



*Office of Public Affairs  
U.S. Embassy, Wellington*

August 4, 2011

**Ambassador Huebner: Speech for American Independence Day Celebration 2011**

E ngaa mana, e ngaa reo, rau rangatira maa. Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou ka toa. E ngaa tini mate. Haere, haere, moe mai raa. Kia ora huihui tatou katoaa.

Ke welina au ia 'oukou pakahi apau e 'akoakoa nei. Aloha. Aloha . Aloha pumehana kakou.

And to our Muslim friends present, Ramadan Kareem.

Welcome. Welcome.

The Honourable Dr. Lockwood Smith; the Honourable Ministers Murray McCully; Gerry Brownlee; Tim Groser, and Nathan Guy. Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Phil Goff; other Members of Parliament; Deputy Mayor Ian McKinnon and other distinguished guests; friends all:

Thank you for coming out this evening to celebrate the 235<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of American Independence. The 4<sup>th</sup> of July – even when celebrated on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August – is a very special day for Americans and our friends.

It is a day that not only commemorates the birth of our nation but celebrates the civic consensus – seeded 235 years ago in Philadelphia – that pluralistic democracies like New Zealand and the United States share.

That civic consensus stands on two main pillars: the freedom to speak and the embrace of diversity. Those two principles are the lifeblood of our two societies, but they are also complex challenges.

We continue to wrestle with the messiness, inefficiencies, and contradictions of citizen empowerment.

And we continue to wrestle with diversity not just to tolerate it, but to find ways to better value, engage, and celebrate it. We celebrate diversity of thought, of outlook, of orientation and priority.

Both of our nations are rich tapestries of many ethnicities, races, religions, and cultural influences and both of our nations are particularly energized, enriched, & strengthened by our Pacific communities.

America and Aotearoa have been, are, and always will be Pacific nations and that is one of the most powerful of the ties that bind us together.

Both lands were settled initially by Pacific migrations.

The first settlers entered the empty American continent 15,000 years ago, not from Europe, but across a land bridge that then defined the northern shore of the Pacific, and they have explored and sailed the Pacific ever since.

Americans have also defended the Pacific, at high cost. In the Great War, many tens of thousands of Americans lost their lives repelling aggression in the Pacific theater, with another 200,000 Americans wounded or missing.

Since then, American humanitarian, educational, and development investment in the Pacific has been immense --trillions of dollars -- even when we have been under budget stress at home.

But the engagement is not just in dollars. It's people. For example, in the past 50 years more than 21,000 Peace Corps volunteers have served in the islands: teaching, building, healing, planting.

Today, more than 51 million Americans live along the shores of the Pacific. More than 1.5 million Americans are of Polynesian, Melanesian, or Micronesian ethnicity, including many Tongans, Fijians, and about as many Samoans as live in Samoa itself.

Another 4 million Americans are from the Pacific islands of the Philippines.

The warm waters of the Pacific caress more miles of American shoreline than any other nation's.

There is no better example of the vibrancy of America's Pacific heritage than our 50<sup>th</sup> state, Hawaii, superbly represented here this evening.

Geographically, Hawaii is a true jewel of the Pacific, sitting in the center of the North Pacific; closer to Wellington than to Washington.

Ethnically, Hawaii is one of the most diverse populations on Earth, with no "majority," and with large, critical mass percentages of citizens of European, Japanese, Filipino, Native Hawaiian, and Latino origin.

Culturally, Hawaiian dance, music, art, and folklore have captivated and seduced outsiders for more than two centuries.

Economically, the State has built a vibrant, diversified economy despite its remote location and small population, with an annual GDP exceeding US\$ 70 billion.

Environmentally, Hawaii is the most remote archipelago on Earth, with extraordinary bio-diversity and 150 distinct – and stunning – ecosystems.

Historically, it was an event in Hawaii – on December 7, 1941– that catalyzed and defined modern American engagement in the world.

And politically it was in Hawaii – in Kapi'olani Hospital in Honolulu to be precise – that the current US President, our first Pacific island President, was born exactly 50 years ago today.

I am pleased tonight to convey to you the personal greetings of that famous Hawaii native, Barack Obama, with whom I spoke in the White House ten days ago during the visit to Washington of another Pacific leader, Prime Minister John Key.

The President asked me to thank you for your great friendship; for your principled engagement in the world – even when it's not easy or popular -- and for your steadfast commitment to tackling the serious problems facing the global community today.

He also restated his view that the vast Pacific unites us rather than divides us.

The strong cultural, historical, and linguistic ties between our respective Hawaiian and Maori citizens are important evidence that he's right.

The year since we last celebrated American Independence Day here in Wellington offers much additional evidence:

- The visit of Secretary Clinton, culminating in the signing of the Wellington Declaration, with its central theme of accelerating tangible cooperation in the Pacific.
- The participation of the *HMSNZ Canterbury* in this year's Pacific Partnership humanitarian mission to Tonga and Vanuatu.
- The visits to Wellington and Auckland of the maritime training ship the *Golden Bear*
- Quick response of multiple US Government entities to the February earthquake in Christchurch
- Collaboration between American and Kiwi search and rescue teams when disaster struck Japan

- Successful working visits to the United States of the NZ Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, Trade Minister, and Defence Minister, among many others.
- Expanding collaboration in fisheries protection, transnational crime prevention, supply chain security, and other maritime security matters.
- Deepening commercial ties, including collaboration on a new transpacific telecommunications cable.
- Working visits to New Zealand of more than 1,000 US Government officials in just a 12-month period.

And much, much more.

And just watch what develops in the 12 months ahead...

The relationship between our two countries, in my view, is as deep, warm, and strong as it has ever been since the US Marines and Eleanor Roosevelt landed in Aotearoa shortly after the outbreak of the Pacific war.

And that feels natural. That feels right. That feels good.

Kati ake i konei. Ma te Atua koutou e manaaki.

‘O kēia ka panina ‘o ko’u ha’i ‘ōlelo – a na nā pōmaika’i a ke akua e helele’i o luna ‘oukou.

Mahalo. Thank you for being here this evening.