ANDREW MARR:
By my calculation, with just over 200 days till his own date with destiny at the next General Election, I’m joined now by the Prime Minister David Cameron. Thank you for joining us, Prime Minister.

DAVID CAMERON:
Good morning.

ANDREW MARR:
The big story of the morning really is still Iraq. General Richards, like many people in that very interesting House of Commons debate this week, have picked up on the fact that you can’t defeat ISIL (or whatever we call them) without pushing into Syria. It can’t just be done in Iraq alone. That’s true, isn’t it?

DAVID CAMERON:
That is true and we’re not trying to defeat ISIL from the air alone. We believe you do need troops on the ground, but they should be Iraqi troops, they should be Kurdish troops. We are part of a large international coalition to degrade and ultimately destroy this organisation, but it can’t be done unless the countries where this organisation has
grown up play their part in destroying it.

ANDREW MARR:
You told the House of Commons interestingly two things: you said that you wouldn’t go into Syria, we wouldn’t attack in Syria without another motion, without returning to the Commons; but you also said that you reserved the right to order attacks if there were some terrible humanitarian disaster that needed to be dealt with very quickly. Now if ISIL are pushed into Syria, we could very quickly see a humanitarian crisis there, so is it the case that you could order the RAF as part of the coalition into Syria without another vote?

DAVID CAMERON:
Well the point I was making didn’t just apply to Iraq or Syria. Frankly it applied to anywhere in the world. If as prime minister I feel there is a humanitarian disaster about to happen that Britain either alone or with partners could do something to avert, then it would be right to order that before going to the House of Commons because there wouldn’t be time. Likewise if there’s some unique British interest, some hostage situation, some unique British interest where you had to order action very quickly, I would always be prepared to do that first and explain to the House of Commons afterwards. I was trying to say to the House of Commons it’s important that this convention that’s grown up of a vote before premeditated action, I believe that’s right, but that doesn’t mean a government shouldn’t act if there’s something it needs to act urgently over.

ANDREW MARR:
So we could go into Syria without another vote?

DAVID CAMERON:
I think I’ve answered. I’m not … But I think what people are worried about …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) With respect you haven’t because you’ve said a big crisis might emerge, this could happen tomorrow or next week in Syria as part of … a result of what’s going on now in Iraq.
DAVID CAMERON:
(over) To be clear … I’m not trying to dodge your question. To be clear, if something happened in Syria, anywhere in the world that there was a need for urgent action to prevent a humanitarian crisis or to protect a unique British interest, I would be prepared to take action and explain afterwards. I said that in the House of Commons. Happy to say that again here this morning.

ANDREW MARR:
Okay now one of the other things that was talked about, again in the General Richards interview but again in the House of Commons as well by people like George Galloway, is that ISIL are not like an army. They don’t have barracks, they don’t have columns of tanks you can hit from the air. They sit inside the population; they hide themselves where civilians are quite deliberately. And that, therefore, an air campaign is bound to kill lots of civilians by accident without necessarily degrading ISIL as much as you hope.

DAVID CAMERON:
Well I don’t accept that because there are occasions, indeed there have been occasions when ISIL are out in the open threatening Christian communities, Yazidi communities, other Muslim communities, and they can be struck and stopped, and that’s exactly what’s happened you know close to where the Kurdish lines are and elsewhere. But if what you’re saying is we need, if you like, an uprising of the Sunni tribes rejecting these extremists and saying we want to be part of a democratic, pluralistic Iraq, yes of course we do need that. And that’s why you know our strategy here is not some simplistic you know drop a bomb from 40,000 feet and think you can solve the problem. It isn’t. This is one part of a comprehensive strategy to build an Iraq that has a democratic inclusive government for everyone and in time Syria needs exactly the same thing.

ANDREW MARR:
Let’s return to the question of boots on the ground.

DAVID CAMERON:
Yeah.
ANDREW MARR:
There are three possible armies involved on the ground. There’s the Peshmerga who are defending their own territory in Kurdistan; there’s the Iraqi Army who have been frankly pretty useless so far and have run away most of the time; and there’s the Free Syrian Army which, as George Galloway said, barely exists. So who are these boots going to be?

