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1. (S) SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER HOWARD SAID HIS UPCOMING TRIP TO NEW YORK FOR THE WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM WAS AIMED AT BUSINESS CONTACTS HE WAS UNABLE TO MAKE WHEN SEPTEMBER 11 CUT SHORT HIS LAST U.S. VISIT. THE PM SAID AUSTRALIA'S COMMITMENT OF FORCES TO OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM WAS FIRM,
PM WARNING A U.S. DECISION TO LEVY HIGH TARIFFS ON AUSTRALIAN STEEL IMPORTS WOULD ENCOUNTER A STRONG NEGATIVE REACTION IN AUSTRALIA AND CAUSE PROBLEMS FOR THE OVERALL BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) PRIME MINISTER HOWARD MET AMBASSADOR SCHIEFFER ONE-ON-ONE IN THE PM'S SYDNEY OFFICE ON JANUARY 23 AT THE AMBASSADOR'S REQUEST. THE PURPOSE OF THE 45-MINUTE CALL WAS TO DISCUSS HOWARD'S UPCOMING TRIP TO THE UNITED STATES.

BUSINESS FOCUS FOR NEW YORK TRIP

3. (C) HOWARD SAID THAT THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF HIS JANUARY 28-FEBRUARY 2 TRIP TO NEW YORK WAS TO TALK WITH BUSINESS REPRESENTATIVES WHOM THE PM WAS UNABLE TO MEET WHEN THE SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACKS FORCED CANCELLATION OF HIS PLANNED NEW YORK STOP AFTER MEETING PRESIDENT BUSH IN WASHINGTON. HOWARD NOTED THAT HE WOULD BE PARTICIPATING IN A FEBRUARY 1 PANEL ON "BUILDING A COALITION FOR A STABLE WORLD: WHO WILL SHARE IN THE BURDEN?" WITH SECRETARY POWELL.

THE PM SAID THAT HE HAD NO SPECIAL NEEDS FROM THE USG FOR THE NEW YORK TRIP, DURING WHICH HE AND HIS WIFE WILL RENDEVOUS WITH HIS TWO GROWN SONS WHO ARE CURRENTLY VACATIONING IN CANADA.

AUSTRALIA'S COMMITMENT TO WAR ON TERRORISM

4. (S) THE PM REITERATED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WAS FIRMLY COMMITTED TO SUPPORTING THE INTERNATIONAL COALITION AGAINST TERRORISM AND PLEASED THAT AUSTRALIAN FORCES HAD BEEN ABLE TO MAKE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION.
5. (S) HOWARD SAID THAT HIS

6. (C) TURNING TO TRADE ISSUES, HOWARD SAID HE WOULD TALK
ABOUT AN AUSTRALIAN-U.S. FREE TRADE AGREEMENT (FTA) WITH U.S.
BUSINESS REPRESENTATIVES DURING HIS TRIP TO NEW YORK.
HOWEVER, THE PM'S MAIN CONCERN AT THE PRESENT ON THE TRADE
FRONT WAS THE PROSPECT OF WHAT HE SAW AS PUNITIVE TARIFFS
AGAINST AUSTRALIAN EXPORTS OF CERTAIN CATEGORIES OF STEEL IF

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MILITARY ADDRESSEES TAKE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/24/2012
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, MCAP, ETRD, AS
SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER HOWARD ON AUSTRALIA AND THE WAR ON TERROR, TRADE ISSUES, AND HIS TRIP TO NEW YORK

PRESIDENT BUSH DECIDES IN MARCH TO LEVY SUCH TARIFFS. THE SECRET

AMBASSADOR POINTED OUT THAT THE PROPOSAL TO LEVY TARIFFS AGAINST STEEL WAS NOT DIRECTED AGAINST AUSTRALIA, BUT AGAINST OTHER COUNTRIES THAT ARE DUMPING STEEL IN THE U.S. HOWARD SAID

STOP IN SOUTHEAST ASIA ON RETURN

7. (C) HOWARD MENTIONED THAT HE WOULD STOP IN SINGAPORE AND INDONESIA ON HIS WAY BACK FROM THE U.S.
COMMENT

8. (C)

SCHIEFFER

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