Thank you very much Mr Randall. A year ago yesterday, on the 10th of September, I met
President George Bush for the very first time. I had spoken to him twice on the phone, but
we spent together at different gatherings and in different ways three hours together on the day
of the 10th of September. We attended a splendid ceremony at the Naval Dockyard in
Washington, where the bell of the United States ship, Canberra, was handed over to Australia
as a momenta of the alliance and friendship between us in World War II. Both of us at the
ceremony reaffirmed the centrality of the ANZUS alliance and that particular ceremony was a
way of marking, during my visit to Washington, the importance of the alliance to both of us.
We then had a lengthy discussion in the White House. I was impressed with the President's
extraordinary grasp of the whole range of world issues. And I was particularly struck, and I
think it's important in the context of current events, at the commitment he had to building a
very constructive relationship between the United States and Russia. And he spoke very
warmly of his personal regard for President Putin. Later that afternoon, I went to the
Pentagon, renewed my acquaintanceship with Donald Rumsfeld, who I'd met with Colin
Powell when they came to Canberra the previous July for the Ausmin talks. And then, as
many in the media know, I had dinner with Rupert Murdoch in Washington and a few people
remarked that they thought that was going to be the story of the visit. But sadly of course,
events unfolded the next day which have, although it's a cliché to say so, it's nonetheless
absolutely true, events that have changed the world. It's difficult to say anything new or
different about those extraordinary events, but one must try.

To me, the two things that have left their deepest impression is that was in so many ways a
very modern catastrophe. The most poignant reminders, and the Ambassador touched on it in
church this morning, were those deeply personal messages left or conveyed by mobile
telephone, that wouldn't have been possible a mere decade or two ago. And the fact that the
attack on the Trade Centre in particular was an attack on one of the great outward
manifestations of the globalised world. It's also an attack on a world that is very well known
to the young, not only of this country but of so many other nations. Because the young have
always been mobile, but I think the young of this generation are about the most mobile
younger generation the world as ever seen. And there are none more mobile within that
worldwide cohort than indeed the young of Australia, who are very mobile in every sense of
the word. That is the first lasting impression it's had on me. I think the other of course is how it has driven home to us the vulnerability of all in the modern world to acts of unrestrained terrorism. And of course to an Australian, an attack on New York or Washington is not an attack on a distant, unfamiliar place – and I don't say that unkindly or disrespectfully of any other city in the world - I simply state the reality that because of the commonality of so many features of our culture, an attack on New York and Washington was bound to be felt more deeply and bound to be linked more immediately to the Australian psyche, than attacks on just about any other cities in the world. Not only have many Australians been to both cities, some have lived there for lengthy periods of time. But of course on top of that, we almost nightly see images of both places. But the revelation to all of us and if we reach into our hearts and minds and ask the question – did we really imagine, except in a very retrospectively theoretical sense, did we really image that something like this would have happened, I have to say to myself, I would have the answer was no. And that is why, I guess like everybody else, when I was told by Tony O'Leary, my Press Secretary, that the plane had hit, one plane had hit the Trade Centre, it wasn't of course until the second one that one began to grasp the concept that this was not a terrible accident, it was something far far more horrific.

I think the other thing that brought home to me the enormity of what had occurred is, I don't think I can recollect an event in my lifetime which, and my birthday is well publicised, in my lifetime which was more talked about for so long after the event. Many of us, of course, of my generation will say what were you doing when President Kennedy was assassinated? Older people might say, do you remember the dropping of the bomb on Hiroshima, the end of World War II, Australians will talk about the 11th of November 1975? But I can't think that any event goes near this in terms of the way in which it seized the consciousness of the world. And why is that so, because it was utterly devoid of any moral or political justification. It was a blind act of indiscriminate destruction and hatred. It needs to be said again that it was an attack as much on the decent values of Islam as it was an attack upon the decent values of Christianity and Judaism and all the other religions of the world. Barbarism has no ethnicity and evil has no religion. And it's a message that all of us should understand.

I think it's of course in the sense of fragility and vulnerability that it's induced that it's had it's most significant and lasting impression, not only in a personal sense but also in a political sense. It is now the case that no country can assume that another country possessing a capacity to inflict that kind of devastation on its citadels or indeed a group of people not necessarily belonging to a state. And indeed the masterminds of this particular outrage were, in proper senses of the word, stateless. It's a reminder of course that it can happen again. And it can have therefore very very significant implications for the willingness and the justification for nations taking action to prevent attacks of that kind being made upon their people and upon their assets. All tragedies of course bring forth no matter what their dimension is, bring forth good things and good deeds. The individual acts of heroism have been recounted time and time again. And the Ambassador gave us in his very eloquent way this morning, some examples of those.

