

## **4<sup>th</sup> Annual Armistice Symposium**

**Auckland War Memorial Museum and  
Auckland University of Technology**

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### **The NZ/US Defence Relationship**

**John McKinnon, Secretary of Defence, New Zealand**

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New Zealand's relationship with the United States is based on a deep and longstanding friendship – reflecting our common democratic values and many shared interests. Within this context, military co-operation between New Zealand and the United States extends back 90 years. We have fought alongside each other in virtually every major international conflict from and including the First World War, in the Pacific and Europe during the Second World War, and our forces have served alongside Americans in Korea, Vietnam, and the first Gulf War.

In 1985 New Zealand banned nuclear capable and nuclear powered ships from our ports. The ban was embodied in legislation in 1987, 20 years ago. In response the United States suspended its security obligations under ANZUS to New Zealand and implemented a number of other measures which severely curtailed any interaction between United States and New Zealand defence forces. The end of the cold war allowed for some amelioration of this situation, but more significant changes came in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

This was the end of the post Cold War era. The security needs of the twenty-first century are qualitatively different from those of a generation ago. Traditional inter-state conflict has increasingly taken second place to conflict within states. And unlike the Cold War, where conflicting parties were often proxies for ideological battles between great powers, today by and large outsiders cannot always be blamed for the violence.

Instead the focus is on three new dimensions of security.

- The first is the downside of globalisation. We benefit from the freer flow of goods, services and people throughout the world, but terrorists, criminals, drug barons and people smugglers also benefit from that freedom. So do those who wish to trade in weapons of mass destruction or other dangerous goods. We do have to take measures to deal with these unwelcome exploiters of our increasingly integrated world.
- The second is the security consequences which flow from the existence of weak or fractured states. Not all countries are equally endowed with the institutions which make for good and stable governance. Conflict and disorder not only threaten the lives and livelihood of the inhabitants of those countries, but can also affect neighbouring lands and people much further afield. The linkage between weak governance and trans-national threats to security makes this an international problem. Afghanistan tragically demonstrates this.
- The third dimension is the consequence of environmental change – whether natural disasters, global warming or the spread of infectious diseases. These are not primarily security issues, but they can have serious implications for security and often military assets are best placed to deal with some of the immediate consequences.

These challenges by their very nature require and call for collective action, nimble responses and genuine commitment - solutions to which New Zealand and the United States, along with a host of other countries, are mutually dedicated. It is within this increasingly fluid and broad security environment that New Zealand and the United States have been able to strengthen their security dialogue and interaction.

Out of a sense of shared interests and shared concerns has come a willingness in both New Zealand and the United States to look constructively at where we can work together. This does not mean that we have set aside the serious differences of perspective that underlay the events of 1985. But we do not wish that one

issue, that 'rock in the road', to dominate our relationship, nor to define the totality of our security co-operation, especially in the contemporary threat environment.

So we have been talking **with** each other, rather than **past** each other, looking closely at where our interests overlap, and seeking to expand defence and security co-operation where that makes good sense. Given the complexity of today's security environment, there is likely to be no shortage of opportunities for the United States and New Zealand to work with each other.

It is natural that much of this activity will be focus in the Pacific. The South Pacific is at the heart of New Zealand's security and defence interests. But this is not a region of the world to which the United States is a stranger. Hawaii, Guam and American Samoa point to that. So did the commemoration in August of the 65th anniversary of the landing of US marines on Guadalcanal, many of whom were deployed from New Zealand. And so does the fact that the United States is a valued dialogue partner of the Pacific Islands Forum, and has considerable development expertise and resources to help the region address its challenges. In that context, the Administration's decision to designate 2007 as "The Year of the Pacific" and to expand its footprint across the region is very welcome.

