

Administration of Barack Obama, 2011

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister John P. Key of New Zealand

July 22, 2011

President Obama. I want to welcome Prime Minister Key to the Oval Office. We have had occasion to work together at various multilateral summits in Asia and have always been struck by the intelligence and thoughtfulness that the Prime Minister brings to his work.

Obviously, we are very pleased that the relationship between New Zealand and the United States is growing stronger by the day. Part of that has to do with the great affection that our peoples have towards each other. Part of it has to do with a great deal of common interests and a set of common values.

So the Prime Minister and I discussed a range of economic issues, including our great interest in promoting a more effective trade regime among the Asia-Pacific nations, and we're working on this Trans-Pacific Partnership; we hope to have a framework agreement by the time that we go to Honolulu for the APEC meeting.

We discussed how countries can cooperate around disaster response. Obviously, we are still heartbroken by the loss of life and property resulting from the earthquakes in Christchurch and are incredibly impressed by the resilience of the people of New Zealand as they rebuild from that tragedy. But both of us, having seen what happened in Japan as well, understand that when these kinds of natural disasters strike, it's important for us to be able to pool our resources to help each other.

We discussed our security cooperation and continue to thank New Zealand for its participation in our efforts in Afghanistan. We're very grateful to the outstanding servicemen and women whom New Zealand has sent there.

And we discussed a wide range of regional issues. Our respective Foreign Ministers are currently in Bali—or at least—I'm not sure if they've left yet—

Prime Minister Key. Yes. They're close.

President Obama. —but they're talking about how we can work on a wide range of issues, everything from green growth to trying to standardize regulations to include the flow of trade. And throughout this process, whether it's in APEC settings, now the East Asia Summit, we've always found New Zealand to be an outstanding partner. And Prime Minister Key personally has always been an outstanding partner on these issues.

So, welcome. We know it's hot out there, so this is a warmer welcome than you perhaps had expected. [*Laughter*] But we very much appreciate your visit.

I do want to also just make note—we were just discussing the fact that there has been a bombing in Oslo, Norway, as well as a shooting there. We don't have information yet, but I wanted to personally extend my condolences to the people of Norway. And it's a reminder that the entire international community has a stake in preventing this kind of terror from occurring. And so we have to work cooperatively together both on intelligence and in terms of prevention of these kinds of horrible attacks.

I remember fondly my visit to Oslo and how warmly the people of Norway treated me. And so our hearts go out to them, and we'll provide any support we can to them as they investigate these occurrences.

So, with that, John, welcome again. Thank you for being here.

Prime Minister Key. Mr. President, firstly, thank you for the invitation to Washington, to the White House.

Similarly, I echo your sympathies and concern for that situation in Norway. If it is an act of global terrorism, I think what it shows is no country, large or small, is immune from that risk. And that's why New Zealand plays its part in Afghanistan as we try and join others like the United States in making the world a safer place.

We've had a very good and tremendous reception the last couple of days. I want to thank you for that personally. We're excited about the opportunities of the Trans-Pacific Partnership. We're excited about the chance to put together a regional trade deal which includes the United States and which will expand over time beyond the nine countries—and I think it can deliver strengthened and continued economic growth, jobs, and higher incomes and better opportunities.

I just want to thank the United States for its response when it came to the Christchurch earthquake—your urban search and rescue team were fabulous, and your call immediately after the earthquake, and the tremendous outpouring of support from the people of America. So thank you very much, indeed.

We are great friends and strategic partners. The Marines are coming down next year to commemorate their amazing contributions, so we're looking forward to welcoming them to New Zealand.

Thank you for allowing us to have this visit. And we thoroughly enjoyed our time here, and we'll see you very soon.

President Obama. You're welcome, and I look forward to returning the visit sometime.

Prime Minister Key. Great.

President Obama. My understanding is the American team is heading out to New Zealand for the World Rugby Cup—

Prime Minister Key. The Rugby World Cup.

President Obama. —the Rugby World Cup. And so, good luck, guys. Although I hear the New Zealanders, the Kiwis are pretty good at rugby so—*[laughter]*—I don't think we're seeded number one in the tournament, but I have confidence that we will acquit ourselves well.

All right. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:10 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton; and Minister of Foreign Affairs Murray S. McCully of New Zealand.

Categories: Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : New Zealand, Prime Minister Key.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Clinton, Hillary Rodham; Key, John P.; McCully, Murray S.

Subjects: Asia : East Asia Summit; Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC); Commerce, international : Asia-Pacific, regional trade promotion efforts; Commerce, international : Environmental protection standards; Japan : Earthquake and tsunami, damage and recovery efforts; Natural disasters : Japan, earthquake and tsunami; Natural disasters : New Zealand, earthquake; Natural disasters : Potential natural disasters, preparedness efforts; Natural disasters : Response and recovery efforts, international cooperation; New Zealand : 2011 Rugby World Cup; New Zealand : Earthquake, damage and recovery efforts; New Zealand : Prime Minister; New Zealand : Regulatory cooperation and harmonization with U.S.; New Zealand : Relations with U.S.; New Zealand : Trade with U.S.; Norway : Terrorist attacks in Oslo and Utoya; Sports : Rugby; State, Department of : Secretary; Terrorism : Counterterrorism efforts; Terrorism : Global threat; Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

DCPD Number: DCPD201100518.