Beat: Travel

TRANSCRIPT -- Australian Prime Minister Abbott addresses hostage crisis

-, 15.12.2014, 03:44 Time

USPA News - Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott addressed the media Monday on the hostage crisis in Sydney, saying the motivation of the perpetrator was not yet clear but could be politically-motivated. A full transcript of his press conference is below. -- START -- I just want to make a short statement on the hostage incident in Martin Place in Sydney. New South Wales police are responding, they are being strongly supported by Commonwealth agencies.

We don`t yet know the motivation of the perpetrator, we don`t know whether this is politically motivated, although obviously there are some indications that it could be. We have to appreciate that even in a society such as ours, there are people who would wish to do us harm, that`s why we have police and security organizations of the utmost professionalism that are ready and able to respond to a whole range of situations and contingencies, including this situation that we are now seeing in Sydney. The whole point of politically-motivated violence is to scare people out of being themselves. Australia is a peaceful, open, and generous society. Nothing should ever change that and that`s why I would urge all Australians today to go about their business as usual. Of course, if anyone does have any suspicions of untoward activity, there is the national security hotline, 1800 123 400, which I would urge them to call. I can let you know that the national security committee of the Cabinet has been briefed on this incident. I`ve been in regular contact with Premier Baird over the course of the last couple of hours. I`ve been briefed by Commissioner Scipione of the New South Wales police and by Commissioner Colvin of the Australian Federal Police. This is an unfolding situation and, as the situation unfolds, there will be operational updates provided by the New South Wales police. I want to assure people that the ordinary business of government must go on, and it will go on, and that`s why Treasurer Hockey and Finance Minister Cormann will shortly be releasing the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook as planned. Finally: This is a very disturbing incident. I can understand the concerns and anxieties of the Australian people at a time like this, but our thoughts and prayers must, above all, go out to the individuals who are caught up in this. I can think of almost nothing more distressing, more terrifying, than to be caught up in such a situation and our hearts go out to these people. I`m going to leave it to the New South Wales police who are in operational charge of this incident, to provide those kinds of details. Obviously, in a situation like this, all sorts of reports fly around, all sorts of claims are made, so I do urge everyone to exercise caution in their reporting, but I will leave all of the operational details to the New South Wales police, who as I understand it will begin providing operational updates shortly. -- END --

Article online:
https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-3105/transcript--australian-prime-minister-abbott-addresses-hostage-crisis.html

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Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619