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PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF NEWS CONFERENCE, MADANG RESORT HOTEL, MADANG -
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JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, is there likely to be any fall-out from the Daily Mirror's article ...?

PM: ... some fall-out within the Daily Mirror. But I've said all I want to say about it.

JOURNALIST: Is Mr Namaliu likely to say anything about it?

PM: He was very grateful that I said what I did and I think he hopes that that will have its effect. It ought to.

JOURNALIST: As it comes towards the end of your trip, how would you describe it?

PM: It's been eminently successful. It's been frank, direct. The Prime Minister and his Ministers have put themselves at my disposal and all the issues between us have been discussed in the most amicable and direct and constructive way. I believe that as a result of the visit the relationship's on an even firmer foundation and we will see ways in which the forms of assistance that we give can be made even more relevant, I think, to the issues and problems confronting the country.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, have the concerns of the expatriot Australian businessmen here in any way altered your perceptions of the problems of law and order in this country?

PM: No. They weren't overboard about the issue. They rightly and understandably stressed the significance of it. But they also indicated the confidence they have in the country. I think they have the right sort of balance about it.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, you said in your speech, you talked of possible restructuring of PNG defence forces. Do you think that it's possible that PNG is better served with a single security force, amalgamation of police and defence forces?

PM: The issue has theoretically been in the minds of some people. And if you were looking at it theoretically you could argue that case. But we don't live in a theoretical

world. The fact is that you have now developed two separate forces, the military forces and the constabulary. I think the important thing is to look at how the provisioning aspects of training can be to some extent co-ordinated. I think there are ways probably and I think our friends here in New Guinea think that. There are ways in which there may be able to be some greater degree of co-ordination. But I think the reality is that the two separate entities would remain.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, your discussions on constitutional change here, does that give you any more confidence that a halt will come to the turnstile government up here?

PM: What is clear from the conversations I've had is that both within the Opposition and the Government there is a conviction that there has to be reform followed through which will bring an end to the possibility of constant change so that there can be a greater period in which governments can be sure that they will be immune from these destabilising no-confidence motions.

JOURNALIST: Any details about helping PNG with the reconstruction on Bougainville?

PM: No, they didn't want us to pursue that in any detail at the moment. It was premature. All they wanted to know, and I was prepared to say, that once they'd settled the issue between themselves that they should know that we'd be prepared to help. That's as far as it went.

JOURNALIST: And your assessment now of the future of Bougainville?

PM: Well one can't be immediately confident. But I would have thought that now that the people up there have seen the preparedness of the central government to actually deliver the goods and services, they were there ready to be delivered, and the people on Buka, ordinary people seem to want them delivered, but it was prevented by the intervention of the BRA. I think that will have its own impact in its way.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, have you had a chance to talk to the new Prime Minister of New Zealand and if so what have you said to him?

PM: I haven't spoken to him in his capacity as Prime Minister. Of course I've known him and I've spoken to him in the past. I have sent a message to Geoffrey Palmer and there has been a message sent to Mike Moore. We wish them all well.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, it's been said in the past that you were more pessimistic about PNG's future than some other members of your Cabinet. Are you, after having been here for four days, been outside Port Moresby, more optimistic of this country's future?

PM: I think the right way of putting it is that I've probably got a detailed, a more detailed knowledge of Papua New Guinea, its history, its creation as an independent nation than probably anyone else in the Cabinet. I don't say that egotistically. It just happens to be the fact through my long experience going back to the 60s here that I'm able to say that. So I was perhaps a bit more conscious than some of my colleagues of the range of rather deep problems that confront the country. I think what I can say is that following this visit I've got a firmer degree of assurance in my mind a) of the fact that the leaders here understand the nature of those problems and b) are committed to addressing them. That gives me confidence.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, did Mr Namaliu express to you any concerns about the sort of media coverage, and in particular the business at the Travelodge -

PM: Yes he did. He was very very upset about it. And in my opinion, understandably so.

JOURNALIST: Did it concern you though that raskols were able to break into the hotel, a hotel where the Prime Minister was staying?

PM: Not as much as the absolute misrepresentation and beatup in the papers concerned me. That was much more of concern.

JOURNALIST: In discussions about the Defence Co-operation Treaty, were there suggestions that it should be altered in any way?

PM: Not the structure of the Treaty and the framework within which we co-operate. The area to which the talks went were what is the best sort of PNGDF for the governments of Papua New Guinea in the future to look together at the issues of what possible changes there may be in training and so on that will best equip them for that future task. So that's what the talks were about, rather than changing the framework within which we operate.

JOURNALIST: ... equipment too. Was there a suggestion that maybe there's too much reliance on Australian equipment?

PM: That point wasn't specifically raised. But I think there won't be any limits to the range of discussions we'll have. The important thing that's been agreed is that we are at one in saying that it's sensible to look at how the PNGDF is equipped, trained and how it operates and are there ways in which together we can make it better equipped for future tasks. That has all been on the basis of not us saying that's what's got to happen but a shared view of it. They understand that Australia speaks from a position of having now since independence put something like half a billion dollars into the PNGDF. So we have a real interest.

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JOURNALIST: Is it possible that police training could come under the Defence Co-operation program?

PM: We've discussed that and I'd just like to say these things and I'm sure Rabbie would like to make his comments. I think it's right to say that we agree that as far as you can see into the future there will be two separate ... PNGDF and there will be the police. But I think we both agree that there will be a complementarity of their roles in many respects and that it may be that you can get a degree of integration in regard to procurement issues perhaps and some elements of training. So in our thinking about the PNGDF we'd be thinking about that side as well.

JOURNALIST: ... on Bougainville, what is the Government's stand now that the suspended provincial government that's refused to recognise the administrator that you appointed.

NAMALIU: The administrator is appointed under our constitution under the ... law of provincial government. As far as we are concerned, he is the administrator of the province.

JOURNALIST: ... control of the situation again. Is that true?

NAMALIU: I think it is more likely to - that description is more apt for the BRA leadership than it is for the position ...

JOURNALIST: You are not dealing with the BRA.

NAMALIU: That's right.

JOURNALIST: Are you dealing with them?

NAMALIU: The BRA?

JOURNALIST: Yes.

NAMALIU: Well as you know, there are leaders who have been involved in the negotiations which resulted in the Accord that belong to the BRA. There are those that belong to the self-styled ... government of the republic of the North Solomons. There are those that come from the community generally. So they are the leaders that we were dealing with. They were Bougainville leaders and we would like to regard them as that rather than belonging to a specific group like the BRA.

JOURNALIST: Who are they ...?

NAMALIU: You know who they are. You know Mr Kabui, you know Bishop Singkai, you know Mr Peter - sorry, not Peter, but you know the other people involved. It includes people who are very close to Mr Ona. But Mr