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PRIME MINISTER

PARTIAL TRANSCRIPT OF SPEECH, GRAFTON RACECOURSE
15 AUGUST 1990
E & OE - PROOF ONLY

PM: I don't want this evening to spend any time at length talking about the most recent situation in the Gulf other than to say this. I of course repudiate completely the nonsense that has been spoken by some that the decision which I, on behalf of the Australian people and after consultation with my colleagues, announced last Friday was one that followed simply from a conversation with my friend George Bush. The issue of a possible Australian involvement in the catastrophe of the Gulf had arisen earlier in the week as a result of discussions that commenced in Washington. By the time I spoke with George Bush last Friday morning I had had the opportunity of thinking deeply about this issue, of consulting my colleagues. And it was a decision taken, the most serious decision probably I've taken in the period as Prime Minister, not at the behest of the President of the United States, but with a full sense of the responsibility which I believe I had as leader of this country, and in the great traditions of Australia, that Australia should not simply be heard but that Australia should be seen. When the fundamental values for which tens of thousands of Australian men and women have died in previous conflicts, when they were an issue, and the rights and the freedoms of a small nation were in question, that the voice of Australia would be heard and that that voice would be backed by action. It was, as I say, the most serious decision I've had to take as Prime Minister but in the end it was also an easy decision because I believe the issues were straight forward. It is my great hope, my great hope that in the days that now pass before our three ships arrive in the Gulf area that good sense will prevail on the part of the leadership in Iraq, because I can assure you it is my dearest wish that that should happen and that our men should not be exposed to danger. Because the welfare of the people of Iraq, the welfare of the people of the region obviously depends upon those sensible decisions being taken. The force of Australia will be used within the context of the United Nations and elsewhere to attempt to bring about that result. It's quite clear ... I've been talking about these major changes that have been occurring in the relations between the super powers that we have the privilege of living in one of the most important and indeed one of the most optimistic periods of the whole of the post-war period. Because it can be said that never has there been a more substantial basis for expecting that the world will be free from the threat of nuclear annihilation.

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