



# 2026 BRIEFING TO THE INCOMING MINISTER OF DEFENCE

**Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa**  
New Zealand Government

April 2026



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# YOUR ROLE AS THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

As the Minister of Defence, you will shape the Defence portfolio through:

- Setting Government priorities for the two Defence agencies (Ministry of Defence and the New Zealand Defence Force)
- Setting the policy direction for Defence, through Cabinet (as outlined on page 7)
- Approving mandates, to deploy NZDF personnel, through Cabinet in conjunction with the Minister of Foreign Affairs,
- Selecting capability options and the granting of approval for procurement contracts, through Cabinet
- Leading New Zealand's international defence engagement programme
- Approving a work programme for assessment and audit of the NZDF and Ministry's procurement function
- Making senior New Zealand Defence Force appointments, through Cabinet.

## How the Defence agencies keep you informed

Collectively referred to as 'Defence', the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) and the Ministry of Defence (the Ministry) are separate agencies that work together to ensure the New Zealand Government receives robust advice on defence and security matters, which reflect military and civilian perspectives.

The New Zealand Defence Force and Ministry of Defence will engage with you in a way that fits your expectations and schedule. This could include a range of channels.

- A regular (usually weekly) meeting on a range of defence matters with the Secretary of Defence, the Chief of Defence Force, and other senior Defence officials
- A weekly report that provides an update on current and emerging issues, projects,

events, visits, travel, and forthcoming Cabinet papers and submissions

- Regular intelligence briefings from Defence Intelligence (NZDF)
- Regular updates on policy and major capability projects under acquisition.

Your Office is supported by two private secretaries (Ministry of Defence) and a military secretary (NZDF).

## The Defence Agencies

The Ministry and the NZDF work together to develop and deliver a work programme through Vote Defence and Vote Defence Force to meet Government objectives.

Together, the Defence agencies deliver on the Minister of Defence's priorities (see page 8) for the Defence portfolio. Under the Defence Act 1990 (the Act), the Secretary of Defence, as the Chief Executive of the Ministry of Defence, is the principal civilian adviser to the Minister of Defence and other Ministers, and the Chief of Defence Force, as the Chief Executive of the NZDF, is the principal military adviser.

The separation between the two agencies is embedded in the Act. The way in which Defence is structured is different to the diarchy model used in Australia and United Kingdom.

There are multi-layered statutory requirements for the Secretary of Defence and the Chief of Defence Force to consult each other on defence matters, as well as on specific functions.

In practice, this means that while the Secretary of Defence and Chief of Defence Force have separate accountabilities, they work closely together.

An important element of the relationship between the two agencies is constructive contestability and challenge. This approach is strongly supported by the agencies' different cultures and shared commitment to the same

outcome – to meet New Zealand’s defence requirements effectively.

The Act defines the primary roles and responsibilities of the **Secretary of Defence** as to:

- formulate civilian advice on defence policy (in consultation with the Chief of Defence Force)
- prepare defence assessments, including a review of different options capable of achieving the Government’s policy goals (in consultation with the Chief of Defence Force)
- procure, replace or repair major defence equipment for use by the Defence Force, and
- arrange for audits and assessments of the Defence Force and the procurement function of the Ministry, as agreed with the Minister of Defence.

The Act defines the roles and responsibilities of the **Chief of Defence Force** as to be:

- responsible to the Minister for the carrying out of the functions, duties, conduct and management of the Defence Force, and
- responsible to appropriate Ministers for the carrying out of functions and duties of the Defence Force that relate to that Minister’s portfolio and the tendering of advice to that Minister on any matter relating to that Minister’s portfolio.

In this context, the Ministry does not have a monitoring role in relation to the NZDF. As the NZDF is not a Crown entity under the Crown Entities Act 2004, it is not subject to a monitoring department.

