

UNCLASSIFIED
FM WELLINGTON
D IMMEDIATE FCO
TELNO 092
OF 030035Z MARCH 87
INFO ROUTINE CANBERRA

RC

SPD

CONSD

NGNSD

X3

NZ EARTHQUAKES

1. NEWS REPORTS CARRIED ON THE BBC WORLD SERVICE AT 11.00PM LAST NIGHT AND 7.00AM THIS MORNING GIVE AN EXAGGERATED IMPRESSION OF THE IMPACT OF THE EARTHQUAKES OVER THE PAST 24 HOURS IN THE BAY OF PLENTY AREA. AS FAR AS IS KNOWN, NOBODY HAS BEEN KILLED AND THE ONLY DEFINITE MAJOR CASUALTY REPORTED IS A MAN WHO DIED OF A HEART ATTACK. NO TOWNSHIPS HAVE BEEN DESTROYED BUT MANY DWELLING HOUSES, ROADS AND RAIL TRACKS HAVE BEEN DAMAGED, AS HAS ONE MAJOR BRIDGE. IT IS REPORTED THAT THE EVACUATED INHABITANTS IN SEVERAL TOWNSHIPS SHOULD BE ABLE TO RETURN TO THEIR HOMES DURING THE COURSE OF TODAY PROVIDED THERE IS NO MAJOR RECURRENCE. MANY MINOR TREMORS OCCURED DURING THE NIGHT BUT THEY WERE ON A DECLINING SCALE. NOBODY CAN SAY WITH CERTAINTY WHETHER THERE ARE MORE SHOCKS TO COME. THE ONLY 'EMERGENCY' DECLARED WAS A 'CIVIL DEFENCE EMERGENCY' IN THE AFFECTEED AREAS.

2. THIS EARTHQUAKE IS NOT ON A PAR IN ITS EFFECTS WITH MAJOR DISASTERS IN THE COOK ISLANDS AND VANUATU DURING RECENT WEEKS. THE NEW ZEALAND CIVIL DEFENCE ORGANISATION APPEARS VERY WELL ABLE TO COPE. 100 SOLDIERS HAVE BEEN DEPLOYED TO ASSIST AND SOME PRIVATE HELICOPTERS HAVE BEEN REQUISITIONED. MR LANGE HAS NOT GONE TO THE LOCALITY SEMI COLON SUPERVISION OF THE CIVIL DEFENCE OPERATION HAS BEEN LEFT IN THE HANDS OF THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER (PETER TAPSELL).

3. WE HAVE HAD NO REPORTS FROM ANY BRITISH CITIZENS SUFFERING AS A RESULT OF THE EARTHQUAKE.

O'LEARY

YYYY

WCHPAN 0470