DAVID CAMERON:
Well in both cases, in Iraq and in Syria, we need to build up the forces that are moderate, democratic and pluralistic. In Iraq what we need is an Iraqi government and Iraqi armed forces that represent the whole country – Sunni, Shia and Kurd. In Syria what we need is we do back the Free Syrian Army and the Syrian National Opposition because they are the legitimate forces in Syria, but it’s going to take time in Syria for them to be built up as a counterpoint to the regime. What’s required in Syria, sometimes … (Marr tries to interject) Ian Birrell was saying earlier that the government’s policy is somehow contradictory. It isn’t. The same thing in Syria is needed as in Iraq, which is a government that can represent all of the people. So you need a transition in Syria from the brutal dictator Assad whose action has helped to build up ISIL, and you need to replace that with a government that can represent all of its people.

ANDREW MARR:
Absolutely, but you also need an army in Syria which can defeat ISIL, and the army in Syria that can defeat ISIL, the only organised army really left standing is Assad’s army. Are we now on the point of having to do a deal with the devil, as it were, to get rid of something worse?

DAVID CAMERON:
No we’re not because Assad is part of the problem, not part of the solution. His brutality against his own people is one of the things that has been a massive recruiting sergeant for ISIL, so what we need in Syria is to build up the legitimate opposition, to go on with the diplomatic efforts alongside that, to have a transition in Syria from Assad to a new government that can represent the whole people. Of course that has to
include Alawites, even prominent Alawites, so that Alawite and Sunni, Christian and other minorities in Syria can all feel they are part of the government. I thought when … You know Ban Ki-moon used this phrase of look “a missile can kill a terrorist, but it is good governance that will kill terrorism”. That is our policy.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Quite right. Okay now again in the House of Commons you were asked about British boots on the ground and you said look if a helicopter lands and needs to be refuelled, there’ll be British people refuelling that helicopter. What about the Iraqi government and the Iraqi army? We’re giving them lots of new kit. Don’t we have to give them advisers and help in how to use that? Won’t there be logistic aspects of that as well? Aren’t there British boots on the ground even if inside the boots there aren’t actually combat troops?

**DAVID CAMERON:**
Well they’re already … I mean we already have, whether it is in Baghdad or whether it is in the Kurdish regional authority, we have people there who are helping and advising and assisting - not in huge numbers - but if we’re trying to build up these forces, then yes of course we have to help them. The expression I use very clearly is what we’re not having is some British invading army of combat troops on the ground. I think that’s very important …

**ANDREW MARR:**
*(over)* We could have, for instance, special forces trying to get hostages out of terrible situations?

**DAVID CAMERON:**
Well we never talk about …

**ANDREW MARR:**
I know you don’t.

**DAVID CAMERON:**
… we never comment on special forces. The hostage situation is clearly an absolutely
tragic one and we should do everything we can to help and I lead those efforts personally.

**ANDREW MARR:**
You see a lot of your critics will say this is the problem. It starts with air power, it starts with advisers, and then – like Vietnam – it escalates. You get sucked in, and you’re sucked into something which may be the right war to be fighting, certainly the right enemy to be fighting, but nonetheless you don’t know where it’s going to end and you don’t know how deeply we’re going to be drawn in. However much you at the moment don’t want to be drawn in further, the logic of the war is that we will be.

**DAVID CAMERON:**
Well in a way that’s an argument for sort of never doing anything. And I think look when you face a situation with psychopathic terrorist killers in Syria and Iraq, who have already you know brutally beheaded one of our own citizens, who have already launched and tried to execute plots in our own country to kill and maim innocent people, you’ve got a choice. We can either stand back from all this, as Galloway and others would say, and say this is too difficult, it’s too complicated, let’s let someone else try and keep our country safe, or we take the correct decision to say let’s have a full, comprehensive strategy, but let’s be prepared to play our role to make sure these people cannot do us harm.

