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12958: DECL: 2020/02/10 TAGS: PGOV, PREL, PHUM, SOCI, ECON, NZ SUBJ
ECT: New Zealand: PM Key and Diplomatic Corps hear grievances at Wa
itangi Day celebration CLASSIFIED BY: Robert J Clarke, Charge' d Af
fares, State, Wellington; REASON: 1.4(B), (D) 1

(SBU) Summary: On February 5--the day before New Zealand's official na
tional "Waitangi Day"--the Ambassador and DCM joined a large Diplomatic
Corps contingent in Waitangi for a program commemorating the 170th Ann
iversary of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840

The Diplomatic Corps' participation in celebrations at the Waitangi site en
ded a 15-year absence which began in 1995, when Maori protesters had unders
cored their displeasure with the government by baring their buttocks at the
international guests

This year's carefully managed program for diplomats offered nothing so drama
tic, but the political nature and
underlying tensions of the celebrations came through during the public exc
hanges between PM John Key and Maori leaders at the Te Tii Marae (tribal a
rea)

End Summary

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(SBU) Security was tight at the Te Tii Marae with dozens of Maori warden
s and members of the Waitangi war canoe team armed with paddles assigned
to keep order

They formed up before PM Key's arrival under the direction of a Maori act
ivist who gave a running commentary, saying that the PM would be safe (af
ter being manhandled at the 2009 celebration) "even though we don't all l
ike him." Key arrived surrounded by his own security and escorted by Tite
whai Harawira, the respected activist and mother of the controversially o
utspoken Maori Party Member of Parliament (MP) Hone Harawira

Key entered the marae through an entrance flanked by controversial red, white and black Maori flags, received a Maori welcome, and sat for a formal discussion with tribal leaders

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(SBU) Hone Harawira, who is not a member of the Waitangi iwi (tribe) and normally would not be participating, was given the microphone early in the exchanges

Harawira began by lecturing Key for criticizing him based on newspaper stories (about his misuse of official travel funds)

He berated Key and National Party policy, saying that "a lot of our people are still starving and raising GST (sales tax) might be good for you and your mates but it is certainly not going to help the people on low incomes." In a rambling presentation, he also said "you know what I am saying about Pakeha (caucasian) colonization is true." 4

(SBU) Dr

Pita Sharples, co-head of the Maori Party, which is in the governing coalition with the National Party, sat with PM Key

He was at pains in his remarks to reject Harawira's suggestion that being in the coalition was compromising Maori demands

When his turn came, PM Key spoke confidently about progress on the Treaty settlements

He acknowledged disproportionate Maori unemployment levels and pledged to address them

He said that the root of unemployment among young Maori was a high school dropout rate

His government, he said, was looking at alternate, better ways of delivering education but needed the cooperation of parents and tribal leaders

Key, in a reference to on-going negotiations on the Foreshore and Seabed Act (which in 2004 stopped Maori from going to the courts to seek customary title to foreshore and seabed areas), said 2010 could be a "breakthrough year." He added the cautionary note, however, that the negotiations had to have give and take on both sides and had a "bottom line of access rights for all New Zealanders." Key mentioned outright repeal of the Act, which many Maori are calling for, only as one possible outcome of the negotiations

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(C) Comment: PM Key's remarks on the Foreshore and Seabed Act at Waitangi have generated criticism among Maori because they seemed to walk back a position he took last November which seemed to promise repeal

The smart betting is that he will eventually back repeal, which underlies Maori Party cooperation with the National Party, but only after he achieves the difficult task of an "elegant" solution which does protect access rights for all New Zealanders to the foreshore and seabed areas, rights which are potent

ially highly lucrative
End Comment
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