



PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J. KEATING MP
DOORSTOP, BEAUFORT HOTEL, DARWIN, 6 SEPTEMBER 1995**

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J: How do you feel about the bomb going off, are you going to take any action?

PM: I condemn what the French have done in the strongest possible terms. It is an act of stupidity. It is not something they need to do. Australia has now arraigned the strongest set of sanctions we have ever arraigned against any other democracy in our history. We have suspended defence contracts. We have withdrawn the Ambassador. We have taken this issue up at the United Nations. We have made an impact in France and in Europe and, I think, this is reacting now against the Government of France in France. So, these things, I think, show the strength of our feeling here and the fact that the risk is the proliferation risk. It isn't that the French don't have weapons that are of high military grade. The risk for all of us is the proliferation of nuclear weapons and that is what the French are devaluing.

J: Are you aware the New Zealanders have withdrawn their Ambassador this morning?

PM: We withdrew our Ambassador a month ago to register our protest. But, we now want an Ambassador to make that contact to express our disaffection and also to be there when Minister Bilney leads the delegation there. Now is the time we want contact, basically, to hop into the French.

J: How do you feel all this time, all this effort, to no avail?

PM: France is an independent country and they can make the decisions, but they are now wearing the admonition of people around the world including Australia.

J: What sort of a response can you outline now, what can you do now, what is the next step?

PM: We are continuing to proselytise on the issue. As you know I have had a substantial amount of press in France. The Foreign Minister has had. Mr Bilney is going with a delegation. We have already had one led by Gareth Evans and this is putting pressure on the French and President Chirac has given some indication now to reduce the number of tests. Well, we want it reduced to zero.

J: So, his offer last night isn't good enough as far as you are concerned?

PM: They should abandon the tests. They should abandon the tests and get on with the real problem, that is, how they contain the nuclear threat in the non-nuclear nations.

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