

## New Zealand couple reunited with September 11 firefighter

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3.00pm - By PAULA OLIVER

The bond formed by three people at the scene of the September 11 terrorist attacks on New York this morning brought them to the Beehive for a special meeting with Prime Minister Helen Clark.

New York volunteer firefighter Mike Weinstock met Hamilton couple Rupert and Kiri Rogers as he helped people flee Manhattan after the two hijacked airliners struck the World Trade Centre.



Mike Weinstock (left) with Kiri and Rupert Rogers in front of the NZ flag recovered from the WTC. Picture / Mark Mitchell

The Rogers were on holiday in New York when they noticed one of the towers was on fire.

As they watched, a second passenger plane flew over their shoulders and ploughed into the remaining tower.

"The sound. Television doesn't do it justice. It hits you right in the chest," Mrs. Rogers said this morning.

The Hamilton pair wanted to get to the Brooklyn Bridge to escape Manhattan but did not know how. They overhead Mr. Weinstock saying he was going that way and walked with him.

Along the way the trio stopped to help a woman who was having difficulty breathing.

Mr. Weinstock gave the Rogers' a business card when they parted, and then went on to spend days helping other rescue workers rummage through the rubble of the fallen towers.

Keen to keep up the friendship that was forged that day, the Rogers contacted Mr. Weinstock and invited him to New Zealand for a reunion.

He agreed to spend the first anniversary of the attacks with them.

The trio this morning spent 20 minutes with Prime Minister Helen Clark who showed them the tattered New Zealand flag that was recovered from ground zero.

Speaking after his meeting with Ms Clark, Mr. Weinstock said the anniversary was challenging but it would have been harder to be in New York.

He broke down when asked if he knew any firefighters who died in the attacks.

"I knew a lot of guys who lost their lives. One of them was one of my best friends. I've called his family this morning to touch base."

Mr. Weinstock said it had been a dream to visit New Zealand and he was glad to be reunited with the Rogers.

He met US ambassador Charles Swindells later this morning and will this afternoon visit a Wellington fire station.