



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF COMMENTS, GREENSBOROUGH SHOPPING MALL, MELBOURNE,
7 APRIL 1987

E & O E - PROOF ONLY

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, are you concerned about the Libyan presence in the South Pacific?

PM: Yes, I am. And I didn't wait until I saw it in the Age newspaper today to know about it. I have expressing my concern about this for a considerable period of time. And not just expressing our concern but for some time with the United States I have told them that they would be making a serious mistake in the South Pacific over a number of years and leaving their foreign policy situation in the South Pacific to the American Tuna Boat Association. Unfortunately, that created a vacuum and you had there where the Soviet Union was able to move into Kirabati with their fishing agreement. They are now doing it with Vanuatu. And now, fortunately, the United States has finalised this \$60m arrangement - fisheries payment over a 5 year period. That is going to start to remedy the situation. But the problem is that in that sort of vacuum the Soviet moved into some extent and so have the Libyans. We are very much aware of what has happened in the firms of people going from Vanuatu to Libya, the connection between the Libyans and Vanuatu, the OPM. And now, very worryingly, the suggestion that there is going to be a linkage into New Caledonia with the Libyans. We are monitoring it very closely. I have expressed in the South Pacific Forum in the last 2 years as strongly as I could, concern that the nations of the South Pacific should not get entangled with the Libyans because it is just preposterous - there is this little country of 3 million people in North Africa - 3 million people - enveloped in conflict with its immediate neighbours, and in conflict with France. By what measure of anything that starts to be intellectually reasonable can their presence in the South Pacific be justified. They have a monstrous record in terms of their relations with other countries. They embrace the tactic of terror. And I say quite firmly and deliberately that any countries in this region that enter into dealings with them are making a very grave mistake. Libya is not here for any altruistic reason. They are here to promote terrorism, unrest, and obviously most recently, because Libya is concerned with the conflict it is having with France, then they are going to try and foment armed terrorist situations here to embarrass the French. No-one is more stronger than I am in terms of criticising the French for the way they are handling - the present French

PM cont: Government - is handling the transition in New Caledonia. But I say quite straightforwardly that I would stand shoulder to shoulder with France in condemning the injection into this terribly volatile situation of any Libyan presence. They bring, they have never in recent history, been identified with bringing to any situation mollifying influences, peaceful influences, cohesive influences. Their whole record has been one of terrorism, of destabilisation. We don't want and we don't need them in the region.

JOURNALIST: Any sort of action you can think of taking, any talks you can -

PM: The countries in the region are sovereign countries. Vanuatu is a sovereign, independent nation. We can make it clear as we have that we believe it is unwise for a nation to get into a close association with Libya. I have made that clear directly in meetings of the South Pacific Forum countries. I have made it clear in many public statements. But in the end these are sovereign, independent nations. And I can just but continue to warn them. As far as we are concerned we have increased - and you would have noticed that the Minister for Defence announced just in the last few weeks we have increased the extent of maritime surveillance exercises by the Royal Australian Navy in the South Pacific Region. We want the countries in the region to understand that we will help them with the real concerns they have about being able to patrol their EEZs - the Exclusive Economic Zones. And it behoves countries like us to give that sort of assistance so that they can have no reason at all for trying to have recourse to a country like Libya, which I repeat has got no conceivable, legitimate, peaceful interest in the region.

JOURNALIST: ... inaudible question ...

PM: It was to support a magnificent local member, Mr Peter Cleeland. To support this man who is one of our very, very best members - to support him. And I am having a campaign to go around the country supporting members like him in our relatively marginal seats but more importantly, as the weeks go on, because he is going to win with an increased margin. It won't be marginal after the next election - he is going to increase his majority. I am going around to more and more of the seats which are held by narrow majorities by the Liberals and by the National Party because we are going to win a number of those in the next election.

JOURNALIST: Has the campaign begun, effectively, Prime Minister?

PM: I don't know what you mean by campaign. Not officially, but I will certainly between now and whenever the election is held, I will be going around the country explaining the performance of this Government and asking the people to make the contrast between the stability of this Government and the chaos and the bitterness and internal hatreds of the Liberal Party and the National Party.

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