



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP DOORSTOP AT THE McARTHUR RIVER MINE, NORTHERN TERRITORY, 6 SEPTEMBER 1995

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J: Mr Keating, what will the Australian Government be saying to the French Ambassador regarding the test?

PM: We will be saying that we are outraged by the fact the French have decided to detonate this bomb, that this is a mindless decision, that it is unnecessary, that the risks for everybody is the proliferation risk, the risk for France is not that it doesn't have a competent weapon, but rather that other non-nuclear states develop weapons. We have already undertaken a series of sanctions, the strongest by Australia against any other democracy. We have cancelled defence contracts, we have withdrawn our Ambassador, we have protested directly to the French Government, we are taking the matter to the United Nations. Australia has led the opposition to France in the world. This has made a difference I think to the French opinion at home. It has certainly made a difference to European opinion and it is this pressure which, I think, President Chirac is now feeling.

J: Do you think the French Government really cares that Australia is outraged?

PM: It cares and it is understood that, I think, we have hurt them in doing this. But understand, this is against the Government of France, not the people of France. It is not their decision, it is President Chirac's decision and we have made it clear to President Chirac and his Government - as I think we are changing opinion in Europe too - that other European states, whose opinions they care about mightily, are now making their views felt, such as in the European Parliament and other places.

J: Will you expel the French Ambassador, Mr Keating?

PM: No, we want the contact to be able to register, to keep the linkages. That is what you do in these things. You express your anger, your outrage, but you try and get a better outcome.

J: Mr Keating, what is the possibility of extra uranium sales confirmed?

PM: Well uranium sales to France are not an issue in this, they are not an issue in this anymore than sales of other things to France are by Australia.

J: Mr Keating, do you think the French now may reduce the number of tests, or do you think this is going to ...

PM: They may do under the weight of international pressure, but I am very pleased about the fact that Australia has led that. That we have made the difference in what, I think, the French Government thought was an easy decision to take.

J: You have taken a lot of action until now, is there anymore you can take?

PM: Well they are fairly strong actions - we have cancelled defence contracts, at the time we withdraw our Ambassador, we have led delegations there and Minister Bilney will be leading another one shortly to continue the campaign that we have waged to date.

J: Tim Fischer says that the Federal Government reaction hasn't been strong enough, that you should expel the French Ambassador.

PM: Well it has been so strong as to affect French public opinion and I think affect the view of the French Presidency. That is pretty strong.

J: But it hasn't been strong enough to stop them testing. They didn't even delay their start?

PM: Well they are a democracy and they can make their own decisions. Mururoa is not part of Australia, it is a French territory. But I think because it is a democracy, we are more outraged. If this was a totalitarian regime, you could perhaps understand how public opinion and international opinion has been bypassed, but what really gets up our nose is that this is a democracy and it is a democracy we have fought for.

J: Mr Keating, can you tell me your thoughts this morning when you heard the bomb had been detonated?

PM: Well one of anger and one of extreme disappointment about the fact that France does not understand that the real risk for the world is for smaller states to acquire nuclear weapons and that they have a vested interest, as we all have, in stopping that happen.

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