I think the other benefit, if I can beg to use that expression, that has come out of the events of the 11th of September 2001, has been in many ways a level of cooperation between countries and within countries in the war against terrorism and the general bringing together of the nations of the world. I've attended, as you might expect a Prime Minister who's been in office for six and a half years, I've attended a lot of international conferences. I don't think I've attended one that was more impressive and more encouraging than the APEC meeting I attended in Shanghai in October of last year. This was a very special meeting for two reasons. It was the first significant international gathering since the 11th of September, or
after the 11th of September. It was also, I believe, the largest international gathering hosted by the people of China since the communist revolution in 1949. And it brought to that great country, it brought the President of the United States, the President of Russia, the Prime Minister of Japan, the President of Indonesia and of course many others. And I found the sense of common purpose of that meeting so very ably chaired by President Jiang Zemin, I found the sense of common purpose and the identification of a common threat to very different societies. I found that deeply impressive, and none more impressive than the contribution of the Russian President who disabused in my mind any belief on his part that the terrorist attack was the automatic product of a particular dispute between two particular countries or groups of people in a particular part of the world. And he as a leader who had experienced, and continues to experience, the difficulties of terrorism within his own country, was left in no doubt about that.

The Shanghai meeting symbolised a very common determination of the world jumping over previous difficulties and barriers to combat terrorism. And subsequently of course in the campaign in Afghanistan to which our own defence forces have contributed so magnificently, and on this day as well as all other days, remain very much in our thoughts, the response of the world collectively was also very strong and very impressive. As indeed was the steady way in which the President led the American people to that response.

I think it’s also important to understand that in the wake of something of that magnitude, some previous conceptions and some previous attitudes were in fact changed and removed for all time. I think one of the things it has done is to encourage the world to have a somewhat better understanding of different cultures and different religions. And in the process of exhorting people not to scapegoat particular groups or particular religions, either here in Australia or elsewhere, I think all of us have benefited from a reaching across of previous cultural divides to bring about a better understanding.

Ladies and gentlemen, as I reflect – because being in Washington at the time did give a particular personal dimension to it – the sense of grief and identification I felt with our American friends was immediate and immense. And the sense of grief one felt for all of the victims of those terrible attacks was equally the same. When the President and I spoke on that beautiful morning on the 10th of September of the strength of the alliance and its resilience, we put it very much in a historical context. Neither of us had the faintest notion that within 24 hours we would be contemplating the invoking for the first time in its 50 year history of the provisions of the ANZUS Treaty, something that I discussed with the Foreign Minister over the excellent communication system in Airforce Two as we travelled across the Pacific with the American Ambassador Tom Schieffer, with his wife and their son.

So those personal dimensions are relevant but they are but a sidebar to the impact these events have had on the history of the world, the impact the've had on how we relate to each other within the world community. The've also of course brought forth a natural focus on the relationship between Australia and the United States. And I want to take this opportunity of saying that I will never apologise for the depth and the strength of the relationship between Australia and the United States. It is not a relationship which is the only relationship that matters to our country. We have many relationships that are deeply important and rich and greatly treasured by the Australian people, and there is no reason why a nation cannot have a whole series of relationships which in their different ways are very important. And I’m not in the business, and I think it’s a rather pointless thing to be in the business of trying to grade the intensity of the bilateral relationships that this country has.
But we do share with the United States a rich and deep history. We share with the United States, as we do with many other nations that are represented in this room, some common values and we share with all the nations of the world the universal human values of respect for life, respect for the individual personality, a belief that there is a difference between right and wrong, and there are evil deeds in the world which require an appropriate response. We share with the American people a comradeship in arms in all of the wars of the last 100 years. We share a belief that the worth of an individual is not derived from that person’s race, religion, ethnicity, colour or social background, but rather the innate decency that a person represents and the contribution that that person wants to give to society.

We also share broadly speaking a commitment to what I would please to describe as competitive capitalism - some would choose another description but I won’t get into that debate today – which is the foundation of the generation of national wealth. The United States has meant a great deal to Australia in the past. We have our differences, not just on the sporting field, but we have our strong differences on a number of trade and economic and political issues. But there are some shared values and a shared commitment to the sort of future we both believe in, that is enormously important. And I take this opportunity in the context of our nation’s reflection on what happened to America and to Americans overwhelmingly a year ago, to state the importance to me and my Government of that relationship.

It is impossible of course, and it would be delinquent of me as the Prime Minister of Australia on this occasion, not to address some remarks to the debate which is now developing over Iraq and her non-compliance with the resolutions of the Security Council. I start by saying something that I hope would be self-evident but sometimes things are not self-evident, and that is that we have no quarrel with the people of Iraq. We have no desire, and I can say based on the conversation I had with him last Saturday morning, nor does the President of the United States, have any desire to have a military conflict. I hate military conflicts and so does he. I was not speaking to somebody last Saturday morning who was eager to have a war. I was talking to somebody who was eager to go the extra distance to achieve some other solution, and I have no doubt that will be the thrust of what he has to say to the United Nations General Assembly within a couple of days.