There are many aspects to the United States role in the region. In April this year, New Zealand co-operated with Australia and the United States in disaster relief activities in Solomon Islands when a major earthquake, and resulting tsunami, took place there. We provided immediate assistance through the despatch of an RNZAF Hercules, New Zealand-based NZDF personnel, and an infantry section working with RAMSI to assist with aid and damage assessment efforts following the tsunami. The United States contributed to these efforts through the immediate despatch to the area, by the Maritime Sealift Command, of the USNS *Stockham* (a heavy logistics support ship). On board the *Stockham* was a US Navy helicopter detachment, US Navy medical personnel, and an unmanned aerial vehicle detachment (for the purposes of damage assessment). The US helicopters were also used in the deployment of NZDF and Australian Defence Force medical personnel to remote areas to assess the damage and provide medical assistance to Solomon Islanders where required. The immediate commitment of these assets was a timely and welcome contribution to the relief efforts in Solomon Islands, and an example of New Zealand and United States military personnel working together in our region for the common good of all.

Given the likelihood of similar collaboration in the future there is benefit in familiarising more of our personnel with each other. To that end six RNZN medical personnel were on board the USS *Peleliu* in July/August when it undertook its annual humanitarian mission in the Pacific and Southeast Asia. The RNZN personnel formed part of a US-led multinational military and non-governmental medical team. During three weeks aboard the *Peleliu*, the RNZN personnel, alongside their US colleagues, provided valuable clinical and medical assistance to the people of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, who would not ordinarily have access to high-grade medical treatment.

It is important that we have visibility of each other's activities in the Pacific. One mechanism for this is the Quadrilateral talks which take place annually between Australia, New Zealand, France and the United States and which facilitate co-ordinating the provision of military assistance and training in the Pacific. Other contacts with the United States take place through the US Pacific Command (PACOM) based in Honolulu. And currently we have a police officer assigned to the Coast Guard led Joint Inter-Agency Task Force (West) in Honolulu: a means of ensuring good communications between United States and New Zealand assets as we face similar challenges in our oceanic environment. There is also scope for other interaction with the US Coast Guard. RNZN officers joined Coast Guard colleagues on the USCG *Walnut* as it undertook a fisheries protection operation in the Pacific.

Our overlapping interests are not of course limited to the Pacific. Both countries also have a long and close military association based on respective support for their national scientific contingents in Antarctica. This long-standing arrangement sees United States Air Force airlift aircraft regularly transiting through Christchurch as they support, and re-supply, the New Zealand and American contingents at Scott and McMurdo bases respectively, during the Antarctic summer season. And we were pleased the US Coast Guard was able to take up an invitation to participate in a successful multilateral (New Zealand-Australia-United States) New Zealand-hosted table-top search and rescue exercise with a Ross Sea scenario in October.

New Zealand has forces deployed in Solomon Islands (RAMSI) and Timor-Leste (ISF). The United States has expressed its appreciation for the role our forces play, with Australia and other partners, in bringing stability to those two countries. At an earlier time, during the 1999/2000 Interfet mission, New Zealand troops worked alongside United States counterparts in Timor-Leste. Through contributions from its Pacific Command, the United States military provided much-needed command and control systems; strategic lift; heavy-lift helicopter support; logistics and civil affairs support; as well as vital planning staff.

New Zealand's interests extend well beyond our immediate region. As the recently released Asia White Paper makes clear, Asia's strategic importance and political and economic value to New Zealand can scarcely be over estimated. The United States role in that region, and the contribution it makes to the region's stability, has always been acknowledged and welcomed by New Zealand. New Zealand and the United States are both members of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), a regional security organisation that provides a vehicle for a wide variety of confidence building measures amongst its members. New Zealand aims to be an active and valuable member of the ARF, reflecting our commitment to the Forum as a useful vehicle for dialogue and co-operation on regional security issues. Given that our forces deploy regularly into Southeast Asia, strengthening links with the defence forces of the region through dialogue and exercises, there is a number of occasions on which there are opportunities to be alongside US personnel. Gatherings such as the Western Pacific Naval Symposium, attended by navies from around the region, are one such opportunity.

