



PRIME MINISTER

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TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE AT THE MANILA HOTEL - MANILA
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PM: Ladies and Gentlemen, I will make a relatively brief statement and then I am open to any questions you may have. I would say at the outset now that I am very grateful to have had this opportunity to visit the Philippines and to hear at first hand from President Aquino about her Government's priorities, concerns and plans. As you are aware Australians very warmly welcome her accession to the presidency. We believe that the manner in which that accession was achieved was a very great tribute to the quality and character of the people of the Philippines. I think in very few countries would it have been possible given the context and environment to have achieved that changeover with the minimal amount of bloodshed that in fact took place. We have expressed our desire as a Government and people of Australia to assist President Aquino and her Government in their reform and development policies. Quite clearly the change of Government is a particularly important development for the Asia/Pacific region. We are looking forward to the resumption of a full and friendly government to government relationship. And I reminded the President of just how quickly my Government moved to recognise the Government and to demonstrate its support. I told the President that it was our wish that this visit so early in the life of her Government would be a firm demonstration of our commitment in that regard. I sort from President Aquino a personal appraisal of how she believed things were going and I was briefed by her on the policies and programs and concepts that she and the Government have for meeting the massive problems with which she and the people of the Philippines have confronted. She told me about the steps so far that have been taken on the commission of good government. And she indicated, having announced the membership of the Constitutional Commission yesterday, her hopes that work will be relatively and speedily performed and that there would then be the opportunity of discussion within the society and then the relatively early stage elections flowing from it. You will recall that when Mr Hayden, my Foreign Minister, visited the Philippines in March he announced that the Australian Government would increase its aid by 50% to \$25 million in 1986/87 and thereby demonstrating again the commitment we have to assisting in the programs of reform. Following that statement

by Mr Hayden in March the Australian Aid Mission visited the Philippines from 5-18 April and the purpose of that visit was to consider in discussion with the officials of the Philippines how best to deploy those increased resources. I informed the President that my Government had now endorsed the strategy recommended by the Aid Mission and I would like to indicate to you the outline which I gave to Mrs Aquino on this matter. Subject to specific proposals being prepared, aid will be provided in three phases. In the first phase emphasis will be placed on the continuation of existing programs, on the introduction of a community assistance program for assistance at grass roots level mainly through non-government organisations and the church, preparation of longer term projection key sectors such as agriculture and education, provision of technical assistance in policy and program formulation, the introduction of a commodity supply program as a response to the immediate critical economic situation. Under that aspect of the first phase of the aid program Australia will provide commodities in key areas of the economy with the proceeds of the sale of these being used to mitigate the budget deficit and to support priority social welfare programs. In the second phase it is envisaged that that commodity supply program would be phased down. Greater emphasis would then be placed on that second phase on the further development of the community assistance program, the further preparation of long term projects and provision of technical assistance. In the third phase the strategy anticipates that the balance of payments and budget support measures being terminated and the aid program would then comprise of fully operational community assistance programs and large, longer term projects in priority areas. I spoke with the President about international issues. I specifically indicated our appreciation that the Philippines offered to host the next round of regional trade consultations. That meeting will be held in Manila before the GATT ministerial meeting in September. I told the president of our repugnance at the actions over a long period of Marcos and the cronies of Marcos having apparently placed massive assets of the people of the Philippines abroad. I said to her that we would assist in respect of inquiries about any such assets in Australia to the maximum extent possible that we could. This would mean in particular helping with the provision of relevant information. That process of course would then have to be conducted within in the Australian legal processes. Other matters that we discussed included the internal security of the Philippines as well as a number of regional foreign policy issues. In that context I referred to the fact that we in Australia had joint facilities with the United States and I expressed to the President the view of my Government that the hosting of these joint facilities in our countries was consistent with our capacity as a Government to pursue rigorously as we had done in the three years of Government, our policies

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in regard to the need for moves towards disarmament, to create a more peaceful world environment within that we have that the existence of the joint facilities was consistent with that. I would like to conclude by, before going to questions, saying that in our first meeting President Aquino and I had a significant victory over the forces of protocol and bureaucratic conservatism. At the end of our meeting President Aquino said to me that she understood that my wife and daughter were visiting with me and she *was surprised* that they weren't here. And apparently protocol had arranged and ordained otherwise so we agreed that it was time for Presidents and Prime Ministers to assert their authority. We did and I am very pleased to say that at the end of my meeting my wife and daughter were able to have a meeting with the President which we very much appreciated. Any questions?

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, I am just wondering what President Aquino's reply was to your comments on bases and would it be alright in Australia's terms to be turned into joint facilities?