We face the difficulty we do in relation to Iraq because of her repeated refusal to comply with resolutions of the Security Council. This is an issue that focuses not only on that but also focuses on the unwillingness to date of the United Nations to do its job. Australia has been a faithful, full fee paying member of the United Nations since it was founded in 1948. And in fact the first President of the United Nations, if my memory serves me correctly, was the late Dr Evatt?, who was then the External Affairs Minister in the Labor Government. And we have good credentials when it comes to faithful membership of the United Nations. We don’t always agree with it. We are highly critical of some aspects of its committee system, but we are nonetheless through Labor and Liberal Governments, we have been a member in good standing of the United Nations. And we will along with a number of other countries, I hope the great majority, look to the United Nations to do its job over the weeks ahead in relation to the Iraqi failure to comply.

People are asking the rhetorical question, what is the link between September 11 and the difficulties in relation to Iraq. The question of whether there was a direct link or not is something, to use the expression, on which the jury must be out. I don't assert it to be in the affirmative, I don't acknowledge that it is conclusively not the case, I simply join others in saying that one can't be absolutely certain. But what one can be certain of is that the fact that September 11 was able to occur, the fact that such an audaciously successful attack was able
to be launched on the economic and military citadels of the most powerful country mankind has known, that must transform in the minds of all nations and not only the United States their attitude in the face of a potential threat which is not addressed. That is, in my view, the linkage that exists between the events of a year ago and the challenges that are now faced, not just by the United States, in fact, not primarily by the United States but, indeed, by the United Nations, by all of us.

It is not right, as the British Prime Minister said, that all of the responsibility should be on the United States. It is not right that the United States and her behaviour should be in the dock. I mean, what we have is an indisputable situation of non-compliance, repeated non-compliance over a number of years and against the background of evidence in the public domain of the possession of agents of warfare, both biological and chemical, and also an aspiration to develop a nuclear capacity which could be turned a reality if fissable material were imported from another source, take much longer if they were left to domestic sources. Now, they are the given facts. People can argue about some of the detail but they are given facts, attested to as recently as the report two days ago of the Institute of Strategic Studies in the United Kingdom.

So the world has a collective responsibility in relation to this issue and I've often said over the past few weeks and I'd repeat it here today that if over the course of the weeks ahead Iraq were to comply fully with the United Nations resolution and if there were inspectors allowed in again, under circumstances of where any requests made or instructions given became absolutely enforceable in a completely protected way then that would transform the situation overnight. And I think I would be expressing the collective prayer and hope of people around the world that that is what would happen. And I hope that in whatever way is chosen by the United Nations that is what is expressed or aspired to over the days and the weeks ahead.

That is our position in relation to this very difficult issue. It is not, in my view, an unreasonable position. It's not a belligerent position, it's not a militant position, it is a reasoned position. And I think it is probably the reasoned position of the great majority of people and I’m sure it would be the reasoned position of many nations in the Middle East and many nations that might have some differences with our country on a number of other issues.

There are just two other things that I would like to say before I sit down and take your questions and that is that I mentioned briefly my remarks about the Australian Defence Force. I do want to take this very public opportunity of thanking the men and women in the leadership of the Australian Defence Force for the role they have played over the last year as part of the Coalition Against Terrorism and the contribution that's been made. The leadership initially of Admiral Barrie, the then Chief of the Defence Force, and with him the now Chief, General Cosgrove and all of the other men and women of the Australian Defence Force, they have as always impressively and courageously represented this nation's interests. And they've gone abroad, as all Australian forces desirably go abroad, not in the name of the Government but in the name of the nation and the nation thanks him for that contribution.

Now, I also want to thank the many other people within the broad national security network of Australia for what they have done. The Australian Federal Police, the intelligence services, people working in the Protective Services and all the other Federal Government agencies, because a lot of things have changed over the last year. We do have to go through a lot more procedures, we do have to go through a lot more checks and it's likely to be that for a long time into the future. We have, of necessity, tightened our security laws. I believe through the great parliamentary processes that this country has I believe that we have got the balance right. There's argument at the margins. Nobody wants to take away people's civil
liberties but, equally, when you live in a world that has changed and has been rendered permanently more vulnerable as a result of what occurred last year you do have to make changes. And for all of those who have cooperated in that I want to thank you.

And very finally, ladies and gentlemen, this is a day of sadness for many tens of thousands of people around the world, it's a day of sadness for the many hundreds of relatives and close friends of the 10 Australians who lost their lives and we have the opportunity, in a very moving way, at St Christopher's this morning hearing from a representative of them. But it's also a day, amidst all of the sadness, where the great capacity of the human spirit to recover and to soar above adversity is apparent. There's a lot of sadness and heartache and a lot of tears in the recollection but there's also a million stories of great inspiration. The Ambassador mentioned some of them this morning. One that always stuck in my mind and I'll always remember was the story of Father Michael, the Chaplain of the New York Fire Department, who went back into building to administer the last rights of the Catholic Church to a number of dying firemen only to lose his own life. And we all react in different ways to these things and different stories have different impressions on different people. That's one that stuck with me. It seemed to symbolise the unity of service and faith which are so very important ingredients of a decent society.

