



Integrated Country Strategy

New Zealand

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1. Chief of Mission Priorities

Our primary mission is to maintain – and accelerate – the positive momentum in our relationship: from our coordination on security contributions in the region, the Middle East and other critical areas, to our growing commercial ties, to our partnership in the Five Eyes, to our educational and cultural partnerships. The Asia Pacific region is the most dynamic, globally relevant region for the future of the world’s security and economy. 2018 marks the 180th year of friendly relations between our countries, since the first U.S. Consul arrived here in 1838. Our job now is to build and grow this relationship, keep it sustainable, and identify and implement new areas of partnership that enhance achievement of U.S. regional and global objectives.

The U.S.-New Zealand trade and commercial relationship is the best it has ever been – and as New Zealand’s view of its place in the world rapidly evolves, we see opportunities to do even better. The region is at the center of world commerce, not just the existing flow of goods and services, but also in setting the framework for the future of the world’s economy. Our trade relationship is healthy and broad, and we seek to expand it even further. We will work with the government to find ways to increase two-way trade and investment in both economies, including through our long standing Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA). We will reduce obstacles to trade, and welcome easier facilitation of travel for New Zealanders to access the United States and its markets. We are sending trade delegations and hosting entrepreneurs. We are proud of the strong collaboration we have achieved in the innovation and STEM sectors. We will seek every opportunity to support the GNZ’s key objective of increasing innovation and value-added economic growth, while encouraging open and competitive domestic markets and promoting growth in U.S. exports, inward investment, and U.S.-bound tourism. We will leverage New Zealand as a valuable partner in our shared pursuit of trade liberalization, a level playing field, and the promotion of rules-based, high-standard regional economic and trade architecture. This will pay strategic dividends as well as economic ones. In heightening awareness of our value as a market destination, innovation partner, and investment source, we will also offer the NZ public and government clearer alternatives to emerging dominant economies in Asia.

Because of this commerce, the region is also home to the darker side of global connectivity – the proliferation and threat of weapons of mass destruction, the illicit trade in drugs, the expansion of terrorist groups, and the exploitation of the world’s most vulnerable by trafficking and smuggling. North Korea’s provocative behavior threatens New Zealand and the world as a whole. To facilitate the growth and effectiveness of New Zealand’s contributions to future shared security goals – including international coalitions and peacekeeping – we will prioritize steady increases in interoperability, including through joint exercises and training, and security assistance. We see fertile soil for collaboration in New Zealand’s neighborhood, from Antarctica to the Southwest Pacific, which will enable us to more effectively address common environmental and security challenges – and to deepen a culture of collaboration that will pay dividends elsewhere.

One of the many ways in which we will strive to make our expanded partnership sustainable is through broad, considered engagement with the opposition, and outreach to the full spectrum diverse society in New Zealand, including Maori, Pasifika, youth and LGBTQ+ communities. That will intensify use of both classic public diplomacy and social media tools, as we push ever deeper and wider into NZ society and culture. We will increase people-to-people programs and cultural ties through expanding educational and professional exchanges, as well as sports diplomacy. We will aim to increase New Zealanders' awareness of the many values, cultural riches, and policy priorities we share -- engendering stronger support for our policies.

The breadth of our partnership and staff to nurture it have continued to grow steadily. The support platform will continue to adapt and must grow slightly to maintain an appropriate level of service. We must maximize the benefits to Embassy employees of the multi-year construction project and find other ways to show that we value their contributions to our mission. Finding ways to maintain quality local staff will continue to be a challenge for management.

This is a dynamic, intense, and consequential part of the world, and our relationship with New Zealand is relevant to all of it. Our shared values and common goals will pave the way for expanded opportunities, enhanced cooperation, and a broad and strong partnership going into the future. Whether it be our diplomatic efforts to encourage the rule of law and international norms, achieving economic growth, or working toward global security, our New Zealand partner has shown a strong will to work with us. We will capitalize on the gains we have made over the past years and seize the opportunities afforded to us at this unique time in U.S.-New Zealand history.

2. Mission Strategic Framework

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3. Mission Goals and Objectives

Mission Goal 1 Improve (or expand) trade and commerce

Description and Linkages: This goal reflects Pillar 1 and Pillar 2 of the 2017 National Security Strategy. It also supports the State-USAID 2018-2022 Joint Strategic Plan, Goal 1 and 2, Objective 1.5 and 2.1 and Goal 3 of the EAP/ASIA Joint Regional Strategy. Consistent with the National Security Strategy and Indo-Pacific Strategy, the mission will seek to increase bilateral trade and investment opportunities to grow our economy. This goal also support Pillar 1 of the National Security Strategy priority to secure U.S. borders and territory in addition to Joint Strategic Plan Goal 1, Objective 1.5 to strengthen U.S. border security and protect U.S. citizens abroad.

Mission Objective 1.1 Boost trade and investment opportunities to create jobs and prosperity

Justification: U.S.-New Zealand trade is healthy and balanced, but there is room for growth that will benefit the U.S. economy.

