



Ba

PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH TERRY WILLESEE AND KERRY-ANNE KENNERLEY, GOOD MORNING AUSTRALIA, 12 NOVEMBER 1990

E & O E - PROOF ONLY

WILLESEE: Good morning, Mr Prime Minister.

PM: Good morning.

WILLESEE: Well you have some tough jobs in your position, how tough has it been this morning? What are your feelings as you say goodbye to two more ships of Australians off to the Gulf?

PM: Mixed feelings, of course, overwhelming and a sense of pride at the good fortune that we in Australia have in the quality of the ships and the crews, the personnel that we're able to call upon to discharge Australia's obligation in these times of crisis and when you meet the men and their families you can't help but be proud to be leader of this country because you see a commitment to do their duty and at the same time you see the pangs of sorrow at the departure. It's a very human situation to be in.

WILLESEE: Mr Hawke, one of the questions that is being asked today is that because war appears now more likely, what would be your reaction to sending even more troops if that did occur?

PM: I refuse to get into a hypothetical question, Terry, about the future. We have made a very firm, clear and early decision about discharging what we see as the obligations of Australia in this crisis. The reaction that we've made has been, as it should be, properly applauded and understood. We will deal with the situation as it emerges. We are constantly monitoring developments and it would be counter-productive to respond to some hypothetical question because you simply don't know the circumstances of the future.

WILLESEE: Mr Hawke, your attitude to the hostages has been criticised -

PM: Let me say it hasn't been criticised by the people who've written to me. I've had very touching communications from some quarters there which I will not go - but there is very a clear understanding from those who've communicated ... two letters and there is a very considerable degree of understanding of the position of Australia in this matter.

WILLESEE: Your fellow Party member, Tom Uren, has been critical of you, suggesting you -

PM: Well there's nothing new about Tom being critical of me.

WILLESEE: Well he says you're lacking compassion.

PM: Yes, well I'm not going to get into a slanging match about the compassion meter with Tom Uren. I'm quite prepared to look at my record in terms of compassion. But I think it's pointless and undignified to get into arguments about relative compassion.

WILLESEE: Well he says he will go in an attempt to free some of the hostages. Does he go with your blessing?

PM: Well if Tom goes we have said, as we've said of other unofficial people, they don't go with any official sanction but we don't want to deter them. The fact is, of course, that there's been a unanimous decision of the European Council of Ministers on this regard that it is counter-productive for governments to be involved officially in these ... because it gives a standing to Saddam Hussein which is not helpful to the achievement of the objective that we're about and that is to get Saddam Hussein to withdraw from the Gulf. But having said that, I made it quite clear that if there are these unofficial ventures which do lead to some people getting out well then that's a matter of joy for those who are released. The problem of course is that the overwhelming majority are going to be retained there and those are the ones who shouldn't be there at all. The only way you're going to get all the hostages released is by Saddam Hussein understanding that his actions aren't acceptable to the rest of the world.

KENNERLEY: Why do these private envoys up until now, why have they had success, Anne Fairbairn, and certainly other international envoys? What are they negotiating with?

PM: Well they are negotiating with a man who's trying to divide the rest of the world and it suits this dictator who has brutally annexed another country to have these people coming and waiting upon him to give him a standing and to say well here, we'll give you a couple, we'll keep the great majority but here's some for you and some for you. It suits him fine and that's precisely why, as I say, unanimously the European Council of Ministers have decided that there will be no official missions of this kind.

WILLESEE: Mr Prime Minister, thanks for your time this morning. We really appreciate that.

PM: Thank you.

ENDS