Thank you.
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

JOURNALIST:
Prime Minister, you've said that the jury's out on the link between Saddam Hussein and terrorism. Do you think Saddam Hussein is evil, say in the way that Adolf Hitler was evil or Pol Pot?

PRIME MINISTER:
Well, I'm not very impressed with any of them. As to how you sort of grade them, I mean, look, you are dealing with somebody who used poison gas against his own people. You are dealing with somebody who runs on all of my understanding and enormously repressive regime and you are dealing with somebody who was involved in a war that cost the lives of a million people. I could go on. I mean, I don't think anybody is arguing that it's not an evil regime. How you compare it with other regimes, look, I'm just not going to get into that sort of game, I don't think it's particularly productive and, you know, you can perhaps write a PhD thesis on it at some stage in a different set of circumstances. But the point that I was making is that the real link, the real significant is that September 11 exposed the vulnerability that none of us previously thought might exist, or very few did. And I think you have to understand the sense of vulnerability, particularly the American people feel but it ought not only to be Americans that if it's possible for the group that perpetrated that attack to achieve with such audacious success such a devastating attack, in that set of circumstances then clearly there's a capacity for others to do likewise and that has implications for the way in which the world deals with people who might have both the capacity and the motive to do it in the future. That really is the link that, I think, truly exists.

JOURNALIST:
You've said in the past that conflict or military intervention in Iraq is probable. Is that still your view, have you upgraded it to inevitable? And while you say you wish to avoid conflict at all costs, what positive steps are you and President Bush taking to avoid military conflict with Iraq?

PRIME MINISTER:
Well, we are taking action in a number of ways. We are taking action to encourage the United Nations to assume its responsibilities to enforce the resolutions already passed in relation to Iraq. And this is a view that I instructed our Ambassador in Washington to put to the administration before I spoke to President Bush last Saturday morning. In fact I had Michael Thawley speak to both the Deputy Secretary of State Rich Armitage, and Hadley the Deputy at the National Security Council, late last week to convey the view that we believed the United Nations should be involved and we have also offered in relation to any United Nations actions sought by the United States to advocate with countries that may perhaps, for whatever combination of reasons be reluctant to do so, to support the role of the United Nations. I think that is a very significant contribution. I mean if, I can only repeat Dennis that if Iraq were to comply in the circumstances that I outlined, I don't think there would be many people around the world who would not see that as being a transformation of the situation overnight. I mean, it strikes me as strange to the point of perversity that the focus should be upon the motives and the conduct of the United States and not upon the motive and the conduct of Iraq and the responsibilities of the United Nations in relation to that.
JOURNALIST:

Some analysts have observed that a war in Iraq might stoke more Arab discontent and therefore terrorism. What do you say in to those in the Arab world who have been saying that Israel has, they've been UN resolutions against Israel that have been ignored for decades, why go after Iraq but not Israel?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, you're not dealing with a similar situation. I mean, Israel for all that many people will criticise it, like any other nation it is not beyond approach. Israel is the one full, truly functioning democracy in the Middle East. The rule of law even in the height of the most difficult situations between the Palestinians and the Israeli's, the rule of law still prevails there. I'm not aware that Israel has a stockpile and used chemical agents. I don't think the sort of things of which Saddam Hussein has been guilty can be said in relation to Israel. I think it's also fair to say that it has been the policy of the Australian Government and I'm very pleased that there's been a more open expression of it from the United States in recent months. That the long-term solution in the Middle East is a home and a state for the Palestinians, as well as the protection of the right of Israel to exist behind secure and internationally recognised boundaries.

JOURNALIST:

Look, despite the importance of the war against terrorism and the need to bring Iraq into compliance with UN resolutions, Australia's primary interest, the strategic area of interest remains the so-called arc of instability South East Asia round to the South West Pacific. Are you concerned that the strong political support we are giving to the United States in this, could complicate relations with in Indonesia in its present situation? And are you confident that Australia has the resources to actually meet any crisis in the region, as well as to make a contribution to a probable war in the Middle East?

