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MURUROA 40TH ANNIVERSARY

Former crewmen of two New Zealand frigates which sailed to Mururoa atoll deep in the South Pacific to protest against French atmospheric nuclear testing meet in Tauranga on 20 July to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the epic voyages.

HMNZS Otago and HMNZS Canterbury were sent on separate voyages in 1973 to draw international attention to atmospheric testing which started in 1962 and ended when France acknowledged world opposition and shifted underground in 1974.

In a show of Anzac support, Australian High Commissioner Michael Potts will attend to mark the role the oil tanker HMAS Supply played in reprovisioning and refuelling the two frigates during their extended voyages stretching over two months.

Prime Minister Norman Kirk sent the two frigates as “silent witnesses with the power to bring alive the conscience of the world” and to reinforce the move he sent Cabinet Minister Fraser Colman as well.

The two voyages drew worldwide media attention, with Mr Colman undertaking many radio interviews, and correspondents on board both frigates reporting daily on the build up to France’s 30th and 31st atmospheric nuclear tests.

Fraser Colman’s widow Noeline and daughter Lynda will be attending the reunion.

The Royal New Zealand navy will be represented by Deputy Chief of Naval Staff Commodore Dean McDougall, a former captain of the Canterbury.

Defence Minister Jonathan Coleman and Veteran Affairs Minister Michael Woodhouse both declined and Mururoa Veterans Society president Peter Mitchell says that’s a pity because the reunion would be a chance for the Government to also recognise an outstanding achievement by New Zealand that eventually led to a complete stop of all nuclear testing in the Pacific.

“That’s a legacy that our sailors and all New Zealanders can be proud of.”

Further Information:

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