## Defence and the national security sector

Defence matters often overlap or have inter-dependencies with the following portfolios:

- Foreign Affairs
- Veterans
- Prime Minister’s Office
- Space
- Intelligence Community
- The Treasury
- Emergency Management

The importance of Defence as part of New Zealand’s broader approach to national security matters is increasing with the deteriorating strategic environment. Defence works with other national security sector agencies to deliver effective advice to Ministers and Cabinet, maximise overall sector performance, and respond to events and changes in the strategic environment.

## Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee

The **Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee (FADTC)** consider Defence matters.

FADTC undertakes an **estimates review** of Vote Defence and Vote Defence Force for the upcoming financial year, s6(a)

You will be invited to speak to the Committee, supported by the Chief of Defence Force and the Secretary of Defence each year.

Each year, the Secretary of Defence and Chief of Defence Force are invited to an **annual review** hearing to report on the progress of the agencies’ work over the past financial year. In recent years the Minister has been invited to also provide an initial statement for the hearing – normally held in December. The Committee may also ask Defence agencies to present on a specific topic on an ad hoc basis.

Defence also produces a **Major Projects Report** that is independently reviewed by Audit New Zealand. This detailed report is

considered by FADTC and provides greater visibility of how major Defence capability projects in delivery are being managed, with a focus on cost, schedule and quality. s6(a)

## Inspector General of Defence (IGD)

Established in 2023 the **Inspector General of Defence** can investigate matters or disclosures in relation to the activities of the New Zealand Defence Force.

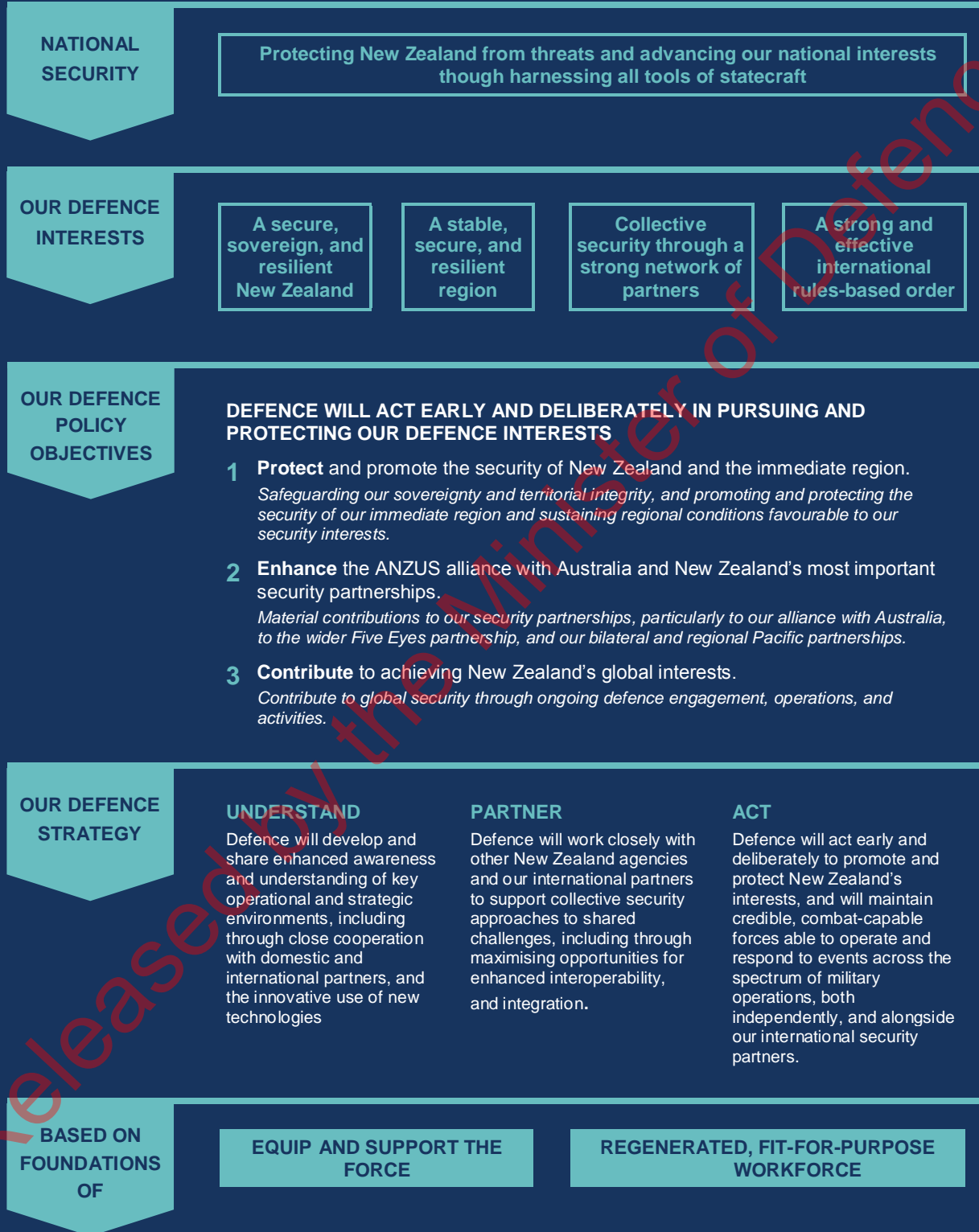
The purpose of the IGD is to:

