

26 March 2002

Powell Hails Close Ties With New Zealand

Joint remarks with New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark

The United States and New Zealand have "excellent" bilateral relations, according to Secretary of State Colin Powell.

The top U.S. diplomat made that assessment March 26 after a meeting with New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark at the State Department.

Powell cited the support New Zealand has provided the United States in the war on terrorism, including direct assistance in Afghanistan.

Following is a transcript of remarks by Powell and New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark after their meeting at the State Department March 26:

U.S. Department Of State

Office of the Spokesman March 26, 2002

Remarks By Secretary Of State Colin L. Powell And New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark, P.c. At Stakeout Following Their Meeting

March 26, 2002 C Street Entrance

(1:05 p.m.)

Question: Mr. Secretary, how would you characterize your relationship with New Zealand at this moment?

Secretary Powell: Excellent. I am so pleased that the Prime Minister and I had a chance to discuss a number of bilateral issues, as well as discussing regional issues and issues far away from New Zealand but in which New Zealand has a great interest.

I was pleased that I had the opportunity to thank her in person for the support that New Zealand has given us in the campaign against terrorism, especially for the contributions that New Zealand has made to our efforts in Afghanistan directly.

So I think this is one of those pleasant visits that I look forward to where you have a good friend who has come to exchange views. New Zealand and the United States have gone through many challenges and crises and conflicts together over the years. We are at it again now.

Question: Did our anti-nuclear situation in New Zealand come up?

Secretary Powell: Yes, we discussed it. I have a clear understanding of the Government of New Zealand's position, and the Prime Minister certainly understands our position. It is one of those areas where we have a disagreement, but disagreements between close friends are not that unusual.

Question: Is it still (inaudible)?

Secretary Powell: Beg your pardon?

Question: Is it still unfinished business?

Secretary Powell: There is a disagreement that continues.

Question: Were you able to —

Question: Mr. Powell, what do you think of Mr. Sharon's decision not to let Chairman Arafat —

Secretary Powell: I haven't been in my office for an hour. I'll have to take a —

Question: Prime Minister, how did you find (inaudible)?

Prime Minister Clark: We have been very, very well received in Washington, and we have had the chance to discuss with the Secretary, who is involved in a daily basis with very significant international issues, just how the (inaudible) approaching and thinking about, and that's been (inaudible).

Question: Mr. Secretary, are we still friends or close to being allies with the United States?

Secretary Powell: We're very, very, very close friends.

Question: What about allies? What about allies, Mr. Secretary?

(The Secretary escorts the Prime Minister to her car.)

Question: Secretary Powell, what do you make of President Mubarak's decision not to go to the Arab League summit?

Secretary Powell: I've got to get up to date. I have been tied up for the last hour and a half.