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## PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

15 April 1986

The Australian Government was advised by the US Administration early this morning of immediately impending military action against Libya. President Reagan has since confirmed that the US has taken military action against targets which it regards as supporting terrorism.

The Australian Government has counselled restraint by both the US and Libya in the course of the developing tensions between them. It deeply regrets that this conflict has taken place and urges both sides to suspend hostilities and engage in genuine efforts to bring about the peaceful resolution of their differences.

This will mean that the US terminate its military engagement against Libya. It also means, as an absolute essential, that Colonel Qaddafi terminate his government's indiscriminate export of terrorist activity against civilians and civilian targets, especially US civilians.

The United States has said that its action was motivated not only by evidence of Libyan involvement in and direction of past terrorist activities but also by indications of Libyan planning being well advanced for further operations against American citizens in a number of countries.

The United States' military action was explained to us not in terms of revenge or reprisals but in terms of demonstrating that terrorism will incur a significant cost.

The Government accepts that there is a substantial body of evidence of Libyan involvement in and direction of international terrorism. The Foreign Minister and I have been privy to apparently compelling evidence of a direct line of command between Libya and the Berlin nightclub bombing.

It is a matter of serious concern that following the Gulf of Sidra episode - where Libya attacked American forces exercising in international waters and the United States retaliated - Libya's policy of extreme hostility against the United States has continued.

The Government, in response to a request from President Reagan in January, took a number of economic measures against Libya and reduced Libya's official representation in Australia as part of collective international measures to demonstrate to Libya that its behaviour in support of international terrorism is totally unacceptable to the international community.

The Government has expressed a desire to work with Western and other Governments for a concerted approach to dealing with international terrorism. The Minister for Foreign Affairs is pursuing this matter with Western and other Governments and will be reporting back to Cabinet on measures to promote a sustained long-term effort to defeat the threat of international terrorism.

The Government is profoundly concerned that the situation has reached the point where Libyan actions have driven the US to regard it as essential that it take military action.

Australia works persistently for a peaceful world. We are opposed to the use of violent means to resolve differences between nations and in particular to the resort to terrorism.

Terrorism recognises no rules and respects no moral standards. The victims are almost always innocent victims. Australians have already been victims of this sort of activity. And that is another reason why we are implacably opposed to this sort of behaviour.

Let me sum up the Government's position:

- . We wish to see restraint and an early end to hostilities.
- . We hope that the conflict will not widen and escalate.
- . We are fully conscious of the intractable and bitter conflicts of the Middle East, and the need for them to be resolved if the Middle East is to cease to be a source of violence and terrorism not only in that region but throughout the world. We look for such a resolution.
- . But an essential requirement for ending the fundamental confrontation between Libya and the US must be that Libya completely and convincingly disavows recourse to terrorism.