- provide the Minister of Defence with dedicated independent oversight of the Defence Force;
- assist the Minister of Defence to account accurately to the House of Representatives for Defence Force's activities; and
- assure the public that there is independent scrutiny of Defence Force activities including in relation to New Zealand obligations under international law.

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# THE DIRECTION FOR DEFENCE

Defence's direction is set by the Government's defence policy and strategy settings. The latest articulation of these are found in the *2025 Defence Capability Plan*. This provides strategic direction for both the Ministry and NZDF (the Defence agencies).



## Ministerial priorities for Defence

In 2025, the then Minister of Defence identified five areas of focus for the Defence portfolio. These priorities currently guide the work of both the Ministry and the NZDF. You may wish to discuss with officials whether or not the Ministerial priorities need to be updated to reflect your own areas of focus or emphasis.

### **Implement the Defence Capability Plan 2025 and deliver an industry strategy**

Defence is focussing on implementing the pipeline of projects outlined in the Defence Capability Plan at pace. In addition, the two-yearly review cycle of the Defence Capability Plan will enable Defence to adjust implementation so that innovation, new technologies, and emerging risks can be considered, with additional capabilities added to the next Plan as the strategic environment demands and the fiscal environment allows.

The Defence Industry Strategy was released in 2025 and outlines how Defence can play a role in reinforcing onshore talent, improving national resilience, and supporting the Government's economic growth agenda.

### **Increase operational tempo and maintain strong relationships with key partners**

A network of strong international relationships, anchored by our partnership with our ally Australia, is fundamental to our security and wellbeing.

Defence needs to continue to be more present, agile, responsive, reliable and predictable, and ensure we remain interoperable with partners. Defence needs to continue to show up and to deploy our highly skilled people.

### **Exercise financial prudence**

Defence will continue to focus on managing internal cost pressures, including finding savings to ensure Defence is delivering the best value for New Zealand taxpayers. Defence will also work with The Treasury to ensure long-term stability for defence investment.

### **Ensure the NZDF workforce and legislative settings are fit for purpose**

Indicative investments in the recently released DCP have been phased to fit with a planned personnel regeneration for the NZDF. Future investments will be made to grow, shape, and retain the NZDF's workforce to deliver the capabilities identified in the DCP through a new workforce strategy, along with related tools and system improvements to meet these requirements.

Policy and legislative work are continuing to ensure that the NZDF is enabled and protected in modern operational environments.

### **Contribute to public messaging around defence and national security**

The New Zealand public is becoming increasingly aware that we are no longer living in a benign strategic environment. Defence Chief Executives are playing more of a role in educating the New Zealand public on our deteriorating strategic environment, and the important job Defence does in securing New Zealand's national interests.

