earlier in February, it is quite clear as far as the United States is concerned, as it is clear as far as Australia is concerned, the operational defence relationship between us remains intact.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, will there be formal ministerial level meetings between Australia and New Zealand under ANZUS in future? When do you expect they might take place? Will they take place annually? Are there any arrangements ...?

PM: I have said earlier in this conference that I will be in a position later this week to make a statement as to the, both in respect of the United States and Australia, and in respect of Australia and New Zealand, precisely the form of discussion that will take place. But they will be bi-lateral.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, did the Americans tell you in what way it would be impractical for them to sit down and talk to New Zealand in an ANZUS Council meeting?

PM: NO they didn't go into detail, but I would suggest that developments since then make it clear that if you have cut off intelligence communications from one party to the other then in the nature of things it is going to be pretty difficult to sit down and have discussions about the range of issues which in themselves would tend to be covered by such intelligence information.

JOURNALIST: Sir, in your view is there any significant element of the ANZUS treaty which is operative at the moment?

PM: I think you would have to say that in so far as ANZUS was a tri-lateral relationship, that no there is virtually nothing of it which is operative now. And I say in operative terms, having emphasised that the treaty itself is, remains there. Now, my obligation on behalf of the people of Australia, that in a situation brought about as a result of a dispute and a difference between the other two treaty partners, that we do everything we can do ensure that our essential national security interests are maintained. And that is what we have done, and what we will continue to do.

JOURNALIST: Sir, is it a concept now rather than a treaty?

PM: It is a treaty. I mean, I don't know how many times one has to give an answer. I think if you look at the transcripts of what I have said before you will get the answer to your question.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, did you ever consider putting the argument to the United States that an ANZUS Council meeting might have been another opportunity to seek some sort of creation ...

PM: Now what I indicated when it was put to me in Washington that the United States, as it saw it then, could not see its way clear to participate, was that we said we could understand that position. But I said I would have to discuss this matter with my Cabinet colleagues when I returned to Australia. I also recall

that at that point Michelle, the decision had not been made by the United States in regard to what they would in fact do about intelligence sharing. It was only subsequently that that decision was made. Now I and my colleagues have as I indicated to the United States that I would do, we have considered this matter and we agree that in all those circumstances, as I say a meeting of the ANZUS Council is not practicable.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, although you say that the ANZUS treaty does remain now, is it not a fact that even if the United States wanted to unilaterally withdraw, under the terms of ANZUS it would not be able to do so immediately.

PM: But you keep getting into situations which are not relevant. I repeat I think for the third time, that the United States has made it clear that that is not a course of action that they want to do. So that it can, and hopefully I won't need to say it again, the position of the United States is that they are not talking about withdrawing from the treaty. They are not talking about tearing up the treaty. Now that is the fourth time. I hope it's clear.

JOURNALIST: Do you feel Mr Lange's current international odyssey in both in what he is saying and doing, is actually further undermining the spirit and character of ANZUS or threatens to?

PM: I don't want to make any comment on what you refer to as Mr Lange's odyssey.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, there is implicit criticism on criticism of New Zealand and support of the United States in the statements that you have been making. Would you agree that the United States unilaterally upgrade or have changed the meaning of the treaty by insisting that the two other parties accept nuclear armed ships?

PM: No, that is an interpretation which is entirely without foundation.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, given that important sections of the Treaty are now not operative, is Australia less secure than we were before?

PM: No, we are certainly not less secure. Again I would have thought it was clear by now, but again I will repeat it, that as far as the United States is concerned, their relationship, the rights and obligations which apply between our two countries, remain operative. There has been no diminution in that at all.

JOURNALIST: Is New Zealand less secure?

PM: Well, that is ultimately a judgement that New Zealand has to make as to whether it is less secure and I don't think that the situation would be assisted by a gratuitous observation from myself as to whether they are less secure. We have adopted the

consisted position, as distinct from the Leader of the Opposition who has jumped from one position to another on this serious matter from the end of last year. We have adopted a consistent position throughout - that is that we are not going to attempt to interfere with the decisions of New Zealand or of the United States. Our pre-eminent and continuing responsibility has been the protection of our national security interests.

