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PRIME MINISTER

STATEMENT BY THE ACTING PRIME MINISTER, THE HON KIM BEAZLEY MP

RAINBOW WARRIOR II

The incident overnight in which the Greenpeace vessel Rainbow Warrior II was seized by the French Navy off Mururoa Atoll further illustrates the serious damage being done to the international image of France as a result of its decision to resume nuclear testing.

The root cause of this incident was the deplorable decision of the French Government to resume testing in the South Pacific. Today's events should send a message to the people of France that their Government has erred in resuming the tests against the will of indigenous populations in the South Pacific, and against the tide of international opinion.

The Australian Government is also concerned that excessive force may have been used to seize the vessel, including the use of tear gas against unarmed protesters.

The French Ambassador to Australia was called into the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Canberra this morning to provide information and an assurance about the proper treatment and release of the Australians on board. Initial reports indicated five Australians were on board the vessel, including two media personnel.

PERTH
10 JULY 1995