**ANDREW MARR:**
I come back finally to the border question and not George Galloway but General Richards again – your favourite general at the moment, I’m sure. “You can’t possibly defeat ISIS by only attacking them in Iraq”, he says this morning. “How the hell can you win the war when most of your enemy can end up in a country you can’t get involved in?” That really is the question, isn’t it?

**DAVID CAMERON:**
Well I have a lot of sympathy with that view, which is why I’ve said we support what the Americans and the five Arab nations have done in Syria. We have a Syria strategy, which is to build up the Free Syrian Army, the Syrian National Coalition to achieve a political transition in Syria. But you know I wanted to take to the House of Commons a proposal that I could achieve consensus for to make sure Britain was
playing her role in this coordinated action across both countries.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Got it. Let’s turn to the Conservative Party conference. Did you have any idea that Mark Reckless was about to do what he’s just done?

**DAVID CAMERON:**
Not specifically, but you know he’s always been someone who … I mean he very rarely votes for the government and has made his views known. Look these things are frustrating and frankly they are counterproductive and rather senseless. If you want to have a European referendum, if you want to have immigration control, if you want to get the deficit down, if you want to build a stronger Britain that we can be proud of, there is only one option and that is to a …

**ANDREW MARR:**
(over) Senseless not reckless.

**DAVID CAMERON:**
… after the next election because the choice is really between that government – and we’ve got a track record now of getting the deficit down, getting people into jobs, taking a correct line on Europe – the choice is that or Ed Miliband in No. 10 Downing Street with no plan for the deficit, no leadership for our country, no way to get the economy growing, the deficit going up, more borrowing, more spending, more taxes. That is the choice. And so …

**ANDREW MARR:**
(over) But whatever you think of …

**DAVID CAMERON:**
(over) … to act in a way that makes the Conservative government less likely is senseless and counterproductive. But you know we have to now get on with the job of this week in setting out our plans for the country.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Before we do, Douglas Carswell, who was a great supporter of yours, why do you think you’re losing these kind of people?

**DAVID CAMERON:**
Well you’d have to ask them, but it is …

**ANDREW MARR:**
Well they say because you’re not a proper Conservative in the end.

**DAVID CAMERON:**
Well I disagree with that. But I mean in the end it is counterproductive. Douglas Carswell and Mark Reckless are both people who actually, unlike me, they want to leave the European Union no matter what. Now I don’t agree with that, I think we should have a real go at reform to get a better deal for Britain. But then there is this promise and it’s a complete and clear promise of an in/out referendum by the end of 2017. So even if you don’t agree with my renegotiation strategy, I am the only prime minister who is going to give you the chance to have a vote to stay in or get out of the European Union, and that’s why I say it’s so counterproductive and senseless.

**ANDREW MARR:**
(over) Well let’s turn exactly to that strategy then if we could because we’ve talked about this before, but it’s clear at the moment that the big issue is the free movement of people into this country from the rest of Europe. That is the thing that’s setting the UKIP people alight. A lot of your own people are very, very concerned about it. Is that at the heart of your renegotiation policy – ending the open frontier?

**DAVID CAMERON:**
Immigration will be absolutely the heart of my renegotiation strategy where I’ve been very clear. We need to get out of ever closer union. That shouldn’t apply to Britain.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Sure.

**DAVID CAMERON:**
We need proper safeguards for the single market. With others, with other countries we
need to be able to block new regulations that we don’t approve of. A whole series of
safeguards and changes at the heart …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Can you be … Okay.

DAVID CAMERON:
(over) Hold on. … at the heart of this, the idea that people – yes of course there is a
right to go and work in other European countries, but it’s not an unqualified right.
You should not be able to move for benefits, you should not be able to abuse the
rules. When new countries join the European Union, you should be able to say to
them look your people cannot come and work in our country until your economy is at
a much more similar level to ours. So these are big changes.

ANDREW MARR:
Okay. So you can do things about benefits, but you can’t do anything about the free
movement of peoples inside the EU and that won’t be part of your negotiating stance?