PM: Mr Hawke, why does the Australian Government as the host of the ANZUS Council choose to make the announcement of the cancellation, rather than leave it to the US Government who didn't choose to participate?

PM: Because we are the hosts. We are the ones who issue the invitations. Now what we have got to - and that is on a rotational basis. It was our turn to host this year and now we have got to deal with the realities. I am not in the business of trying to play political advantage in this, as I keep repeating. What we have got to do is to make sure that we make decisions that ensure that Australia's real interests are protected. Now the realities are that the Council could not in any effective sense go ahead. Therefore, we as a Government have to be in a position to go ahead and make the bilateral arrangements with the United States and bilateral arrangements with New Zealand. Now, you can't go ahead and finalise and organise your bilateral relationships if you are still deluding yourself and deluding other people that the other meeting is going to go ahead. It could not go ahead. There is no reasonable, practical effective way in which it could go ahead, so that had to be cleared out of the way and let's get on with the business of dealing with how we are going to protect Australia's interests in this bilateral fashion.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, did the United States make it clear to us that if we decided to go ahead with the meeting, they would not attend (inaudible)>

PM: I made it clear that they said that they could not attend a meeting in those circumstances.

JOURNALIST: Did you seek the views of the New Zealand Government before deciding?

PM: In the sense that I am not trying to tell New Zealand what to do, the reciprocal is that I am not conducting my affairs on the basis that I have to get my decisions cleared with New Zealand or with anyone else. My responsibility is to Australia. I have got to deal with this in terms of how you are going to protect Australia's interests in a context created by the decisions of others, about their bilateral relations. Now the New Zealand Government made a decision. There was an inevitable reaction from the United States. As I say, I can't believe that New Zealand could not have been aware that this is the sort of position that could have been arrived at, but in the circumstance created by

others, then we have, as I say - I repeat - a pre-eminent responsibility of taking action to ensure the protection of Australia's interests and that is what we will always do, as distinct, I repeat, from Mr Peacock who tries to play politics in this in October and say, destroy New Zealand. Go for a bilateral treaty. And then in March says, no don't do that. Negotiate together to keep them together when it can't be done. That is not what we are about. We are about the real decisions that have to be made in this real world.

JOURNALIST: So Mr Hawke, are you hoping now to be rid of this matter, or are you hoping that it is now a matter between New Zealand and the United States?

PM: It's not a question of being rid of this matter. I repeat that the dispute as to whether ships of the United States go into New Zealand is between the United States and New Zealand. I have never been possessed or seized of the matter, never, because it has always been a matter between the United States and New Zealand. So how can I get rid of something of which I have never been seized.

JOURNALIST: Do you think there is something odd, Prime Minister, for the fact that your Prime Minister is out tripping through Indo-China.

PM: I haven't got a Prime Minister tripping through Indo-China. It may be that wish may be father to the thought, I accept.

JOURNALIST: Your Foreign Minister is tripping through Indo-China proposing a role for Australia as a mediator in a conflict which (inaudible) but our two major allies doorstep.

PM: You always want to be very, very careful about argument by analogy to make sure that there is an analogy. There is not one in the circumstances to which you refer. As far as the position in Indo-China is concerned, there is no treaty relationship with a situation where one party to the treaty has said this is not operative and the other has said in those circumstances there is a certain reaction. Now, in the case of Indo-China we have got the position where we have certainly an interest in the area. Our interest in the area has been welcomed by all parties concerned. Already, Bill Hayden, the Foreign Minister, has played a useful and constructive role which has been welcomed by others where he has been acting, as he has, on behalf of our Government. It would be quite silly and counter-productive for us to say because you have got some problem in regard to ANZUS that you are not going to continue there. The ANZUS relationship is one thing. We deal with that as it stands. It is in no way analagous to what is happening there. It is entirely appropriate that Mr Hayden should continue the discussions he is having there and we will continue to have them because if there is any way in which in those circumstances we can help to play some role, however small, in trying to bring that problem to an end, we will do it.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, in the weeks since your talks with Mr Shultz have you sought to warn New Zealand that the ANZUS Council was in jeopardy?