PM: There was no attempt on my part nor would I ever contemplate purporting to tell the Government and the President of the Philippines how they should conduct their affairs with the United States or what they should do about any changes to the nature of bases. I mean I make no such presumption. As far as President Aquino is concerned she said that the agreement ran until 1991. That was her position and at this point as far as she was concerned she was not going to be involved publicly in any debate or discussion about those issues and that her immediate priorities which I agree with are domestic economic priorities.

JOURNALIST: Recently the Government of New South Wales tried to recruit 2,000 Filipino nurses to work in Australia however it was blocked by some trade unions who appeared to be evading Australian immigration laws. Will your Government work for the easing of Australian immigration laws for Filipino to Australia?

PM: Let me make it clear that as far as Australia's immigration laws are concerned the days of any discrimination on the basis of the country of origin, or race or colour, have long been behind us. So any implication in your question at any attitude by any segments were based on those considerations and that they have been able to use immigration laws for that reason are not soundly based. President Aquino did raise with me the question of the nurses. She said she understood that there was a shortage of nurses in Australia and that there would be available properly trained nurses from the Philippines. And I have simply said to the President that I would acquaint myself with the details of this matter on my return. I have not been in any specific way briefed about it and so I have given her that undertaking. We will

look at it when we return to Australia.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, one interpretation of the ANZUS Treaty has it that Washington could seek Australian military assistance in the base

PM: The matter hasn't been raised with me and I see no point in speculating about it. It doesn't seem to be an issue which is remotely within the realm of our concerns for the foreseeable future. And I repeat it has not been raised with me.

JOURNALIST: What did Mrs Aquino raise with you of all anything specifically related to the transfer of assets out of the Philippines to Australia?

PM: Well, Geoff, I raised the matter with her. I expressed the repugnance of Australians to the massive raping of the resources of the Philippine people by the previous regime. I knew it was a matter for concern for them and she agreed that and still being surprised almost daily by the dimension of what occurred. And because I knew that it was a matter for concern I said well, we understand that and offered to provide any assistance that we possibly could within Australia if they were to identify what they believe were assets that had been improperly acquired.

JOURNALIST:

PM: No, our defence co-operation program now with this Government remains operative. And I did not discuss the matter with the President but at an appropriate time it would be the case I think that my Minister may wish to have discussions at the ministerial level and I am sure that discussions will continue at the level of officials to see what is the most appropriate method of assistance there. You will appreciate that members of the Philippines armed forces have been coming to Australia for training. It seems that that will continue to be an appropriate of the DCP. If the new Government wishes in any way to suggest other or more effective ways in which co-operation program can be given effect to well then, of course, we stand ready to do that.

JOURNALIST: On the question of bases, does the Australian Government

PM: We believe that the presence of the American bases is appropriate and yes we believe it is a contribution to strategic stability in the region.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, did you express that yourself to Mrs Aquino?

PM: I expressed the view about our assessment of the need for security in the region. I deliberately did not seek to intrude myself into telling the Philippines Government what it should do. Rather I indicated that we were a relatively new Government and that we had had to face the question what was the appropriate policy position in regard to the joint facilities in our country. I explained our processes of approach on this, the decisions that we had arrived at, the way in which that decision was totally consistent with our pursuit of policies to which I have already alluded, the policies of trying to achieve progress in the areas of disarmament and that it was totally possible while having those joint facilities to pursue an independent foreign policy. It didn't mean that because we had joint facilities with the United States that we necessarily on every issue saw eye to eye with them or would not be in a position at times where we disagreed to point that disagreement out. So it is clear from what I said that the view of our Government that the presence of the bases here was consistent with the Australian Government's own perception. And I deliberately refrain as it is proper for me to do so from telling this Government what it should do.

JOURNALIST:

PM: No, not at all. We are meeting next week with other major aid donors particularly Japan and the United States and it is quite clear from the outline that I have given that the sorts of things that we are talking about would in any co-ordination process be appropriate to be done by Australia. What we will seek to ensure in the discussions that we have with others is that there is not a replication or duplication. But there is so much to be done here that there is no way I believe that what would be doing would be something that was not necessary to be done.

JOURNALIST: banned Australia to fly aircraft into the Philippines?

PM: Yes, I did make the point to President Aquino that we tended to regard as a badge of honour the decision of the previous Government to ban our aircraft because of the strength which my Government had expressed their views about the activities of the previous Government. And in no circumstances while it was appropriately regarded as a badge of honour, it was not one now we thought we needed to wear and the President indicated to me that she understood our concern. It has been brought to her attention and I think that you will find that this matter will be dealt with reasonably quickly.