DAVID CAMERON:
Well that is one of the things that I think particularly worries people and concerns me
– that, as I say, the right to go and work in France or Spain or Spanish people to come
and do a job that has been advertised here, that is one thing; but it’s a completely
different thing to be able to go to claim benefits, actually even to work in Britain, but
to send your benefits home to your families that stay in your home countries. All of
those things need to be addressed.

ANDREW MARR:
I understand that.

DAVID CAMERON:
It comes back to the bigger point, Andrew, which is there is only one way these things
can get addressed. If Ed Miliband is in Downing Street none of these things will
happen. If I am prime minister all of these things will happen and there will be an
in/out referendum by the end of 2017.
ANDREW MARR:
Are you determined that we will stay inside the EU?

DAVID CAMERON:
Well I’m determined we’ll do the right thing for Britain. Now I’ve set out very clearly …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Straight question.

DAVID CAMERON:
(over) No but this is important. I think people want to know what do I believe?

ANDREW MARR:
They do.

DAVID CAMERON:
What I believe is right for Britain is to seek reform, get reform, and get Britain to vote to stay in a reformed European Union. That is my plan. Now …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) There are two very, very different things, prime minister.

DAVID CAMERON:
(over) But the point is if people don’t like that plan …

ANDREW MARR:
Sure.

DAVID CAMERON:
… the only way they get to vote to get out of the European Union is if I am prime minister. I think people want to know what is your plan, not you know what if this, what if that. That isn’t …

ANDREW MARR
But also they want to know what is your base position. You go there and you negotiate and if you don’t get everything you want, you say to the British people “Okay I haven’t got the deal. We should leave Europe” and, like many of your colleagues, you say there is a future for Britain outside Europe. It might be bumpy but in the end it’ll be fine. Or you’re determined to stay in Europe basically, in which case it’s much harder to get that negotiation successfully concluded.

DAVID CAMERON:
But here’s the point. When you’re going into a negotiation, I think you should set out what you want to achieve. And also I want the 27 other countries in Europe to see that there is a plan here that with reform can end with a reformed European Union and a reformed relationship with Britain and Britain staying in. I want them to see that that is the goal. Now, as I say, if I don’t achieve that, it will be for the British public to decide whether to stay in or to get out.

ANDREW MARR:
Are there any circumstances which you would go to the British people and say “I, David Cameron – not Boris Johnson, not Nigel Farage – I, David Cameron, recommend that we leave the EU”? 

DAVID CAMERON:
Well I’ve said this all my political life. I’ve said if I thought that it wasn’t in Britain’s interest to be in the European Union, I wouldn’t argue for us to be in it. I mean I believe … I’m a deeply patriotic politician and person. I do this job because I love my country, I care passionately about its future and I want it to be a strong, proud, self-governing, independent nation. Yes working with other European countries on trade and cooperation, maximising our influence in the world so we can do the best for our people in the world. That is what drives me.

ANDREW MARR:
So if you don’t get what you want, you say to the British people it’s time to go?

DAVID CAMERON:
No, I’ve said I believe we will get what we want and I think the British …
ANDREW MARR:
If you don’t.

DAVID CAMERON:
Well I think the British public want someone who is absolutely determined to deliver for them a better future in Europe. But in the end, I don’t decide. They decide.

ANDREW MARR:
Alright. Let’s move onto something else that you said recently, which was right at the end of the Scottish vote, you came onto the street of Downing Street and you said that English devolution should happen at the same pace as and in tandem with Scottish devolution. Do you still agree with that?

DAVID CAMERON:
Yes, absolutely. Let me be clear. We must keep our vows and we will keep our vows to the people of Scotland that they will have a stronger Scottish Parliament with stronger powers over taxation, over welfare, over spending. That will happen. And that agreement we set out was no … it was nothing … it wasn’t even a new departure for the Conservative Party because we have already signed up to plans for that, but what I’ve said is with a Conservative Government, with me in No. 10 Downing Street, you don’t just get Scottish devolution; you get properly English votes for English laws – the English question properly answered, so that MPs in Scotland … sorry MPs in Wales and Northern Ireland and in England get these rights in the way that the Scots now have.

