

Remarks by Donald C. Winter  
Secretary of the Navy  
New Zealand Defence Force Reception  
Embassy of New Zealand  
Washington, DC  
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Thank you Ambassador Ferguson and Commodore Anson for allowing me the opportunity to make some brief remarks this evening. And thank you for your country's continued friendship.

New Zealanders have fought bravely in defense of freedom and alongside the United States in every major conflict in the twentieth century; and for that I am grateful.

The core of the relationship between our countries is grounded in the pursuit of democratic principles and the necessity of engagement in the international community. New Zealand has long been a pillar of regional security in the Pacific and has contributed admirably to security efforts around the globe.

Following the attacks of September 11, 2001 New Zealand contributed military assets to Operation Enduring Freedom, deploying its Special Air Service Regiment (SAS) as well as a provincial reconstruction team to Afghanistan. For their "extraordinary heroism" in action, helping to neutralize Taliban and al-Qaeda forces in "extremely high risk missions," the SAS were awarded the *United States Navy Presidential Unit Citation*. I want to underscore the importance of New Zealand's continued contributions to operations in Afghanistan.

Today we face new and emerging threats. From regional security concerns in the Pacific to the spread of terrorist networks around the globe, we have many issues to confront jointly. And protection of the maritime domain is crucial to our success. We must identify threats to our shores before they become imminent. And we must also work closely with partner nations to thwart the trafficking of arms, people, and narcotics. The United States cannot accomplish these goals alone. It will require a concerted effort between our countries.

As Secretary of the Navy I am particularly proud of our Navy's longstanding tradition of developing diplomatic relationships and fostering goodwill among maritime nations.

It was 100 years ago that President Roosevelt launched a portion of the U.S. Atlantic naval fleet from Norfolk, Virginia, on a diplomatic mission of enormous proportions. These ships, painted white except for the gilded scrollwork on their bows, came to be known as the “Great White Fleet.” Over the course of 14 months, these ships would travel to 6 continents and make 20 port calls before completing their 70,000 kilometer cruise.

One of the port calls was made in Auckland, New Zealand in August of 1908. It was estimated that 100,000 people, or about 10 percent of New Zealand’s population at that time, lined the shores of the harbor to watch as the mist cleared, revealing sixteen gleaming white battleships. It must have been an awe-inspiring arrival. It was that port call in Auckland that marked the beginning of a strong and lasting trans-Pacific partnership.

For the United States, the sailing of the Great White Fleet around the world emphasized the importance of a global maritime nation. We understand that trust is built over time, founded on friendships that are nurtured over decades, and centuries, of good relations. The commitment of New Zealand, the United States, and Australia to mutual values of peace and democracy was recently underscored when Ambassador Ferguson and his Australian counterpart stood shoulder to shoulder with Deputy Secretary England to commemorate the newly renovated ANZUS corridor in the Pentagon.

One hundred years ago President Roosevelt understood that America’s interests had become intertwined with the global community. Today our maritime strategy focuses on our commitment to our friends and allies, our desire to help those in need with disaster response capabilities, and our determination to maintain preeminence in the maritime domain. All have historical antecedents in the experiences of the Great White Fleet. By reflecting on the past and focusing on the future, we celebrate one hundred years of global partnerships and security and look forward to a new period of increased cooperation between our countries.

Thank you.