## KEY UPCOMING CABINET DECISIONS AND MINISTERIAL SUBMISSIONS

The following Cabinet papers are scheduled for your consideration in the coming months. These papers include capability business cases<sup>1</sup>, deployment renewals and investments in estate and infrastructure. In some instances, these are joint papers involving both Defence agencies or are standalone papers for your consideration from the NZDF.

More detailed advice will be provided to your office on each of these papers.

s9(2)(f)(iv)



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s9(2)(f)(iv)

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<sup>1</sup> **Business case description**

*Defence uses the Government's Better Business Case model to progress capability projects through stages of the investment process:*

- **Programme business case** or **indicative business case** establishes the strategic case for an investment and sets out the options for delivering it.
- **Detailed business case** or **single stage business case** confirms the investment is budget ready and seeks a decision to formally approach the market.
- **Approval to deliver** is the final decision on the capability and the commitment of funding.

# DEFENCE CAPABILITY PLAN

In April 2025, the Government released the 2025 Defence Capability Plan (DCP), which outlines planned commitments of \$12 billion over four years. This include \$9 billion of new spending, on major military equipment and essential support such as people, estate and IT. The Prime Minister has said publicly this is the floor not the ceiling of funding for the Defence Force. The DCP also outlines a pathway to more than double defence spending by 2032/33, [REDACTED] s6(a) [REDACTED]

## Implementation

Of the four year indicative commitment, in Budget 2025 the Government made investment decisions worth more than \$3 billion for priority projects. This includes:

- A **\$2 billion-plus investment in maritime helicopters** to increase the offensive and defensive capability and surveillance range of New Zealand’s frigates, with the MH-60R Seahawk the preferred option to replace the existing fleet. The final business case is due to Joint Ministers for approval later this year.
- More than **\$700 million on two new Airbus A321XLR (extra-long range) aircraft**. This will ensure New Zealand has reliable aircraft to deploy our personnel, deliver military equipment and humanitarian aid, support the evacuation of civilians, and transport government trade and diplomatic delegations quickly, over long distances, and often at short notice.
- **\$104 million for a suite of hi-tech digital communications devices and systems for the New Zealand Army** to ensure our soldiers are combat capable, lethal, deployable and interoperable with international partners.
- **\$99 million for a multi-functional regional supply facility at Burnham**

**Military Camp**, delivering a single, modern logistics hub, enabling efficient access to equipment and supplies to ensure personnel have what they need, where and when they need it.

- **\$53 million** to ensure the NZDF can continue to **defend itself against cyber threats** at home or when deployed.
- **\$20 million on the Homes for Families programme** to ensure sailors, soldiers and aviators who dedicate themselves to protecting New Zealand, have access to warm, modern homes to return to when off duty.
- **\$31 million for the first stage of the future naval base**, which is a long-term programme to regenerate and modernise the Devonport Naval Base, New Zealand’s only naval port and the operational home of the Royal New Zealand Navy.

s9(2)(f)(iv)

As well as new investments, the Government released the Defence Estate Portfolio Plan (DEPP) which sets out a long-term vision to ensure camps, bases and training areas are fit for purpose and equipped to meet the needs of a modern Defence Force. This plan details priorities for the **\$2.5 billion identified in the DCP to modernise and strengthen Defence infrastructure** over the next four years, subject to annual budget processes.

## Assurance

The DCP is formally reviewed by Cabinet every two years. Work is currently underway on the 2027 review (see below).

An updated classified Integrated Investment Plan is provided to Joint Ministers twice a year to show a summary of the detailed investments underpinning the DCP.

A quarterly report is provided to EXP Ministers every three months to provide detail on progress in implementation of the plan. This report is intended to supplement Quarterly Investment Reporting (QIR) provided to Cabinet by The Treasury.

Individual business cases to deliver the plan undertake assurance activities in line with The Treasury requirements.