PM: I didn't need to be a messenger. I made it clear that we are not a messenger. I said right from the beginning that that is not how we see our role. You don't believe there haven't been discussions between the United States and New Zealand.

JOURNALIST: Do you believe that the US has handled this whole matter with the utmost sensitivity?

PM: I am not here to make judgements, as I said to Max Walsh about odysseys of one leader around the world, nor am I here to make judgements about the United States. I have made it clear in my opening statement that we indicated that we understand the reaction of the United States in this matter and I don't think there is anything to add to that.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, would it be reasonable to conclude that you discussed the inevitable consequences of this action by New Zealand with Mr Lange when you talked with him at the South Pacific Forum?

PM: Well I talked with Mr Lange before the South Pacific Forum and at the South Pacific Forum we didn't go into any further details on this matter. I have simply said here that the Government of New Zealand has made a decision early in the piece on this matter. I can't believe that in their consideration of the decisions they have taken and to which they have adhered, that they have not addressed their minds to the likely repercussions.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, has the United States been just withdrawing its intelligence New Zealand, in other words to cut off Australian intelligence?

PM: Well I invite you to have a look at the transcript of the press conference I had on that matter.

JOURNALIST: Why was this decision made now rather than closer to July ...

PM: Well I have already answered that question. Let me repeat it. Our responsibility is to look after and advance Australia's national security interests in the real world with which it is faced. It is quite clear that the trilateral meeting can't go ahead and that the trilateral relations are not operative. Now that is the reality. Now, are you suggesting that knowing that that is the reality I should say, oh well, perhaps a star will appear in the sky and something might change that real world situation. We have got to live in that real world situation, so I have got to be in a position - my Foreign Minister, my Defence Minister have to be in the position to discuss with the United

States what are the arrangements, how are we going to operate now in that real world. We have to do the same with New Zealand. It would be a gross dereliction of duty if faced with that reality, I said, well I will delay making the arrangements which are necessary to be made in Australia's interests.

JOURNALIST: Is it also the reality that the operations of ANZUS will remain dormant until there is a change of government in New Zealand?

PM: No, that question has been put to me before. I am not in the business of saying there has got to be a change of government. It may be. I don't know. It may be that this Government in New Zealand could change its position. I don't know.

JOURNALIST: If the New Zealand Government doesn't change its position, would it be in Australia's security interests for that government to be defeated?

PM: Oh.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, when do we get the Beazley/Hayden papers on ANZUS?

PM: When do we or when does the Cabinet. I mean, who should get them first. I mean, do you mind if we get them first?

JOURNALIST: I don't mind (inaudible).

PM: No, well you have got your own arrangements about that presumably. We, the Cabinet, expect to get them next week. We hope to.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, are you concerned that the conflict between the US and New Zealand is damaging to the security of the South Pacific region as a whole?

PM: Well, Geoff, let me answer it this way. I think obviously everyone would have a greater sense of continuity if this problem hadn't arisen, but I would think that the countries of the South Pacific would feel, no, from the statements that have been made in the United States and by myself that as far as the relationship between the United States and Australia is concerned, they remain, as I have said, undiminished. So there will be that sense of continuity. As far as the relationships between Australia and New Zealand are concerned, we will attempt to keep them in the best possible shape. So as far as the South Pacific area generally is concerned, I don't believe there is any reason for concern. There would have been a reason for concern if this Government had followed the vacillating policies of the Opposition who one day are arguing destroy ANZUS and then another start trying to mediate in the situation which is unmediatable, but where the countries of the South Pacific can see the consistency of position that has been followed by the Australian Government and our commitment to

ensuring that the relationships with the United States remain intact and that we will do our best to do the same thing with New Zealand, I don't think in those circumstances there is cause for concern on their part.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, why do you assume it is unmediatable if Australia hasn't tried?

