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Office of the Prime Minister

STATEMENT BY THE GOVERNMENT OF BELIZE ON THE WAR IN IRAQ

Belmopan - 20 March, 2003.

The Government of Belize deeply regrets the failure of diplomacy and the resort to military force to deal with the Iraqi crisis.

The global effects of this war are as yet uncertain, but it could have a serious effect on all our economies.

We are deeply concerned about the impact in Belize on the supply and cost of food, energy and other essential inputs for the functioning of our productive sector and our daily consumer activities. There can also be a serious fallout for the travel and tourism industries.

The uncertainty surrounding the duration and severity of the war can severely erode confidence in our economy.

In addition to the impact of the war on the economy, there could well be serious heightened security concerns for the Belizean people.

The Prime Minister has summoned a special meeting of the National Security Council to assess the situation and advise on necessary measures to safeguard the interests of Belize and Belizeans.

Steps have been taken to tighten the protection of foreign embassies stationed in Belize and to strengthen security at our country's ports of entry as fears grow of possible terrorist retaliations.

The Prime Minister calls on all Belizeans to remain calm, but alert to the developments. He asks for the cooperation of suppliers and the general public to take steps to preserve and conserve supplies of food and oil and to support the collective effort to address the situation over which we have so little control.

Office of the Prime Minister

March 20, 2003.