Responding to natural disasters sadly provides another. In the immediate aftermath of the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami, both New Zealand and the United States responded with the deployment of military assets. The United States, through PACOM, committed two US Navy aircraft carrier battlegroups, with all the assets and resources that these capabilities bring; a wide range of US Air Force and US Marine Corps fixed wing and helicopter airlift assets; and the US Army supplied a variety of medical, engineering, logistics, communications, and civil-military teams. The NZDF, proportionate to its size, deployed two C-130 aircraft and a light medical team to Indonesia. The NZDF also facilitated New Zealand's assistance in Phuket with strategic airlifts and logistic support. We

deployed two RNZAF B757s, an Air Loading Team, a Public Affairs Team and an Aero Medical Team.

New Zealand naval vessels regularly visit ports in Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK) and China, as do ships from the US Navy. Peace and security in the Korean Peninsula has been a concern for New Zealand since the Korean War. We strongly support the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula, and the efforts of the United States and the other parties to the Six Party Talks to bring this about. In the same vein we have given effect in New Zealand to UN Security Council resolution 1718. Our concern for security in the Korean Peninsula is also manifest in the assignment of three officers to the Military Armistice Commission (UNMAC), the body which monitors the 1953 ceasefire line between the two Koreas. There they work alongside United States and ROK forces.

As our support for the Six Party talks indicates, minimising or eliminating the risk of the proliferation of nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction is a shared concern. It is for this reason that we have joined the United States and many other countries in the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). Recent exercises under the PSI have seen New Zealand defence assets operating alongside those of the United States and others in Australia, Singapore, and Japan.

New Zealand has a longstanding and strong commitment to participation in international peacekeeping and related operations. We currently have over 400 NZDF personnel contributing to such missions. 25 NZDF personnel are engaged in six UN-led peacekeeping operations, with substantial contributions to a range of other UN-endorsed multinational or regional operations. Like the United States, we also take an active role in discussions in the United Nations on peacekeeping issues such as measures against sexual exploitation and the safety of UN peacekeepers. The United States stands as the largest contributor to the UN peacekeeping budget - providing roughly a quarter of the total cost to operate all peacekeeping missions and important military training and logistical support for peacekeeping operations.

Well before 9/11 New Zealand and the United States were foundation members of the Sinai Multinational Force and Observers (MFO), and both currently participate in the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation, organisations which make a

contribution to stabilising one of the most volatile regions in the world. And then in the upsurge of UN peacekeeping missions in the 1990s our two countries worked together in Somalia, Bosnia and Kosovo. While we did not support the United States led war in Iraq, we have contributed to UN mandated reconstruction efforts in that country.

Since 9/11 the most substantial interaction between our two armed forces has occurred in the context of our shared response to that event through the international campaign against terrorism, particularly in Afghanistan. Closely following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, in late 2001, we deployed our special forces to Afghanistan against the Al Qaeda elements being sheltered by the Taliban. In 2003, we were the first country after the United States and the UK to lead a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Afghanistan. While our PRT is a New Zealand operation, now affiliated to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), it has close links with United States forces in Afghanistan. In March this year the Government announced a further twelve month extension of our Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan, a small contribution of medical personnel in Kandahar, and a Royal New Zealand Navy frigate presence in the Arabian Gulf next year. The commitment to supporting development and achieving greater stability in Afghanistan that this signalled is complemented by a range of other interventions, from development assistance to police training. United States acknowledgement of our contribution has been clearly demonstrated on several occasions, including in the presentation of a United States Presidential Unit citation to the New Zealand Special Air Service in June 2006, and the awarding of the Bronze Star and United States Army Commendation medal in October 2006 to members of the New Zealand Defence Force.

Thus there are many circumstances in which New Zealand and the United States are working alongside one another. It has been possible to do so without prejudice to established policy positions on both sides. In this Museum, commemorating as it does the sacrifice made by New Zealanders in times past, we can readily understand why good and reliable friends are valued in and for themselves. That is as true in 2007 as it was in 1942 when New Zealanders welcomed United States forces to our land.