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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

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PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT

THE STONE OF DESTINY

3 JULY 1996

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STATEMENT ON THE STONE OF DESTINY

Madam Speaker with permission should like to make a statement about the Stone of Destiny

The Stone of Destiny is the most ancient symbol of Scottish Kingship. It was used in the Coronation of Scottish Kings until the end of the 13th century.

Exactly 700 years ago, in 1296, King Edward I of England brought it from Scotland and housed it in Westminster Abbey. It remains the property of the Crown. I now wish to inform the House that, on the advice of Her Majesty's Government, The Queen has agreed that the Stone should be returned to Scotland. The Stone will, of course, be taken to Westminster Abbey to play its traditional role in the Coronation ceremonies of future Sovereigns of the United Kingdom.

The Stone of Destiny holds a special place in the hearts of all Scots. We believe that, on this the 700th anniversary of its removal from Scotland, it is appropriate to return it to its historic homeland.

I am sure the whole House will want to be assured that the Stone will be placed in an appropriate setting in Scotland. The Government will be consulting Scottish and Church opinion about this. The Stone might be displayed in Edinburgh Castle alongside the Honours of Scotland, Europe's oldest Crown jewels. Alternatively it might be appropriate to place it in St Margaret Chapel inside the Castle or in St Giles Cathedral. There may of course be other options.

Once these consultations have been completed, the necessary arrangements will be made and the Stone will be installed with due dignity in Scotland.