



PRIME MINISTER

E & O E - PROOF ONLY

PRESS CONFERENCE AT RAAF FAIRBAIRN - 15 APRIL 1986

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, why didn't you pledge support for Mr Reagan's action in Parliament?

PM: My statement was a statement which was relevant to the circumstances. We were not advised in advance, asked in advance for support. The statement was carefully calculated to convey the position of the Australian Government and that is that we want hostilities to cease. In a discussion that the Foreign Minister and I have had and the information to which we had privy earlier, we tried to convey our understanding of the circumstances which had motivated the United States to take this action. And I have tried to convey to the people of Australia the concern that we have about terrorism. Not just in which Libya is involved but which they are directing. And it is quite clear that these circumstances of conflict are not going to be eradicated until Libya desists from directing such terrorists. Now, as I say, the Foreign Minister and I have had access to information which we find compelling as to the fact that Libya had been involved in the direction of such terrorists. Now we, having said that, want the hostilities to cease because there is not merely the danger to innocent people in Libya but there is also the present danger of the escalation of this conflict.

JOURNALIST: Do you support the President's action?

PM: Well, what my statement says, it means. And that is that we want the action to cease. I have tried to convey our understanding of the circumstances which has led the United States Administration to do this. Let me make it clear, I am not going to get into some squalid auction with the Leader of the Opposition about the degree of our support for the relationship with the United States and of our loathing and condemnation of terrorism. It serves no ones purposes in Australia or elsewhere to get into to such a squalid auction. It is a careful, calculated statement to convey the position which has been considered by the Foreign Minister and myself.

JOURNALIST: Shouldn't Australia have been notified in advance of this action by the Americans?

PM: I am not here to say that we should have been notified in advance. We were informed at about 9.30 this morning when clearly the action was underway.

JOURNALIST: So when you get to Washington do you expect the President to ask for your support?

PM: I don't know. You would have to ask the President what he is going to do. All I can say is I will convey to the President the sentiments that are in my statement. One thing I will certainly be conveying to the President is that I would believe it vitally important that the United States should expose the information of which they are in possession and upon which they have based their action. Now I understand because I have discussed this matter with Secretary of Defense, Mr Weinberger, the inhibitions which I think all of you can understand in terms of the way in which they acquired this information. But I do really believe that it is in the interests of everybody concerned that that informatin should be made public.

JOURNALIST: Do you think the Americans would prefer a statement of greater support?

PM: Well, all I can say is that where earlier this year when the question of the United States action and attempt to get support from other countries was concerned they expressed their satisfaction to the reaction that we undertook as a Government. And I have no reason to believe that they will be wanting or pressing or seeking to press us into some further position. We have tried, as I say, to make a valid statement in this matter and I repeat that I believe it would be in everyones interest if the actual information which the United States has in regard to Libyan direction of terrorist activity were made public.

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