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US warship arrives in Wellington Harbour for 'official engagement' with Defence Force

Thomas Manch · 15:34, Nov 26 2021



MONIQUE FORD/STUFF

The USS Howard, a United States Navy Arleigh Burke-class destroyer warship, arrived in Wellington's harbour on Friday to conduct exercises with the New Zealand Defence Force.

A United States warship has arrived in Wellington for a port visit and “official engagement” with the Defence Force, the first visit from the US navy since 2016.

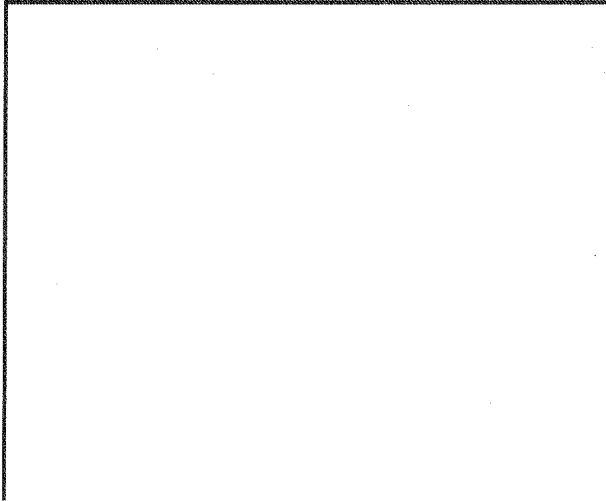
The crew of the USS Howard, an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer, “manned the rails” sailed into the harbour and pulled alongside Aotea Quay on Friday morning.

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with a New Zealand Air Force C130 Hercules parachuting tests into the water near the ship as it passed Auckland. The tests were returned by a helicopter aboard the USS Howard, for processing before the ship arrived in Wellington.

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As a strong northwesterly bore down on Wellington, USS Howard Commander Travis Montplaisir said he was “excited to be here, but the wind is something else”.

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The crew of the USS Howard "manned the rails" as it approached Wellington's port.

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He said the ship's visit was "a visible sign of our commitment to our allies, partners and friends".

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"We do our best work when we're working alongside those allies, partners, and friends, and it enables us the opportunity to conduct interoperability events."

While he would not comment on any operations USS Howard may have conducted en route to New Zealand.

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“We did not see any submarines on the way down ... But we were looking for them, we're always looking for them.”

Montplaisir said he would not comment on how long the USS Howard might remain in New Zealand, but said it would be at least 72 hours.

“There's no exercise in port, but there's a number of distinguished visitor visits both off-ship for the leadership to go out and visit with the New Zealand leadership as well as that New Zealand leadership to come here and conduct those co-operative events.

MONIQUE FORD/STUFF

USS Howard's crew as the warship arrived in Wellington Harbour.

“We come together we share ideas, we talk about cooperation, the bonds that make us stronger, and that togetherness allows us to build that strong relationship that we need for future events and future exercise operations.”

The USS Howard was carrying numerous missile systems, including Tomahawk land attack missiles, for purposes including ballistic missile defence and

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Aotearoa, on its way to Wellington.

New Zealand Chief of Navy Rear Admiral David Proctor, in a statement issued last week about the USS Howard's impending arrival, said New Zealand ships regularly participate in US-led exercises, including last month in Guam, and the Defence Force would "train and interact" with the US ship.

MONIQUE FORD/STUFF

Naval officers take photos as the USS Howard arrived in Wellington.

"Ship visits like this are a demonstration of the US' active engagement in our region. They present opportunities for improving interoperability between our forces and building trust and understanding between partners," Proctor said.

"It is nice to be able to return the courtesy and show goodwill as we host a US Navy vessel and her crew here in New Zealand again."

The crew of the USS Howard, all fully vaccinated for Covid-19, had spent at least 14 days at sea before arriving in New Zealand, which amounted to the required self-isolation period required to enter New Zealand.

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Under New Zealand's nuclear-free legislation, the prime minister has to sign off on the entry of a foreign warship into New Zealand waters, satisfied the ship "will not be carrying any nuclear explosive device upon their entry into the internal waters of New Zealand".

Nuclear-powered ships are entirely barred from entering New Zealand waters, under [the 1987 legislation](#).

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