

Aborigines to join rugby tour protest

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By MICHAEL DOYLE

A group of Aboriginal activists will join the demonstrations against the Springbok rugby tour of New Zealand.

Up to 10 people will fly to New Zealand, probably later this week, to side with Maori groups and other opponents of the tour, according to the chairman of the Aboriginal advisory committee of the Australian Council of Churches, Mr Gary Foley.

Mr Foley said yesterday it was "possible" that he and the chairman of the North Queensland Land Council, Mr Mick Miller, would be among the protesters. The number of Aborigines taking part would depend on how much money could be raised for air fares.

Mr Foley said: "There's no shortage of volunteers. It's just a matter of selecting a bunch of good tough people and politicians."

In other moves in the lead-up to the Springboks' scheduled arrival in Auckland on Sunday:

- New Zealand was warned by Papua New Guinea that the tour could damage the unity of the South Pacific Forum (an association of South Pacific island countries as well as Australia and New Zealand);

- The US State Department, despite its opposition to apartheid, announced that it had granted visas to the Springboks so that they can play three matches in the US;

- An anti-tour group, which included Bishop Brian Ashby, head of the Justice Commission of the New Zealand Catholic Church, began a last-ditch court action aimed at preventing the tour;

- The office of the Australian Governor-General confirmed that a former New Zealand judge had asked Sir Zelman Cowen to try to stop the tour.

Mr Foley, who is also director of the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, and secretary of the National Aboriginal and Islander Health Organisation, said that Aborigines played a key role in protests against the Springbok tour of Australia in 1971. It was logical for them to express solidarity again "with our black South African brothers and sisters, as well as anti-racist people in New Zealand".

The Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, Sir Julius Chan, said yesterday it would be foolish to say that the tour would not taint relationships within the South Pacific Forum. After talks in Wellington with his New Zealand counterpart, Mr Muldoon, he said, "Naturally . . . we will do everything possible to avert such a thing happening, but to be realistic you can gauge the sort of possible effects and consequences of this tour."

Talks between New Zealand police chiefs and protest organisers collapsed yesterday after an attempt to agree on guidelines for the demonstrations. Police said they were disappointed with the response from the organisers, who in turn accused police of failing to answer a series of questions.