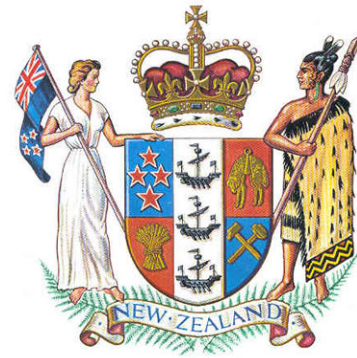


**New Zealand Prime Minister,  
Rt. Hon Helen Clark**

September 10, 2007



## **Address at NZ-US Partnership Forum**

I am delighted to have the opportunity to address this second New Zealand – United States Partnership Forum.

I know that the NZ-US and US-NZ Councils play an important role in advocating for closer bonds between our two democracies and more extensive ties between our economies, and I thank them both for that. I congratulate the Councils on organising this important event, and I welcome the United States delegation to New Zealand. Some of you I have already seen in Sydney in recent days.

I would also like to acknowledge especially Ambassador Anne Martindell's efforts to come to New Zealand for the Forum. Anne is an old friend of New Zealand, having served as US Ambassador here close to thirty years ago. She went on to found the United States – New Zealand Council in the interests of both our countries.

Many of our guests from the United States know New Zealand well. You know us as a small, liberal democracy, with an egalitarian ethos and a strong sense of fair play.

Thus it is natural that New Zealand should have a close and fruitful friendship with a nation like the United States with kindred values. It's also natural that we won't always agree, but that on many, if not most, important issues, we will find ourselves of common mind.

We enjoy a common democratic heritage and shared values; our relationship is mature and longstanding. We are two of the world's oldest democracies, and two of a tiny number of countries which maintained democratic government throughout the twentieth century.

Over the past eighteen months or so, both our governments have been taking stock of the relationship between our countries, and looking for opportunities where we might work more closely together where our interests coincide.

This has been a relationship strengthening process. Along the way, we've accepted that while we cannot ignore our differences, nor should we let them define the overall relationship. We've reminded each other that our friendship has tremendous breadth, a

proud history, and a very promising future.

Long before the New Zealand and American Governments had close contact with each other, there were extensive people to people and commercial contacts.

The United States was an important player in the Pacific from the early nineteenth century.

Before 1840, US whalers and traders had a significant influence in the New Zealand economy and in early contact between Maori and Europeans.

Then Americans flocked with others from around the world to the New Zealand gold rushes in the second half of the nineteenth century, following the gold rushes of California and Australia.

Colonial New Zealand was an importer of ingenious American manufactures, from affordable furniture and clocks, to many other modern trappings, helping improve the comfort and quality of life in this furthest outpost of the British Empire.

In military terms, our relationship began during World War I, when the United States joined the allies against Germany. In just a few weeks I will be in Belgium for the ninetieth anniversary of the Battle for Passchendaele – New Zealand's worst ever military disaster in terms of lives lost in a single day.

But it was in World War Two that we really got to know each other, when, after the bombing of Pearl Harbour, the United States joined the war in the Pacific against Japan.

Large numbers of United States marines, soldiers, and sailors came to New Zealand.

They built friendships, relationships, and family ties which endure to this day.

In the Pacific theatre, New Zealand and United States military forces operated well together – with New Zealand's Major General Barrowclough overseeing highly successfully joint operations in the Solomon Islands.

Both New Zealand and the United States sustained big losses in the War in the Pacific – and its islands and atolls carry those memories and scars to this day.

For example, Red Beach on Tarawa Atoll bears that name because of the horror of the battle which followed the landing by United States Marines. Near the beach stands the memorial to the New Zealand coastwatchers who were executed by the Japanese military.

The strong bonds forged between New Zealand and the United States during those war years set the stage for an expansion of political, cultural, and commercial relations in the post-war era.

The war in Korea which followed in 1950 saw New Zealand and the United States fighting alongside each other again in the United Nations command – and still represented there to this day.

Then there was Viet Nam – a searing experience which left both our nations internally divided. My government in the 21st Century is, as we speak, working with Viet Nam veterans on a formal acknowledgement that whatever the rights and wrongs of the war, they fought honourably in the service of New Zealand and deserve full recognition for that.

As the Cold War wore on, concern about nuclear holocaust led New Zealand to declare itself nuclear free in the 1980s. At that point, our operational involvement in ANZUS ceased.