PM: It is not a question of not having tried. If you have the position where as a result of the decision of the New Zealand Government an important element of the relationship has come to an end - the access of ports for their ships - and the United States in those circumstances has said that it could not and would not participate in the meeting. And you have the position that New Zealand is saying, well, no that is it's position. It is not changing, then you can't mediate a position where the two parties are saying that is our position.

JOURNALIST: If no-one tries. I mean, you were ACTU President. I mean, I am sure were faced with similar ...

PM: Well, again - I warned before about analogies. If you believe that in a situation talking about the national security interests of this country, that you are going to say, no, I will attempt now to interfere in the decision-making process in New Zealand and I will attempt to interfere in the decision-making process in the United States, then you are pressing an analogy which is not sustainable. I mean, which way do you want it. Do you want it that Australia is going to try and pressure New Zealand. I mean, what I have been told before and I understand it and accept it, is that New Zealand is a sovereign foreign country and that it is not Australia's position to be trying to push New Zealand around. I have certainly, I mean not that I am an avid reader of everything that you write - if you can accept that without any disrespect - but that certainly has been the position that you have espoused. Now you can't have it both ways. You can't be arguing that Australia should be staying aloof from, leaving this independent nation of New Zealand there to make its own decision and at the same time saying, oh no, you should be interfering to get them to change to accommodate to the United States. In international relationships where two countries make their position clear on what they regard as a matter of fundamental importance, that is it. There are other areas where countries concerned can indicate that there is room for manoeuvre, that there is hope for discussion. Going back to the analogy that was pressed before in regard to Indo-China, if you want to say that the two sides roughly in the Indo-China dispute - on the one hand Vietnam and on the other the ASEAN group - there both sides have indicated that they welcome the involvement of Australia. It's not a question of dogmatic positions with no room for positive discussion. They have welcomed and said, perhaps there is room. That is not the position here.

JOURNALIST: Just to take you back to that answer you gave Geoff over there about the South Pacific.

PM: Yes.

JOURNALIST: Your words were that you see the relationship between the US and Australia remains undiminished.

PM: Yes.

JOURNALIST: Then you went on to say as far as New Zealand and Australia are concerned, we will attempt to keep it in the best possible shape.

PM: That's right.

JOURNALIST: Are we to infer from that that our relationship is diminished, as you see it?

PM: No, what I am saying is that there have got to be further discussions with New Zealand and Australia. Those discussions I will be able, as I say, later in this week to spell out. There hasn't been, therefore, at this stage, any statement by New Zealand of its reaction to the position. I was able to quote precisely from the administration in the United States as to what the position was. There is no corresponding statement to which ... You should read no more into it than that.

JOURNALIST: Has Australia informed New Zealand that the July Council meeting is off indefinitely because the Americans won't come, or had Washington already told them?

PM: No. Washington could not have told New Zealand because the Ambassador of the United States and the High Commissioner for New Zealand were both informed just before 4 o'clock this afternoon.

JOURNALIST: So this treaty as a tripartite agreement remains indefinitely a treaty in name only?

PM: Well, I believe that that is not an unfair description because if in fact a treaty which is a trilateral treaty and under which certain operations have been going on - if those operations are no longer going on - then I guess in some sense that is not an unfair description. But I do want to emphasise, consistent with what I have said about not intruding into the affairs of New Zealand or of the United States, in our discussions that we have with the United States and with New Zealand - I mean it may emerge that there are certain things that went on before which may still go on. But it is impossible at this point to be definite about that and therefore I have the responsibility of making sure that we get the bi-lateral relationships in a sensible, operative way.