As the DCP is indicative, the investment costs, timings and scope may change over time, reflecting progress in developing business cases and Cabinet decisions.

## DCP 2027 Review

The DCP is designed over a 15 year horizon but deliberately focuses on critical investments over four years. To support long-term planning, defence must be able to anticipate future challenges in the strategic environment, and understand technological developments and demographic changes in New Zealand that impact workforce planning. The DCP will be reviewed every two years in a structured and repeatable process in order to re-evaluate the strategic environment and re-prioritise efforts as needed to ensure the NZDF remains a capable and credible force in a changing world. Reviews will allow a staircase approach to investment, with additional capabilities added to the DCP as the strategic environment demands and the fiscal environment allows.

This work is already underway and covers three phases:

**Phase 1 – Understand**, now complete, focussed on horizon and threat scanning, and gap analysis of the current DCP.

**Phase 2 – Develop**, will take place during 2026, and will focus on developing and balancing prioritised options.

**Phase 3 – Deliver**, will involve the drafting advice to Cabinet setting out options and an updated DCP for release.

The review process is designed to be repeatable. Focus areas will change over time in response to the needs of Defence and the evolving strategic environment.

## Industry Strategy

To complement the DCP, a Defence Industry Strategy (the Strategy) was released in October 2025 which details how Defence and industry will work together to deliver the DCP while building a strong, resilient industry that delivers economic growth.

The Strategy highlights a number of actions over the next four years to deliver capability faster, with resilience, including:

- Requiring prime suppliers to develop and submit New Zealand Industry Capability Plans to ensure the use of New Zealand industry in delivering and sustaining defence capability.
- Exploring opportunities for small to medium businesses to become 'Thin Primes', delivering equipment and systems to Defence, while sub-contracting the original equipment manufacturers.
- Establishing a Technology Accelerator, with an indicative investment of \$100-300 million, for Defence to work with the advanced technology sector on military use technology for the NZDF and with export potential.
- Creating new offshore opportunities for businesses, including showcasing Kiwi innovations to international partners.

## KEY ENGAGEMENTS: INTERNATIONAL

International engagement is a key element of Defence’s role, both in contributing to New Zealand’s security and to maintaining the international rules-based order.

Defence needs to ensure its capabilities are appropriate for the contemporary environment, but to also ensure that we maintain a level of interoperability to contribute credibly alongside partners.

Defence relationships ensure we can work with trusted partners in responding to security challenges and to access information, equipment, and training opportunities. Effective defence engagement also supports New Zealand’s broader foreign and economic policy objectives. It is important therefore that New Zealand actively engages with our partners, including contributing to international security efforts and undertaking operational deployments.

Defence engagement is guided by an

s6(a)

[Redacted text]

- [Redacted text]
- [Redacted text]
- [Redacted text]
- [Redacted text]

The following international forums are scheduled until the end of 2026.

Date	Location	Meeting details
29-31 May	Singapore	Shangri La Defence Dialogue
s6(a)	Fiji	South Pacific Defence Ministers’ Meeting
29 October	Philippines	Association of Southeast Asian Nations Defence Ministers’ Meeting-Plus

### Your international engagements

As Minister of Defence, you lead key defence relationships with our partners, with a particular emphasis on our region and our formal ally Australia.

**It is recommended that you make contact with key international counterparts as soon as your diary allows.** s6(a)

[Redacted text]

s6(a)

s6(a)

The Ministry will provide your office with full briefings to support these engagements.

#### Engagement with our ally Australia

Meetings with your Australian counterpart set the strategic direction, level of effort, and tone for the defence relationship. You have a formal **Australia – New Zealand Defence Ministers’ Meeting** (ANZDMM) and **the Australia –**

**New Zealand 2+2 Foreign Affairs and Defence Ministerial** (ANZMIN) annually.

This was most recently held in mid-March in Canberra. These meetings are an opportunity to take stock of our shared goal to become increasingly interoperable with Australia, as well as update on our trajectory towards an integrated “Anzac” force.