ANDREW MARR:
So the reason I’m asking is that the Labour Party don’t agree with quite a lot of that. Other parties have different views as well. It’s a very, very complicated thing to deliver in a few months and, therefore, a lot of people in Scotland are saying aha, this solemn promise on the front page of a newspaper won’t be delivered because you …
ANDREW MARR:
... and Ed Miliband will fall out and between you the Scottish thing won’t be delivered.

DAVID CAMERON:
No, no, we may well fall out over this issue of England because I don’t think Labour have got an answer to this question. We, the Conservatives, do have an answer. It was in our 2001 manifesto, it was in our 2005 manifesto, it was in the last manifesto as well. But be in no doubt, as prime minister I will deliver both. So you’ll have a choice really. You can have Ed Miliband and have Scottish devolution ...

ANDREW MARR:
(over) But come what ...

DAVID CAMERON:
(over) ... and nothing for the English, or you can have David Cameron and you get Scottish devolution and a proper answer to the English question. I don’t think I could be any clearer.

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Come ... Well come what may, whatever the arguments going on in London about English parliaments and English ... votes for English laws and all of that - however that’s going, the Scots will get the devolution promise ...

DAVID CAMERON:
Yes, yes.

ANDREW MARR:
... under all circumstances?

DAVID CAMERON:
Yes, yes.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Okay that’s very clear. Thank you very much indeed for that. And speaking of which, do you now favour an English Parliament as such and where would it sit?

**DAVID CAMERON:**
No I don’t. I don’t think … Look I think the last thing frankly this country wants is another expensive parliament building with another expensive group of politicians with salaries and expenses and all the rest of it. That is not what we’ll be proposing. I think it is perfectly possible to make changes in the Westminster Parliament, so that when issues that are exclusively about England or England and Wales are addressed, we can find voting arrangements to reflect that. And we need to do that obviously not just in terms of what happens with English laws, but if the Scots are going to have – as we believe they should – the right to set income tax rates, you need arrangements in the UK Parliament, in the Westminster Parliament to make sure that there’s fairness there as well. So these plans are being worked out by William Hague. Either there will be an outbreak of good sense by my political opponents and cross-party consent. I doubt it. I suspect it will be the Conservative Party …

**ANDREW MARR:**
Alright.

**DAVID CAMERON:**
… putting forward at the next election a balanced programme of devolution – both Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom – and when we win our majority, we’ll put that into place in tandem and at the same time.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Now your big announcement this morning is about using money from welfare cuts to boost the number of apprenticeships. Can I ask you, you’re cutting the welfare cap to £23,000. What evidence do you have that lots of families are going to be able to cope with £3,000 less?
DAVID CAMERON:
Well what we’ve found with the welfare cap is it’s been a policy that has worked and worked very well. A lot of people said when we said we’re going to cap families at £26,000, people said this would cause chaos, families would have to move across the country, it won’t work. Actually what has happened is that a lot of those families have gone into work, have found a job, and actually it’s been a policy that has helped to help them with their lives. I think all the evidence is that the cap is too loose, particularly in some parts of the country, so bringing it down to £23,000 saves money, will mean more families getting into work. And what I want to see, the plan we have for Britain, is to spend less on welfare and more on helping people into work. So we’re going to use that money to pay for 3 million apprentices in the next parliament. This is after the last four years where we’ve seen 1.8 million more people get into work, our deficit come down, our economy turned round. As you were saying earlier, we’ve now got the fastest growth of any major country in the West. We’ve had a successful economic plan, but now is the time to turn that plan into a plan for every family in our country to give them the security and the peace of mind that they want. I want people to see that with a Conservative Government they’ll get the chance of a good job …

ANDREW MARR:
Alright, can I …

DAVID CAMERON:
… that taxes will come down, that will get them a good school place for their children …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) One other question …

DAVID CAMERON:
… dignity in retirement. These are the things that we will be delivering.

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Okay one other question on this. Are we moving towards a situation where
nobody under the age of 21 gets any kind of benefits at all because that’s what it looks like?