Unfortunately from then on our relationship with the United States came to be defined by what we disagreed on – primarily the nuclear policy – rather than by our strong commonality of purpose in most endeavours.

In March when President Bush and I met again in Washington we agreed it was in both countries' interests to have a forward looking relationship and to focus on working together on the many issues where our interests coincide.

That includes in the defence arena. New Zealand was one of the first nations to step forward with special forces in Afghanistan, and then to take responsibility for a Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan - a commitment I might say we have found very rewarding because we believe we are making a difference for the better to the lives of the people of Bamian Province.

During this Forum you will be discussing many of the areas where New Zealand and the United States interact a great deal.

For example, the United States is the third largest source of international visitors to New Zealand, and is surpassed only by our near neighbour Australia, and by the United Kingdom with which we have so many close family and historical ties.

The United States is our most important partner in science and academia. Around 40 per cent of New Zealand researchers have undertaken collaborative projects with US counterparts – more than with any other individual country.

Our people have long benefited from access to postgraduate education at America's world-leading universities.

Now, we see this education relationship maturing, with more US students choosing to come to New Zealand for study or research. The numbers are up from only a few hundred a few years ago to seventeen hundred in the past year.

And let us not forget the role of the Fulbright programme which has played an important role in exchanges of scholars between our countries.

My government is a big promoter of working holiday schemes for young people. We put such a scheme in place for Americans aged eighteen to thirty with a thousand places in 2004. It has proved so popular that we increased the number of places to 5,000 last year.

Now we are delighted that the United States is launching a pilot programme which extends the time New Zealand tertiary students can work and travel in the United States from four to twelve months. This Forum will witness the signing of this new arrangement this morning.

Another area of co-operation which I have been privileged to see at first hand is that between our Antarctic programmes.

I was with Ambassador McCormick and other senior United States Government representatives at Scott Base and McMurdo Station in January for the fiftieth anniversary of our co-operation in Antarctica – and it was very special to have Sir Edmund Hillary, the founder of Scott Base with us.

Our government made provision in this year's budget for a significant injection into Antarctic research to mark International Polar Year. I have no doubt that this will support even more collaboration with United States' Antarctic researchers.

On the trade front the United States has long been New Zealand's number two partner, surpassed only by Australia with whom we have a comprehensive free trade agreement. Our two way trade in goods is well balanced.

It's been exciting to see more engagement between us in the new economy areas, with New Zealand and United States' companies partnering in screen production and in high technology ventures.

These fields require imagination, enterprise, technical excellence, and a free and open business environment to succeed. Both our countries have these attributes in abundance.

In this respect, it's fitting that the two Councils have chosen "partnership and innovation" as the theme for this Forum.

I hope that participants will be able to identify how the United States and New Zealand can better harness our two countries' strengths to the mutual advantage of both our economies.

At the political level, my government has worked hard to facilitate the commercial relationship.

That's included a close relationship with the United States' Customs Service to ensure

the smooth flow of goods from New Zealand to the United States.

We work closely with the United States on international trade policy, especially within the WTO and APEC.

Bilaterally, we continue to make the case for a free trade agreement between our two countries. Studies show that an FTA would be beneficial for both of us.

It would also be a logical extension of our strong shared commitment to freeing up trade in the WTO and APEC contexts.

While current circumstances in the United States make it difficult for the Administration to announce new FTA negotiating partners, I hope that these two councils will continue to press for New Zealand to be included as an FTA partner when the time is right.

Overall my government is committed to continuing to strengthening the relationship New Zealand has with the United States.

We welcome the State Department designating this year the “Year of the Pacific”, and we have been able to work together on critical issues in this region, including Fiji.

We are also co-operating within the Proliferation Security Initiative, and on encouraging denuclearisation in the DPRK.

We have an excellent record of working together on urgent international environmental concerns, human rights, non-proliferation, trans-national crime, combatting terrorism, international peacekeeping operations, and many other pressing international concerns.

Climate change was a big issue on this year’s APEC agenda, and I believe we can both be well pleased with the outcome. We have a strong climate change partnership developed in the early years of my government, and a lot of research collaboration on science relevant to climate change.

In summary, despite the large and obvious asymmetries in size and power, New Zealand and the United States have a long and proud record of working together.

We are old friends. We have a good and mature relationship built on a foundation of shared values.

This is a very important relationship to New Zealand and I am confident there will be many ways in which we can enhance it in future.

I wish you all well in your discussions and know that will make a contribution to strengthening the relationship between our countries.



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