

January 5, 1976
Political Report for the Month of December 1975,
'Pacific Nuclear-free Zone and the ANZUS Pact'

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Summary:

New Zealand concerns the incompatibility between the proposal of the Pacific Nuclear-free Zone and the ANZUS Pact

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...Similarly, Mr. Muldoon's government is apparently in an embarrassing situation in regard to the proposal of nuclear-free zone in the South Pacific which was over-whelmingly endorsed by the UN General Assembly in November last year. While the National government clearly opposes nuclear weapons and their test, it had previously expressed reservations about the establishment of the nuclear-free zone in the South Pacific on the plea that it was incompatible with New Zealand's and Australia's membership of the ANZUS Pact. The present Foreign Minister, Mr. Talboys, said, the move represented the pursuit of an ideal. He had always felt "one might just as well seek the creation of a 'devil free zone'." It was his general view that a nuclear-free zone could not be effective. He said "we are not in an position to control the high seas." It, therefore, appears that he present N.Z. government is unlikely to take any further initiative in this direction either in the UN or in the region itself. Some of the Island territories which had sponsored the resolution in the UN can, of course, take up some further steps, but with Australia and New Zealand withholding whole-hearted support to the concept on the plea that this would cause strains to the ANZUS Pact, the establishment of the nuclear free-zone in South Pacific will be impossible or meaningless.

LN Ray, High Commissioner