**Engagement in the Pacific**

There is a wide range of membership-based groups in the Pacific for discussing security issues. New Zealand is a member of many of these regional fora and actively advocates for a shared regional response to security challenges that align with our values. s6(a)

[Redacted]

The **Pacific Regional Security Architecture** provides the framework and settings from which to consider our relationships and obligations in the Pacific. These settings provide New Zealand with regular opportunities to interact with key security leaders in the region.

At the ministerial level, the **South Pacific Defence Ministers’ Meeting** (SPDMM) is the central regional forum, and members are Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Tonga, Papua New Guinea, France and Chile.

SPDMM convenes annually to discuss regional approaches to security priorities and convey these priorities publicly through a shared communique. SPDMM has been consistently attended by the Minister of Defence. The 2026 SPDMM meeting, hosted this year by Fiji, is tentatively scheduled for the week commencing s6(a)

Defence is also reconsidering how it meets its obligations to the three **Pacific Realm countries** and territories, Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau given geostrategic dynamics in the region. Over the last few years, Defence engagement has increased at all levels with

the Realm. While at the Ministerial level there are no set engagements, there may be ad hoc opportunities to meet with Realm leaders.

**Engagement beyond the Pacific**

Defence’s principal regional engagement is through the **Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Defence Ministers’ Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus)**; the members of which include the 11 ASEAN countries, plus New Zealand, Australia, the United States, China, Japan, South Korea, India, and Russia. Philippines is the Chair for 2026 and the annual Ministers-level meeting will take place in Manila on 29 October 2026.

The **Shangri-La Dialogue** is considered Asia’s premiere defence summit and attracts Defence Ministers, industry leaders and academics from across the world. It is an excellent opportunity to conduct bilateral meetings with a wide range of counterparts including from the United States of America and United Kingdom, alongside Asia. The Minister of Defence normally accepts an invitation to make a speech at a plenary or special session. The next Shangri-La Dialogue is planned to take place from 29-31 May 2026 in Singapore.

Also important to New Zealand is our participation in the **Five Power Defence Arrangements** (FPDA) with the other members – Singapore, Malaysia, Australia and the United Kingdom. The Five Power Ministers last met informally on the margins of the annual Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore in June 2025. s6(a)

[Redacted]

s6(a)  
[Redacted]

## KEY ENGAGEMENTS: DOMESTIC

In addition to your international travel schedule, the Defence agencies will support a programme of domestic engagements. Subject to your direction and priorities, these typically include camps and base visits, meetings with diplomatic representatives, speeches, and participation in ceremonial events such as military graduations and commemorations. These engagements provide valuable opportunities to connect with personnel and understand the operational activity of the Defence Force.

### Defence industry

The Defence Industry Advisory Council (the Council) was established in 1994 as a ministerial advisory body reporting to the Minister of Defence. Membership is made up of selected Defence industry leaders. The current chair is Greg Lowe, former Chief Executive of Beca and co-chair of the Australia–New Zealand Leadership Forum.

The New Zealand Defence Industry Strategy committed to re-invigorating the Council. New Terms of Reference have refreshed the Council's mandate to include advice on:

- progress (and industry feedback) on implementing the Strategy;
- opportunities for, and barriers to Defence and industry collaboration and innovation; and
- strengthening New Zealand's Defence industrial base.

s9(2)(f)(iv)

### Minister of Defence Awards of Excellence to Industry

The Council also administers the annual Minister of Defence Awards of Excellence to Industry.

Established in 1998, the Minister of Defence Awards of Excellence to Industry highlight and reward the contribution made by industry in supporting Defence. The Awards are presented in an annual event hosted by the Minister of Defence and the Council. Being a finalist for an award is highly prized by Industry and winning is a significant achievement.

The last Awards were held on 19 May 2025 in Parliament's Banquet Hall. s6(a)

Officials will look to work with your Office regarding your attendance and will provide supporting briefings.