PRIME MINISTER:

Geoffrey, I agree with you that the arc of instability, the potential pressures immediately in our region are our first area of responsibility. And let me make it clear that any commitment we might hypothetically - I'll say that again – hypothetically, make in relation to activities a fair way from our shores, would pay regard to our continuing capacity to deal with any situations that might emerge. In other words, we're not going to overstretch ourselves or our military resources. If we were asked to make those contributions, either in the context of Iraq or indeed something similar. We're not going to do that - and I've made that clear before and I'll make it clear again. As for our support for the United States, my experience has been as Prime Minister that if one explains and articulates the reasons for taking a particular stance and if proper regard is played for the national interest on other nations, when their vital interest are involved it doesn't automatically flow that, if I could put it in this abstract way, nation C that is not necessarily as close to nation B as nation A, being Australia, is not automatically offended if you strongly express and articulate that close relationship. I don't think the world is quite as simplistic as that. I think it's a lot more subtle and a lot more sophisticated. We as a Government have worked very hard on our relations with countries to our immediate north and further within the Asian Pacific region. We've had some very impressive demonstrations in the last few months of the capacity of this country to deal, in a very constructive way, with major nations in the region. The relationship we have with Indonesia is very important. We both share a concern about terrorism and the MOU on
intelligence sharing that we signed when I was in Jakarta in January, is an illustration of that. And indeed in a number of areas, the campaign against terrorism has contributed to our two countries getting closer together. It's not been the only reason, but it has certainly not been something that has held it back.

**JOURNALIST:**

You painted for us today a vivid picture of flying back from Washington to, I think, Honolulu. When you first embraced the idea with the Foreign Minister of invoking the ANZUS Treaty, of course this underpins Australia's significant strategic alliances, but it's a far from perfect treaty. One of the partners, New Zealand, their Prime Minister said last year they were no longer in it. So the very least, our strategic devices which have taken us to Afghanistan and possibly further, seem somewhat imperfect. And I wonder if you think in a post-September 11 world, you think there's time for Australia to look at a new strategic alliance?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

With the United States?

**JOURNALIST:**

Yes.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Look, I as you know in other contexts, I'm a Burkean conservative and I don't believe in abandoning something that continues to work unless I'm convinced that it's no longer of value. The modern manifestation of the ANZUS alliance bilaterally is of course, we now call, when we have discussions between our Defence and Foreign Ministers and the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defence, we call them the Ausmin talks. Look, there is a different view taken of the relationship by New Zealand. I might quickly interpolate that has not in any way affected the closeness of the relationship between Australia and New Zealand. May I say that I've worked very hard with three New Zealand Prime Ministers I've dealt with and certainly very much with the current one, with whom I have a very good and very close constructive working relationship to keep our two countries that are so historically linked very much together. I don't see and need to alter the formal architecture of it. I think it works albeit in a different form, but it works very effectively, as between Australia and the United States. New Zealand has a, by her choice, a more passive role but that's a matter for New Zealand and the United States. I've not been in the habit in the last six of and a half years of giving public advice to the New Zealand Government and I don't intend to do so today.

**JOURNALIST:**

Prime Minister, your Defence Minister Robert Hill yesterday spoke a little bit about the changing nature of the conflict in Afghanistan with the current war on terror. Is the Government, I was just wondering is the Government thinking or has it been looking at planning ahead for any change in our commitment in Afghanistan?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Any change in our deployment?
JOURNALIST:

Our deployment – bringing home the SAS for example and replacing them with more conventional troops. And are you optimistic or is there any hope for optimism at this stage of an end to what is happening in Afghanistan?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I think broadly the campaign in Afghanistan has gone very well. And a lot has been achieved, an enormous amount has been achieved. The Taliban regime after all has been removed and 1.6 million refugees who were in Pakistan - I think 1.6 is the figure - have gone back to Afghanistan. So that’s a very considerable achievement. Like everybody else, I was disturbed at the bomb attack last week and the attempted assassination of the President. There are some disturbing signs about a possible push back by the Taliban. I wouldn’t want to put it any more strongly than that. In a situation like this, you always keep talking at the appropriate level regarding a military commitment. You owe it to the men and the soldiers involved, you owe it to them to keep the thing under constant review and we’ll always take decisions that protect to the maximum degree their security and their safety. We don’t have any plan to make any change at present. They’re there to do a job. If that changes, then we’ll obviously inform the Australian public in the appropriate way. But we don’t have any plan at present to change. They’ve done an outstanding job and I know their contribution is greatly valued.

JOURNALIST:

The events of September the 11th had an impact on the US economy which in turn had a domino effect on other economies around the world, including Australia. The Treasurer last week highlighted the global slow down as the main risk to the Australian economy, coupled with the severe drought now in parts of Australia, and new figures yesterday show the further down grade for this year’s winter crop. With these risk factors in mind, what is your assessment now for the outlook for the US economy and for Australia for the second year after September the 11th?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well it is true that the downturn last year as a result of September 11 did have an effect around the world. It actually didn’t have as big an effect on Australia as it did on most other countries. I think the outlook for the American economy is mixed. My experience when I was in New York at the beginning of the year was that the economists and the financial community were a lot more optimistic than the businessmen. But that’s often the case. Although sometimes it’s the other way around – the businessmen are more optimistic than the economists and the financial community. I suppose it depends what stage of the business cycle you are at. There’s obviously some hesitancy in the American economy and the big question is whether the decline in the stockmarket, which has been far more marked than it has been in Australia, because we didn’t go up as high, and that old adage about what goes up must come down didn’t affect as badly as it did in the United States. And if that decline has a prolonged impact on middle America’s spending capacity, then you will then start to see some effects. So I’d have to say it is a question mark. I’d agree with the Treasurer’s assessment. The drought is a problem. Of course we have some other things going in our favour. We have some – and you’ve heard me talk about them before but that won’t stop me mentioning them again – you’ve got some very strong fundamentals. You don’t have the low dollar but you do have a super competitive exchange rate and all of that reform over a long period of time has made a very significant contribution. And we’re better fitted to deal with
the problem than many others but Peter’s right in sort of drawing attention to those two things.