JOURNALIST:

PM: No I have not had any information given to me which would indicate that that is the case and all I can say

on the question of any acquisition of assets and dealing in Australian by the previous regime I have given the indication to the President as I have said that we will provide what information we appropriately can within our legal processes. If they have any information at all then we would like to know of it. We will do what we can within our legal framework to assist. I mean if you look at the total picture and just not what they have done in Australia because I am not aware but it is difficult to imagine anything more obscene than the activities of the previous President and his cronies in stealing from the people of the Philippines the assets which they so sorely need.

JOURNALIST: Does this mean that bank accounts can be opened like they are being opened in Switzerland

PM: No, what I have said is that we would want the Philippine Government if they identify in their judgement assets in Australia which have been improperly or illegally acquired to indicate that to us. And that within our legal processes we will provide what information and assistance we can. We will not be changing any legal processes in Australia on this matter.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, most Australians are apparently ignorant about the Philippines and vice versa. Does your Government intend exchange programs between Filipinos and Australians?

PM: There have been some such interchanges in the past. I accept the point that you make that there is not a sufficient degree of knowledge between our two countries of one another's cultures, traditions and background and I would be certain that in the discussions that will be going on particularly when my Foreign Minister again comes here next month for post-ASEAN ministers talks that this will be one area in which discussions will be held. There are limits, of course, in terms of government budget facilities to what can be funded but there are ways I believe in which in non-government funded directions there can be a stimulation of contacts between our two peoples. And we will certainly be keen to do whatever we can in that direction.

JOURNALIST: On the Marcos assets Mr Hawke, can we assume that the Government hasn't made any progress on identifying those assets so far and are there particular problems there do you think?

PM: Well, let me repeat the point Mike, President Aquino did not raise it me. I mentioned it to her. So I take it that at there end I have not reached a position where they have done enough work I would assume to have identified the particular problem. It was my concern merely to indicate to the President our attitude, that we wanted to do all that we could to help. The initiative must be with them.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, I have two questions.

PM: Yes, of course.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, are there any conditions attached aid to the Philippines?

PM: It is not a 25% increase. It is a 50% increase to 25 million. No there are no conditions. Australia is at the forefront of aid donors in the world in the lack of conditionality attached to our aid. It is virtually all in grant form. If you want to put a condition as it were though it is not exactly the right world, our fundamental concern is that as far as possible Australian aid shall be going to the grass roots level. We want to see and we want to have the feeling that the assistance we give is going to be directed to programs which are going improve the well-being of the ordinary Filipino people.

JOURNALIST:

PM: That is a very good question. I don't know whether people here heard it but it was asked whether the President asked for more aid or did she say 25 million was enough. One of the refreshing characteristics of President Aquino I think is her directness. And she expressed considerable gratitude for the action and the speed of the action of the Australian Government. She indicated not only as far as Australia was concerned but for the rest of the world that the Philippines needed as much assistance as they could possibly get. So this wasn't put in terms of saying at all, well Mr Hawke, thank you for your 25 million, I don't think it is enough. But she genuinely said clearly the Philippines can use as much aid as it possibly can get because the magnitude of the task is so enormous.

JOURNALIST: Well, you will notice from the answer I gave previously that I think the basic responsibility for this must lie with the Government of the Philippines and I repeat the answer that I have given that if in the light of investigation they do they want to take proceedings and believe the proceedings are appropriate then we will provide all the assistance that we can within the processes of the law.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, can you tell us about your discussions on insurgency with President Aquino. You said that she had briefed you. Perhaps you also offered your own observations?

PM: I am not an authority on insurgency. But she did indicate to me that she had a considerable degree of optimism both in terms of the attitude of the people who had been involved in insurgency that she believed the hard core was a relatively small percentage and that the others would be responsive. Within that she made the point that it was important that the Government should be able to provide the opportunity for active and constructive involvement of the previous

insurgence in agricultural activity and that the Government had plans for making land available not merely to ex-insurgents but as part of dealing with the problem of insurgency the Government was concerned with trying to ensure that there was a revitalisation of rural agricultural activity. The third point that she made was that she believed that the the reform in the armed forces was significant and effective and that the people in the rural areas would have an increased confidence in the integrity of the armed forces and she regarded this as relevant in dealing with problem.

JOURNALIST:

PM: We in fact will be having here within a matter of two months, there will be meetings of the joint commission and of the business co-operation committee and out of those discussions, the level of officials and of the business level the question of opportunities in increased Australian investment will be one of the issues that will be addressed at those meetings. And I would hope that out of those discussions there would be the opportunity for some forms of investment here which would be mutually beneficial.

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