DAVID CAMERON:
It’s not quite as simple as that, but …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Pretty close.

DAVID CAMERON:
… at heart I want us effectively to abolish youth unemployment. I want us to end the idea that aged 18 you can leave school and go and leave home, claim unemployment benefit and claim housing benefit. We shouldn’t be offering that choice to young people. We should be saying you should be earning or learning. And so if you need to have benefits, there will be an allowance that you can have for 6 months …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) I understand the logic behind it, but …

DAVID CAMERON:
(over) … otherwise actually funnily enough …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Forty-eight per cent of these people … 48 per cent of these people have children, so my question to you is: are you not going to put – I mean for the best possible motives no doubt – but put a large section of the young population of the country into dire poverty quite quickly with this?

DAVID CAMERON:
We’re not talking about those people with children. This is about single people aged 18 to 21 who at the moment you can leave home, sign on, get housing benefit, get your own flat and start a life of dependency. Now that is no life at all and no future for your children when you do have them. So we’re saying save that money, make sure that after 6 months every one of those young people has to be in a job or in training, and use the savings to provide 3 million apprentices. And here’s the real point. We
were talking earlier …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) And their parents essentially have to support them.

DAVID CAMERON:
… we were talking earlier about immigration. If we want to solve the problem of immigration, the other side of the coin is education and welfare. We need an education system that educates young people so they can take the jobs that are becoming available – and they are becoming available – and we need a welfare system that prioritises work. Now that is what you’ve seen over the last four years and you’ll see more of it over the next five.

ANDREW MARR:
For now prime minister, thank you very much.

END OF MAIN INTERVIEW/THEN GOES TO EXTRA QUESTIONS AFTER THE NEWS

ANDREW MARR:
The prime minister is still with me. Prime minister, the other thing I must ask you about was that moment when you were overheard talking about the Queen “purring with pleasure.” Presumably she was furious because she’d been trying really hard to keep out of that debate all the way through. What were you thinking of?

DAVID CAMERON:
One of those moments when you look back and kick yourself very hard. It was not a conversation I should have had even though it was a private conversation and I’m extremely sorry and very embarrassed about it and I’ve …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Are you ashamed about it?

DAVID CAMERON:
… made my apologies and I think I’ll probably be making some more.

ANDREW MARR:
Are you ashamed about it?

DAVID CAMERON:
Well I’m very sorry about it. Yeah I’m very sorry.

ANDREW MARR:
And have you repaired things with the Palace?

DAVID CAMERON:
I’m not going to ever discuss my conversations …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Ever again.

DAVID CAMERON:
… with the Palace ever again. Even with you, Andrew.

ANDREW MARR:
Alright. Now you said a little while ago that you were delighted to see Boris back, on his way back to the pitch. Once he gets onto the pitch, if the team wins, would you like him back in the cabinet as well?

DAVID CAMERON:
Well yes, of course, but he’s got to finish his term as Mayor of London. I know that’s what he wants to do and I believe you can be a Member of Parliament and Mayor of London and do a very effective job. But once he’s finished that, then you know he’s a star and, as I’ve always said, I want to have the stars in the team.

ANDREW MARR:
Okay. You come to this conference with a couple of defections, a minor sex scandal and the problems inside the party. People are muttering final years of John Major.
Does that make you quake or does it make you angry? How does it make you feel?

DAVID CAMERON:
Well I have to admit, it’s not been an ideal start. I think I’m prepared to say that. But look, the truth is these things – frustrating as they are – they don’t change the fundamental choice at the election, which is do you want to continue with a long-term economic plan that is working and that can deliver for Britain’s families and hardworking taxpayers, or do you want to lurch off with Ed Miliband with no plan, no leadership, no ideas about the economy – just more borrowing and taxes? That’s the choice. And, look, you know you learn in this job, you often wake up and you find that all sorts of things have happened in your own party, but the question is does it change the fundamentals about what you’re trying to do and what the team is trying to do, and it doesn’t.

ANDREW MARR:
David Cameron, thank you very much indeed for joining us.

INTERVIEW ENDS