



PRIME MINISTER  
CANBERRA

Mr William Kamm  
161B Koloona Drive  
CAMBEWARRA NSW 2540

10 April 2003

Dear Mr Kamm

Thank you for your recent correspondence concerning Iraq.

The government has decided to commit Australian forces to action to disarm Iraq because we believe it is right, lawful and in Australia's interest.

Iraq, under the regime of Saddam Hussein, has a history of aggression and has not shied from using weapons of mass destruction on its neighbours and even its own people. If Iraq is permitted to keep these weapons not only might it use them again but other rogue states will feel empowered to develop similar arsenals, knowing that the world will do nothing to stop them. The more countries that have chemical, biological or nuclear weapons, the greater the likelihood that these weapons will fall into the hands of terrorists.

Iraq, like many rogue states, has long supported international terrorism. And we know as a matter of undeniable fact that terrorist groups want weapons of mass destruction. They desire them because of their potency and the fear they engender. With such weapons at their disposal, terrorists could target entire cities or regions. Their victims would not number in the hundreds or the thousands but potentially millions.

Terrorist groups have already demonstrated their contempt for our way of life. It is our western culture and values, our democratic philosophies and institutions, which they oppose. International terrorism knows no borders. Australia and Australians anywhere in the world are as much targets as any other western country and its people. The attacks of the 11<sup>th</sup> of September and in Bali demonstrate that international terrorists have no regard for human life no matter what the nationality of their victims may be.

The possession of chemical, biological or even worse, nuclear weapons by a terrorist network would be a direct, undeniable and lethal threat to Australia and its people. That is the reason above all others why the government strongly believes that action must be taken to disarm Iraq. Not only will it neutralise the threat Saddam Hussein's regime poses to the region, but it will also send a clear signal to other rogue states and terrorist groups, like Al Qaeda, that the world is prepared to take a stand.

I want to assure you that the action we are taking with the coalition to disarm Iraq is fully legal under international law. The legal authority to use military force to disarm Iraq is contained, and confirmed, in successive Security Council resolutions. The cease-fire that ended the 1991 Gulf War was conditional on Iraq destroying its chemical and biological weapons, and foregoing its nuclear aspirations. Iraq was prohibited from possessing or developing these weapons. Iraq has not honoured the cease-fire commitments, despite repeated opportunities to do so. As a result the authority to take military action under those earlier resolutions has revived.

Despite the best efforts of the coalition, casualties among both combatants and civilians are, tragically, the unavoidable consequence of confronting the Iraqi regime. Our quarrel is with that regime and not with the Iraqi people, who have suffered intolerable oppression and deprivation under Saddam Hussein's rule. Once the conflict has ended, we will do all that we can to ensure that Iraq is able to establish a government that has the support, and reflects the will, of its people. This is the only way to ensure that the wealth generated from Iraq's oil reserves is directed to achieving their wellbeing and prosperity.

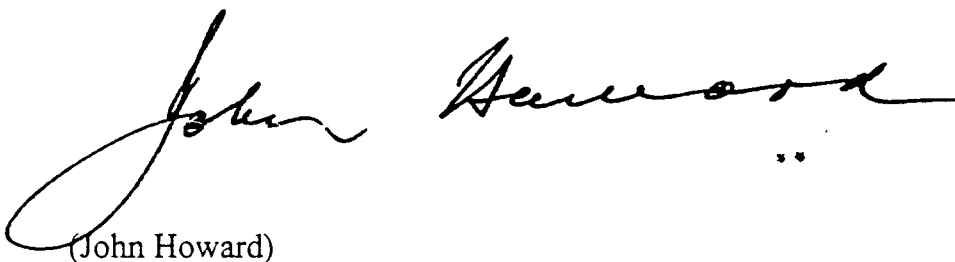
Australia is contributing to humanitarian relief operations and providing support to refugee communities in the region. We have provided urgent food aid and will continue to provide humanitarian assistance and expertise as part of international programmes to support the reconstruction effort. Success in these endeavours will reduce the factors that have caused so many Iraqis to flee their homeland in recent years. Since 1991, Australia has welcomed over 49,000 Iraqis under our humanitarian programme and stands ready to participate in any future international effort to address refugee flows that might arise from the conflict in Iraq.

The government understands that many in the community hold strong views on this matter. We understand your concern and respect your opinions.

That said, I urge all Australians, whatever their views, to support the courageous men and women of our defence force who are currently serving in the Gulf and continue to direct any protest and criticism to the government.

Thank you again for writing to me about this important issue.

Yours sincerely



(John Howard)