Mission Goal 2 Expand defense and security relations

Description and Linkages: This goal reflects Pillar 1 of the 2017 National Security Strategy; the State-USAID 2018-2022 Joint Strategic Plan, Goal 1, Objective 1.4; and Goal 1 of the EAP/ASIA Joint Regional Strategy.. It also supports the 2017 National Defense Strategy, and the US INDOPACOM Theater Security Cooperation Plan for 2018. Consistent with the National Security Strategy and Indo-Pacific Strategy, the mission will seek to expand defense and security relations.

Mission Objective 2.1 Promote more informed defense and security decision making

Justification: Information sharing is a key component of developing a common understanding of regional and global security threats, as well as opportunities, and requires constant attention to improve processes.

Mission Objective 2.2 Enhance key capabilities for integration and interoperability

Justification: Integration and interoperability of defense and security capabilities is a key component of regional and global defense cooperation, and allows our military services to work together seamlessly in conflict or pre-conflict operations.

Mission Objective 2.3 Strengthen public support for defense collaboration

Justification: Utilize traditional media and social media engagement to strengthen public support for U.S. military cooperation with New Zealand and activities in the region. Highlight

benefits of defense cooperation and shared values, key military anniversaries, and joint military activities. Support and highlight military cooperation related to joint exercises, work with local organizations to commemorate important anniversaries and events, strategically use our local USMC MSG force to build goodwill with the public, partner with key local NGOs, such as the Kapiti U.S. Marines Trust, to continue emphasizing our shared history and values related to World War II, and regularly message on humanitarian relief missions.

Mission Goal 3 Maximize coordination on regional/global issues

Description and Linkages: This is a multi-agency broad-based goal that touches on every aspect of our work and the bilateral relationship. It has linkages to the 2017 National Security Strategy, State-USAID Joint Strategic Plans, EAP/ASIA Joint Regional Strategy, and 2018 Public Diplomacy Implementation Plan for Mission New Zealand.

Mission Objective 3.1 Support resilience and prosperity in the Pacific Islands and ensure Pacific Island countries view the United States as their preferred partner of choice

Justification: The Pacific and Antarctic region is facing its most contested time since the Second World War. As Secretary Mattis as said, the Pacific is the U.S. “gateway” to the Indo-Pacific and a region of significant U.S. legacy and engagement. The region is more important than ever due to challenges to maritime norms, pressures on EEZs, vulnerable and developing states, foreign influence, and more.

Mission Objective 3.2 Engage and cooperate on global issues of shared interests to ensure comprehensive coordination

Justification: US-NZ alignment or at least coordination on global issues makes our bilateral relationship globally relevant

Mission Objective 3.3 Promote understanding of the US as a valuable long-term partner

Justification: Strengthen the growing perception that the United States is a Pacific nation and valuable partner with shared values and heritage by building local and regional programming targeting the Marori and Pasifika audiences strategically. This objective will allow us to better coordinate assistance programs and both enhance and influence the voice of small states. By emphasizing the diversity, dignity, and democratic values of the region, we can conduct better, more strategic outreach.

4. Management Objectives

Management Objective 1 Invest in physical infrastructure and personnel to accomplish our mission.

Justification: Mission New Zealand continues to add American direct hire positions at a measured but regular pace. Post management leverages the ICASS platform to improve performance and adjust staffing resources in order to handle the increased workload. This year, with ICASS Council approval, we will abolish an underutilized LES position and repurpose the funding to hire one of the two positions approved by the ICASS Council in 2016. In addition, we will hire the second position approved that same year with savings realized from frozen EFM positions and recent ICASS staff turnover. We will restrict spending on non-salary items next fiscal year as our frozen positions are thawed and replacement ICASS staff start work. Filling these additional positions and other vacancies are critical to maintaining our lean team's capacity and morale, so that they can continue to meet service standards.

While we are able to make these small adjustments within current resource levels, we suffer without a dedicated entry level USDH FMO: we need this position. The dual-hatted Management Officer role is continually overburdened which results in less oversight, little time to focus on improvement of the Financial Management Section, insufficient support for Apia, and lack of capacity to provide front office support on the big issues.

Another critical component to maintaining the morale and effectiveness of local staff is to provide a safe and comfortable work environment. The construction project is entering its final year, so there is light at the end of the tunnel, but there is work to do to maximize the utility of the new space and ensure the fatigue of the past four years begins to dissipate. Investment now in equipment and office configuration is vital for staff to feel like the pain of the past five years has been worth it.

Local Employee pay is a major issue for post, and is especially challenging to address as post management has so little control. The multi-year pay freeze was felt especially sharply at the higher grades, and staff quickly observed that their pay was not keeping up with their logical comparators – in this case Australian LES. That perception of lack of fairness, regardless of the accuracy of underlying labor economics, has been reinforced by the disastrous results for the Mission of the recent global effort to review LE staff job classifications. Though Washington communicated early on that region-wide the number of downgrades has been proportionally small, in Mission NZ more than 50% of the reviewed jobs have been downgraded. The result is staff feeling undervalued and underpaid – a caustic combination, which combined with the departure of a number of ICASS staff in the past months, is a serious concern for post management.