

Press release 13 April 2020

Almost 10,000 German and other European travellers back home in Europe: 25th German repatriation flight left New Zealand today

Today, the 25th German repatriation flight from New Zealand to Germany took off from Auckland to Frankfurt am Main (Germany). It brought the number of passengers repatriated to Europe close to 10,000.

Today's flight was the last Lufthansa flight from New Zealand within the German government's repatriation program announced by Federal Foreign Minister Heiko Maas on 16 March 2020. Like all Lufthansa repatriation flights from Auckland, it was carried out with an Airbus A380. The Lufthansa flights from Christchurch were carried out by Boeing 747.

The very last German repatriation flight will leave Christchurch tomorrow Tuesday 14 April 2020 at 2:45pm and will be operated by Air New Zealand.

In only 12 consecutive days between 3 April 2020 and 14 April 2020 a total of 25 German repatriation flights left New Zealand, including seven Airbus A380, seven Boeing 747 and twelve Boeing 777. A first flight had already left on 28 March 2020.

The repatriation flights from New Zealand to Germany represent the largest single part of the entire German repatriation program.

In his speech at Auckland Airport, German Ambassador Stefan Krawielicki called it the „largest repatriation air bridge in German history“. „If one were to add up all the kilometers flown per passenger, the total would be approximately 180 million kilometers.“

Several repatriation flights received special permissions to fly an extra loop over Auckland and Christchurch to thank the people of New Zealand for their hospitality. As a gesture of gratitude, the Lufthansa captain of the last Lufthansa-flight out of Christchurch on 12 April 2020 even baptised his previously nameless Boeing 747 aircraft in „City of Christchurch“. Many Lufthansa captains also released „jump seats“ in their aircrafts to allow more stand-by passengers on their return flights to Germany.

Most of the passengers on the repatriation flights were tourists like backpackers, families on parental leave with small children and work and holiday visa holders. There was also a significant number of underage exchange students from Germany. Most of the passengers were German citizens, but also other EU citizens and citizens from Israel, Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Great Britain were taken back to Europe by the planes chartered by the German government. On the very first Lufthansa flight alone, citizens from 23 different countries were on board.

This enormous team effort was an excellent example on how closely and successfully Germany and New Zealand can work together. It was only possible because of the extraordinary support of all the people and agencies involved. The German Embassy Wellington is therefore particularly grateful to the German-New Zealand Chamber of Commerce, who reinforced the Embassy team with six extra staff members at the airports in

Auckland and Christchurch. Furthermore, the Embassy is very grateful to the EU Delegation to New Zealand, Air New Zealand, German Lufthansa, Auckland International Airport, Christchurch International Airport and the respective ground handling staff, Aviation Security, NZ Police, NZ Customs, Immigration NZ, Christchurch City Council and Christchurch Emergency Operations Centre and, of course, to the New Zealand government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. In addition, the German Embassy is also grateful to the governments of Canada, Japan and Thailand for allowing the repatriation flights to land for technical stopovers in Vancouver, Tokyo and Bangkok.

Last but not least, the German Embassy would like to thank Sky Tower in Auckland and Auckland City Council for bidding a special farewell to the last repatriation flight out of Auckland today by lightening up the Sky Tower in the colours of the German national flag.

Vielen Dank und auf Wiedersehen!

Auckland/Christchurch, 13 April 2020