JOURNALIST:

A question about propaganda. Saddam Hussein has shown himself to be an effective user of weapons of mass communication. Over the last few days we have seen an American former United Nations weapons inspector prominently escorting international media to sights to, in his words, prove that they’re not what the United States and other enemies of Iraq assert them to be. How should ordinary Australians interpret this material that we’re seeing each night, and does it not put more pressure on you and your Government to make available any reliable information you haven’t yet made available to the Australian people?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well the answer Greg to that is that we live in a very open, robust democracy, and long may it remain so. And the media and everybody else makes their contribution to that and they choose to run certain stories and not run others. We have an obligation, and I’ve acknowledged this before, we have an obligation to explain and defend everything we do. I mean Government’s are accountable. Everybody is accountable in the modern world, even more so than they were in earlier times, and I’m no exception to that and I accept the responsibility of explaining myself and putting my case. I take the opportunity in the context of that of saying or asking rhetorically if indeed there is nothing to hide in Iraq, why can’t the inspectors go in in an unhindered fashion? And why can’t in an unconditional way any instructions of the United Nations be carried out? I think that is a question that Australians listening to this broadcast would probably want to ask. Most of them nod their heads about it because in the end, you know when you’ve got claim and counterclaim, when you’re saying your hands are clean and you’ve got nothing to hide, why don’t you demonstrate it?

JOURNALIST:

A little over 12 months ago you made some comments which caused some questions to be asked about your future tenure as Prime Minister. They must seem like not 12 months but a light year away at least given recent developments.

PRIME MINISTER:

It was actually two years ago.

JOURNALIST:

And revisit it every 12 months.

PRIME MINISTER:

You do.

JOURNALIST:

Are you now more inclined to stick around given the growing international uncertainty?

PRIME MINISTER:
I always think that TV journalists learn a lot when they look at the interviews conducted by other TV journalists, and if I could refer you to an interview I did with Kerry O’Brien on the 7.30 Report a few months ago, in other words I don’t have anything to add to what I’ve previously said on that subject.

JOURNALIST:

Just sort of on your Prime Ministership, between Vietnam and you winning Government in 96 we only had one real major commitment overseas and that was in the Gulf War of our troops. Since you’ve been in power we’ve had two – Timor and Afghanistan. And here you are today sort of talking about the possibility of a third. Do you think your legacy will be a military one as much as anything else?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I don’t believe so. But you can’t start talking about legacies until you reach the point of saying you’ve got one. What else can I say? But look, no – if you ask me what things am I most proud of that my Government has done over the last six and a half years, I would unhesitatingly say one of them was the intervention in East Timor. I think that was enormously to the credit of this country. We stood up for the right thing and it was difficult. It’s now history. It’s now behind us. We are very importantly, we’re building our relationship and we’re well along the road to doing it with Indonesia. I’m very proud of what we did in relation to gun control. And I think the evident strength of the Australian economy in the face of an Asian economic downturn and the downturn last year, and the strength of that economy, all of those things are things if you ask me right now, sort of on work in progress basis, what I thought were the great achievements for the Government so far – I’d say those three things in particular.

JOURNALIST:

Last night Henry Kissinger told the ABC that he thought that what Colin Powell meant by UN involvement in Iraq, he meant the return of weapons inspectors after Saddam Hussein had been removed. I don’t know whether that is your understanding of the role of the UN, but is that your understanding? And secondly, would Australia support an attack on Iraq if Russia and China abstained from the resolution in the Security Council?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well look I’m not going to start hypothesising on such a very, very important, sensitive issue. I’m not going to answer the last part of that question other than to say I’m not going to hypothesise. There is no proposition in front of the Australian Government about an attack on Iraq. I hope that doesn’t come because I would like to see this issue resolved in another way. So I’m not even going to hypothesise on that, lest people think I’m predisposed, which I’m not, to a particular set of circumstances. I’m not going to try and define exactly what the future involvement of the United Nations may be, beyond saying that it would be to transform the whole issue completely if everything the United Nations had requested in the past were in fact done. And that would be a very good start. But I think you have to in relation to future United Nations action and involvement maintain a degree of flexibility. When I spoke to President Bush last Saturday morning, I don’t think he had precisely made up his own mind as to exactly what the United States was going to put to the United Nations, and I could understand that. I mean it’s something of a… you’re dealing with the UN and different
nuances in different resolutions, it is something of a movable feast. And it’s a bit early to be sort of committing yourself to an exact formulation of words and I’m certainly not in the business of answering the other hypothetical question.

