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## PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF DOORSTOP, GARDEN ISLAND, SYDNEY,  
12 NOVEMBER 1990

E & O E - PROOF ONLY

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, are these ships entering a more dangerous situation than the previous two ships?

PM: Well they get there at the beginning of December and it's difficult to say what the situation will be then. It's our hope that with the accumulating evidence and the determination of the rest of the world that the leadership of Iraq will come to the understanding which would be the intelligent decision that they must withdraw because the world is not going to accept their annexation of Kuwait. I hope that realisation will dawn.

JOURNALIST: Do you accept that war is now more of a possibility than it was ... probability than it was before ...

PM: Well I think you would have to say that with the time that's passed and the refusal of the leadership of Iraq to withdraw that it does look somewhat grimmer than the situation before. One had hoped that the evidence that was available then would lead the leadership of Iraq to withdraw. That evidence of - that being the sensible course has accumulated since then and yet we haven't had the withdrawal. But I still remain hopeful that there will be a peaceful resolution of this matter.

JOURNALIST: Do you expect a conflict before Christmas?

PM: I'm not talking about expecting a conflict and I don't go to that.

JOURNALIST: Are the sanctions working, Mr Hawke?

PM: Well the sanctions are working in the sense that the economy of Iraq is running down very, very considerably. There is reduced food supplies there. So the impact is very, very considerable and the combination of the impact that there is already on Iraq, together with the evidence of the determination of the rest of the world not to allow the annexation of Kuwait to stand, as I say, should lead the leadership of Iraq to the conclusion that the only sensible decision in the interests of their own people is to withdraw.

JOURNALIST: Would you be prepared to reassure these sailors and their families that if there is an escalation they won't be left there alone?

PM: The people on these ships and the ones that are there know the commitment of this Government to ensure that all decisions would be taken which were appropriate in the circumstances to ensure the maximum extent possible the effectiveness of our contribution and the safety of those involved.

JOURNALIST: What are the families telling you?

PM: Well it's very interesting. There's the natural human emotion of sadness at parting but overwhelmingly combined with that there is the expressed conviction that their boys have a job to do and that they're proud of them.

JOURNALIST: Do you have any comments on David Lange's comment this morning in the Sydney Morning Herald?

PM: Not at this stage. I will have later.

JOURNALIST: Should Mr Uren be going to the Gulf?

PM: That is a decision for Tom to make. Just let me make this point that the European Council of Ministers considering this matter recently have made a unanimous decision that it is not appropriate for official missions to go in regard to hostages and that has been accepted and adopted unanimously by our colleagues who are involved in this exercise. If private individuals go then they go not with the sanction, as it were, of governments but we understand their reasons for going and we accept their integrity and if they have some success then for those who are released, that's a great joy. Although for the great majority who are left behind it's a matter of mixed emotions I guess. But there is the very firm unanimous conviction that at the official level there cannot be comfort or stature given to Saddam Hussein by people going and meeting with him because this is a man who has broken all the rules of international law and behaviour in holding these people as hostages and they all should be released.

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