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# John Kerry lands in Antarctica, highest US official to visit



U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, third right, prepares to board U.S. Air Force C-17 flight to Antarctica at Christchurch International Airport, New Zealand Friday, Nov. 11, 2016. The State Department said Friday that Kerry would travel from Nov. 10 to Nov. 12 to the McMurdo research station on Antarctica's Ross Island and the South Pole. Kerry will be the first secretary of state and highest-ranking U.S. official to visit Antarctica. (Mark Ralston/Pool Photo via AP) (Associated Press)

By Associated Press November 10 at 11:59 PM

**MCMURDO STATION, Antarctica — U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry became the highest-ranking American official to visit Antarctica on Friday when he landed for a two-day trip during which he'll hear from scientists about the impact of climate change on the frozen continent.**

**Kerry left from New Zealand after being held up for about a day by bad weather. Kerry and his entourage left the Christchurch airport at 6 a.m.**

aboard a C-17 Globemaster military cargo plane and landed in Antarctica about 11 a.m.

Kerry, an experienced pilot, spent much of the flight in the cockpit of the huge jet, chatting with the pilots. After a smooth trip of about five hours, the group landed on the Pegasus Ice Runway, the strip of ice that serves McMurdo. The large base is the hub for U.S. operations.

Kerry made no public remarks on the initial leg of the trip. In Christchurch a day earlier, he congratulated President-elect Donald Trump for winning a “momentous election” and said he had reminded State Department staff of the “time-honored tradition of a very peaceful and constructive transfer of power.”

In Antarctica, Kerry’s plans called for his entourage to transfer immediately at the airstrip to a smaller military transport plane for a three-hour flight to the research station the U.S. government operates near the South Pole. Kerry planned to visit that station for about two hours before returning to McMurdo for the night.

Kerry’s aides described the trip as a learning opportunity for the secretary of state. He planned to receive briefings from scientists working to understand the effects of climate change on Antarctica. Kerry has made climate change an intensive focus of American diplomacy during his term, and had previously spent decades working on the issue as a U.S. senator.

He planned to return to New Zealand on Saturday for meetings with Prime Minister John Key. He plans to fly next week to the Middle East for talks, and then onward to a global climate conference in Morocco, where he will give a major speech.

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