JOURNALIST:

You said just a few minutes ago that one of the consequences of the atrocity 12 months ago was that people have changed, there was a better understanding of different cultures and religion and less of a tendency to scapegoat other groups for apparent offences. Are you convinced that that lesson has permeated all sectors of the Australian community? The Government has consistently said to effect that just because someone's a Muslim doesn't mean they were cheering on the planes on New York 12 months ago but is there more you could do to spread the message that there are Islamic extremists and then there are other followers of Islam.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, I think you perhaps summarised my remarks in a slightly firmer form than I'd given them. I’m not saying that there's others and, you know, benign accident, I’m not suggesting you did it deliberately. But look, I said I thought there was some greater inquiry about different religions and different cultures. I don't think people are necessarily more…dramatically more informed, I think there's just been a greater effort by some people to get a little bit of an understanding and to see common good in all of the world's great religions, whatever your own individual religious face may be. Look, there's intolerance in Australian society from some people but I think overwhelmingly we have been a very tolerant people and I think we have been remarkably receptive. And there have been some recent surveys that indicate that. And we...we have to understand that when you bring people from all around the world you can only build a united society around a set of common values. And my view has always been that when people come to this country, no matter what their origins, they should seek to become what I call in plain, unmistakable terms, I think they should seek to become Australians no matter where they come from. And that means adhering to a common set of values but it doesn't mean you abandon the special place in your heart for your homeland or that you abandon particular customs and cultures that are important to that connection with your homeland. Now, there is a happy medium in all of this.

I mean, there are some common, accepted Australian attitudes and values. They clearly include free and open expression, they include a respect for the equal roles of men and women in our community, they include a respect for our democratic institutions, they include freedom of religion, they must include a proper embrace and usage of the English language without, of course, in any way [inaudible] the right of people to use other language as well if that is their wish. But all of these things I think are commonly understood and accepted. And can I say I think we have done this very well. I mean, we get so critical of ourselves, some people do. I mean, when you think of how this country is now composed to what it was 50 years ago - I mean, it hasn’t changed perhaps as much as many people think it is, it depends on what part of Australia you live - but we have been incredibly successful and I think we should be a little more confident in expressing that than sometimes we are. And do you think of how, of what we've gone through? Phil Coorey asked me a moment ago of things that have happened over the last few years. We have gone through, in the last 10 years, we've gone through - or 15 years or more - the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia and I would think on a rough calculation we would have between, what, 6, 700,000 people owing their origins to the former Yugoslavia, the Serbians, Croatian, Slovenian, Albanian, so it goes on, maybe, 6 or 700,000, maybe it's only 500 but it's a lot.
Now, by and large, that disintegration occurred with all the tension that that involved and all of the tragedy and the ethnic cleansing and everything that occurred in other parts of the world with remarkably little resonance in this country in terms of open conflict. And the same thing with a very difficult situation in the Middle East. I think we're handling that well. I mean, people feel [inaudible] about it but in the end what gets to them is that they're Australians more than anything else and that is how it should be. I don't want them to be indifferent. I mean, if I were an Australian of Croatian descent and I had some relatives living still in Zagreb and I know a bloke in this very situation, I'd worry about what was happening. I'd be interested in it but in the end when it came to me relating to Australians of other ethnicities and descents what would matter most to me was that we were Australians together and I think, by and large, we have done that, we've done that to a remarkable degree. I think we fret about this too much. I think we navel gaze too much about this. I think we've just done it better than most and we ought to be pleased about that and we ought to just get on with being Australians and continuing to accept in a proper basis of integrity for our immigration programme, continue to accept people from all around the world. I mean, I was very happy to say when I was travelling around Europe, as you would have heard me on a number of occasions, and I surprise many of my European hosts by reminding them that the language most widely spoken in Sydney, the biggest city in Australia now for English, is the dialect of Chinese. And there were very few of my European hosts who sort of thought that was possible. But the fact that they didn't is a sign, isn't that we've done it pretty well. I just think we ought to relax and realise we have done it well.

