

Press Releases: Meeting With Staff and Families from U.S. Embassy Wellington

Remarks

Rex W. Tillerson

U.S. Embassy

Wellington, New Zealand

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MS GREEN: Terrific to have you guys all here. We're so excited to have Secretary Tillerson here to meet Mission New Zealand so early in the administration. We're here with Embassy Wellington, but also (inaudible) if I can get you to move to the side, we've got Consulate Auckland joining us in silently. (Laughter.)

Secretary Tillerson has urged us to lead through accountability, respect, and honesty; and he has modeled this as a CEO, as a volunteer, and now as our chief diplomat. Secretary Tillerson, you've come a long way to be here, a lot of plane time, and we appreciate you making time for this. So without further ado, Secretary Tillerson, meet Team New Zealand.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Thank you. Well, it is – it's a real pleasure to have the opportunity to see you, even if it's only briefly, and to also see the folks in the consulate office down here as well.

We had some really good meetings while here, brief though they might have been, with the prime minister, the foreign minister, and also opposition leadership; and very, very useful for me to hear directly from them. A lot of what this trip has been about is ensure people know how important this area remains to the United States, the relationship, the longstanding partnership between New Zealand and the U.S. And so we had a lot of common interest areas to talk about, and it was a very fruitful conversation.

We really appreciate our national employees, our partners, our colleagues down here that enable us to be successful, and we appreciate you very much. I also want to thank all of you who are on assignment here. I know this is a long way from birthdays; it's a long way from weddings, from graduations back in the States; and that creates particular challenges. And we know you're sacrificing a lot to be here, but we appreciate that you're here. We particularly appreciate the families, the spouses, that are here supporting those of you in the mission that allow us to accomplish our important work as

well.

We've got an exciting new ambassador coming, Scott Brown, former senator. I think you will find Senator Brown was really known in the Senate for his bipartisanship – an extraordinary individual. I know Scott, and he is extremely excited to make his way down here to serve Embassy New Zealand and Samoa. And I think you're going to find he's going to be an extraordinary leader and someone that you're going to really enjoy having as part of your team as well.

So again, I want to thank all of you for what you do for us. The region is important; we want to reaffirm that with this trip, this visit. Hopefully, this is not going to be the last time. You'll see other members of the administration coming through the region as well.

New Zealand plays a very important role with us both in some national security interests but also in economic interest and, in particular, the role they play with so many of the smaller island countries in the region. They are important to how we manage those relationships as well.

So again, thank all of you for what you do for us. Please know that you're appreciated. Way down here out of sight does not mean you are out of our minds in any way. So thank you, thank you again. It's a real pleasure to be here. (Applause.)

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