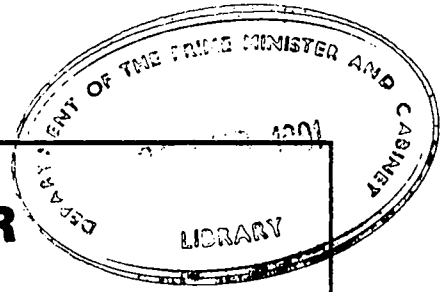




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PRIME MINISTER

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**STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER
THE GULF
THURSDAY, 17 JANUARY 1991**

Ladies and gentlemen, fellow Australians

You will recall that on 4 December last, I told Parliament that Australia was prepared to make our Naval Task Force available to serve with allied forces in operations authorised by Resolution 678 of the United Nations Security Council, should that become necessary.

You will also recall that Resolution 678 authorised member states of the United Nations, from 15 January 1991, to use all necessary means, including force, to uphold and implement the Security Council's previous resolutions - in essence, the unconditional withdrawal by Iraq from Kuwait.

With profound regret, I must now inform you that the necessity which I foreshadowed in the Parliament five weeks ago has come about.

As a consequence, therefore, the Australian Naval Task Force in the Gulf is now with other members of the United Nations co-operating in armed action to fulfil the United Nations resolutions to enforce the withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait.

It has been my intention that Parliament, having endorsed the position I put on 4 December, should be given the earliest opportunity to receive a report from me should action be taken in line with that position.

Accordingly, I have decided to recall the Parliament on Monday 21 January for two days so that I can make, and allow debate upon, such report.

Fellow Australians

I must emphasise from the outset - and it cannot be repeated too often or stressed too strongly - that this tragic necessity has one cause, and one cause only.

And that is the invasion and occupation of the nation of Kuwait, a member-state of the United Nations, by Iraq on 2 August last year - more than five months ago.

That was the act of war - and since that time we have sought by means of peace to reverse that act of war.

Since that time, the world community, working through the United Nations, with a unanimity, a strength and unity of purpose without precedent in history, has demanded that the Government of Iraq withdraw unconditionally its armed forces from Kuwait.

Twelve separate resolutions of the United Nations have been aimed at achieving that result.

Since August, governments of the member-states of the United Nations have worked unremittingly to persuade Saddam Hussein to comply with the will of the world community and to end the crisis he alone provoked.

Literally at the eleventh hour, with the positive support of the allied nations and in particular the President of the United States, the Secretary-General of the United Nations went to Baghdad to make a last appeal for compliance, a last plea for peace.

Like every other initiative undertaken within the framework of the United Nations' resolutions, it was rejected with contempt, and met the same uncompromising refusal to do the one thing that the world community agrees he must do - give up the nation he has seized and crushed.

That is why Resolution 678 of the United Nations Security Council has come into effect.

And that is why I have directed the Australian Naval Task Force to participate in the operations authorised by that resolution.

Ladies and gentlemen, fellow Australians

So momentous a decision must be placed - as it has indeed been taken - in the broad context of the future - not only the future of Kuwait, not only the future of the Middle East, but in the context of our future vision of a world striving for peace and freedom.

And our decision is based on five grave considerations.

First, there is the fundamental principle, without which there can be neither peace nor freedom - the right of every independent nation not to be invaded, not to be the victim of aggression, not to be destroyed.

Second, we act with the commanding moral authority of the United Nations. Never in its 45-year history has the United Nations worked so effectively and unitedly to fulfil its Charter and the principles of peace and security it embodies.

Third, we have reached this decision only at the end of a process without precedent in history. There is no parallel for the restraint, the patience and the caution with which the world alliance against Saddam Hussein has sought by peaceful means to resolve this conflict.

Fourth, the decision has a clear and achievable goal - to end this aggression, as a necessary step towards establishing the conditions for peace and stability in the Middle East.

And finally, there is a wider purpose behind our decision. It is a purpose implicit in everything that has been done by the United Nations since last August.

That purpose is to further the great quest for a new world order of peace, security and freedom - to fulfil the hopes and opportunities springing from the end of the confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union. Indeed, I believe that, at the bar of history, there will be no greater condemnation of Saddam Hussein, than that his aggression has plunged the world into a terrible and needless crisis which threatens the world stability on which those splendid hopes depend.

My fellow Australians

I know that the overwhelming majority of Australians will share my regret - indeed much deeper than regret - at the need for this decision. We all of us wish for peace. But we cannot have peace just by wishing for it or just by talking about it; we have to work for it, and sometimes, tragically, we have to fight for it. The great lesson of this Century is that peace is bought at too high a price, if that price is the appeasement of aggression.

I know that you all with me will feel that our first thoughts today go to the 884 of our fellow Australian serving men and women most directly affected by this decision.

We have three ships of the Royal Australian Navy serving in the Gulf; HMAS Sydney, Brisbane and Success.

Our thoughts go to these ships' crews, to the medical teams serving on the hospital ships, to the logistic support team in the region, and to the Australians serving on exchange with other allied forces in the Gulf.

War is full of terrible uncertainty. We cannot foretell what will be demanded of our serving men and women; but we can foretell how they will meet those demands.

We are confident of their skills; we are grateful for their devotion. We know they will serve bravely and well, and we hope, above all, that they will return safely home.

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