JOURNALIST:

[inaudible] arrangement or understanding prior to the election that the appointment might be made?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well it was a proper appointment and he’s a very good appointment. And I know it has been criticised by the Courier Mail and by some others and I accept that criticism. There’s always criticism of the appointment of people who have had a political background – not always, but in many cases. I made it very clear before the 1996 election that I would reserve the right for the Government to make some appointments out of political ranks and I think the ones that we have done over the last six and a half years, like Andrew Peacock and David Connolly and John Spender have all been very good appointments, as indeed were appointments of the former Government such as Doug McClelland as the High Commissioner to London. They’ve been very, very good appointments. But as to the exact circumstances of it, I mean I’ve got to tell you Dennis that in the lead up to the last election who was going to be Australia’s Ambassador - no disrespect to the wonderful Irish or to His Holiness - who was going to be the Ambassador in Dublin or the Holy See was not my major preoccupation. I see Lynton Crosby out of my mind’s eye. I don’t think I can remember talking about it to Lynton Crosby. Look we went into that election not knowing what was going to happen and I don’t think anybody going into that election had any firm understanding about diplomatic appointments.

JOURNALIST:

You’ve said a couple of times today that if Iraq were to comply fully with the UN resolutions, then that would transform the situation entirely and completely. George Bush and Tony Blair as recently as the weekend were still talking regime change. In your mind, in your view, what
is the priority and the top agenda here? Is it unfettered access for weapons inspectors or is it regime change?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well I think the… it’s not a situation where I want to get into saying which is the more – different people are going to have different views about what is more important. Speaking theoretically if you had a regime change you would probably get a different approach in relation to the United Nations, but let me phrase it this way – if there were a sudden, dramatic transformation and a new approach, a new dawn in relation to weapons inspections, the dismantling of all the weapons and so forth, I think regime change might not be seen as quite as important. But from our point of view, we want the potential threat posed removed. And one way of removing it is to allow the inspectors in. I hope that happens, but it’s not just allowing inspectors in. They’ve got to come in in circumstances where they have unhindered access. I would even offer the view they have protected access and that any instructions given to remove and destroy and so forth are carried out, and there is supervision of that process by another body perhaps. I mean these are possible ways of handling it. I don’t want to get too prescriptive, somebody to write down and say that’s the precise new articulation, but I’m trying to answer your question as best I can. Look I think everybody would like to see the regime change in Iraq. I think a lot of Iraqis would like to see the regime change – a lot, perhaps even a majority. The threat posed by the agents of war, the chemical and biological and so forth, is the major concern but in a sense it’s a different side to the one problem.

**JOURNALIST:**

You spoke again today about the close and special relationship that Australians have with the United States, and I just want to draw your attention to some comments today by the Australian Institute of International Affairs which described the September 11 attacks as moral anathema, that said that we do need to understand why the United States is so hated that young men will commit such acts against the symbols of American power. I just wanted to ask you what your response to those comments are, and whether or not you’ve asked yourself the same question?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well clearly if you believe in blind terror and indiscriminate killing as an agent of human behaviour and human activity it is, and I’m no psychologist, it is more probable than not that you will seek to do it against the most powerful and the most high profile nation in the world. I mean one way of looking at America’s dilemma is to say yes, they have the… I mean to be an American is… to be the most powerful country in the world is an enormous advantage, but it also makes you an object. I mean bear in the mind that the backgrounds of many of the people who were involved in these terror attacks, as I have been told and read and we’ve all read, did not necessarily come out of a particular dispute in the Middle East. I mean people have sought to draw a connection between the conflict between the Palestinians and Israel and I mean let me say, I continue to argue very strongly for a settlement of that and I regard it as one of the great tragedies of the last ten years that Arafat did not have the courage in the end to embrace what Barak offered him. But I also believe very strongly that Palestinians are entitled to a homeland and they have as much right to have a homeland as do the Israelis.

But part of the reason why America was attacked is because of who she is, because she is the strongest. That does not necessarily indicate moral turpitude or any kind of moral justification
for it. America is not flawless. I mean it’s a deeply flawed society in many ways. All of our societies have deep flaws. There are many aspects of American life, particularly in the area of social security benefits, that I don’t agree with. I think the safety nets we have in this country are better. There are American characteristics that I don’t relate to as readily as others, but I mean we’re all different and I hope we remain different. I’d hate to live in a world where all our national differences were blanded out in some kind of grey blancmange where all of our differences had been removed. So I think you have to bear that in mind. When you are the biggest kid on the block, people are always more prone to have a go at you. That is a simplistic way of putting it but I think there is a lot of truth in that and I don’t think that of itself connotes moral failure or turpitude on the part of the United States.

Can I also just finally remind you this is the great dilemma all free societies have, is the eternal struggle between allowing people the freedom that we believe we should have to move and speak and do things in an open democratic society, but the inevitable risks that that exposes you to. I mean that is a dilemma that this country faces. I mean we always come out, and properly so, in favour of keeping a society – I mean that’s why we say the attack a year ago, was on our values and one of those values is to have these kinds of exchanges for people to then go away and rubbish absolutely everything I’ve said and so forth. But that’s what society is all about. But I do think you should allow for the fact that when you are the most powerful country in the world, therefore you are going to be an object of violence. It’s not necessarily because of your moral failure.

[ends]