

7 July 1997

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**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER  
THE HON. JOHN HOWARD MP  
DOORSTOP INTERVIEW - RED CROSS BLOOD BANK, SYDNEY**

**E & OE**.....

**JRNLS:**

Prime Minister, has a decision been made to evacuate Australians?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

What has happened is that we are dispatching two C 130 transports to Butterworth. One of them has already left and the other will be going during the day. They will be appropriately placed so that if an evacuation becomes necessary they can participate. At this stage we hope it's not but we must always take precautions and ensure that our first priority, which is to look after Australians overseas, is fully discharged.

**JRNLS:**

How many Australians are in Cambodia at the moment?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

There 517 Australians registered with the Embassy in Phnom Penh. In addition, the Embassy has consular responsibility for about 150 Canadians under an arrangement between Australia and Canada. At this stage they are in no more or less danger than any other foreigners in a very difficult situation. The latest advice I had a few hours ago was that none of them had been injured but it is a very difficult, unstable, dangerous situation. When you have outbreaks of violence and essentially civil war of this kind, foreigners can get caught in the cross fire.

**JRNLS:**

Is the airport in Phnom Penh open again for such an evacuation?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

The latest information I had today, earlier today was that it wasn't but of course they are situations that can change and the important thing is to have evacuation capacity as close as possible to the area where you may evacuate people.

**JRNLS:**

So you are calling it a civil war?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Small "c", small "w" but it's fighting between two factions and sadly for Cambodia, once again, people are dying. One must wonder when the tragedy of Cambodia ends. It's suffered more than any other nation in Asia, and indeed, the whole world over the last 30 or 40 years from civil strife. It had the dreadful genocide of Pol Pot and I can only express the sadness and the sympathy of the Australian Government to the Cambodian people for what they may be going through.

**JRNLS:**

Is our envoy going to go into (inaudible).

**PRIME MINISTER:**

I'm sorry, I couldn't hear that.

**JRNLSST:**

An Australian (inaudible) envoy was on his way (inaudible)

**PRIME MINISTER:**

I will get another situation report when I get back to my office. Thank you.

ends