# VOTE DEFENCE AND VOTE DEFENCE FORCE BUDGET APPROPRIATIONS

There are separate funding Votes for the work of the Ministry of Defence – Vote Defence – and the New Zealand Defence Force – Vote Defence Force.

## Ministry of Defence

Vote Defence is administered by the Ministry which delivers its work through two appropriations: a departmental appropriation and a Crown capital appropriation on behalf of the Minister of Defence.

### Departmental appropriation

The departmental appropriation *Ministry of Defence Outputs* funds the Ministry's day-to-day operations, including defence policy advice, international defence relations, audit and assessments, and development of defence capability options up to the Approval to Deliver and capitalisation stage.

The Ministry's baseline appropriation (revenue Crown) for 2025/26 is \$24.944 million. This increases to \$26.838 million in 2026/27 due to increased funding approved in Budget 2025 to support the delivery of the Defence Capability Plan. s9(2)(f)(iv)

s9(2)(f)(iv) You will be provided with more detailed information as part of the Budget focused supplementary briefing as part of your introduction to the portfolio.

### Non-departmental appropriation

The non-departmental multi-category appropriation *Defence Capabilities MCA* funds the acquisition of defence capabilities on behalf of the NZDF and is allocated after Cabinet approval of business cases for specific projects. The Ministry is currently managing 31 acquisition projects with total budgets of \$6.4 billion, with \$1.4 billion of this total remaining to be spent (as at 28 February 2026).

The Ministry is currently appropriated for \$384.888 million in 2025/26, and \$279.641 million in 2026/27.

The level of capital expenditure under this appropriation largely depends on the stage of the delivery cycle for high-value projects. While the P-8A and C130J aircraft were in production phase annual expenditure was over \$900 million for several years.

## New Zealand Defence Force

Vote Defence Force is administered by the NZDF and contains appropriations that are detailed in seven output classes.

The Vote Defence Force appropriations for 2025/26 financial year include \$4,014 million for Departmental Output Expenses and \$923 million for Capital Expenditure. For the purposes of reporting Defence expenditure relative to GDP, NZDF includes Personnel and Direct Operating (e.g. activities, training, and maintenance) expenditure within Output Expenses and Capital Expenditure. That expenditure appropriated for 2025/26 equates to 1.16% of GDP (2024/25 1.15%). As a result of the planned commitments in the DCP this is forecast to rise to 2 percent of GDP by 2032/33.

The NZDF's operating model is characterised by comparatively low variable operating costs relative to its total baseline. Relatively small increases in operating funding result in higher asset utilisation and significant increases in activity.

The NZDF continues to face cost pressures with price increases particularly in estate maintenance, logistics, munitions, maintenance, repair, and overhaul, and in information services.

## Budget 2026

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The NZDF readiness states of military capabilities used to support response options for Government are managed through the NZDF Outputs Framework:

Prepare	Protect, Project and Inform	Veterans' Affairs
1. Navy Capabilities Prepared for Joint Operations	4. Operations to Protect New Zealand and New Zealanders	7. Supporting our Veterans
2. Army Capabilities Prepared for Joint Operations	5. Operations Contributing to New Zealand's Security, Stability and Interests	
3. Air Force Capabilities prepared for Joint Operations	6. Advice to the Government	

# DEFENCE LEADERSHIP TEAMS

The Ministry of Defence, Strategic Leadership team and the members of New Zealand Defence Force Leadership Team are outlined below.

Ministry of Defence	New Zealand Defence Force
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**Brook Barrington**  
Secretary of Defence

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[Redacted]  
[Redacted]



**Air Marshal Tony Davies**  
Chief of Defence Force

s9(2)(a)  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]



**Sarah Minson**  
Deputy Secretary Capability Delivery

s9(2)(a)  
[Redacted]



**Rear Admiral Mat Williams**  
Vice Chief of Defence Force

s9(2)(a)  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]



**Anton Youngman**  
Deputy Secretary Strategy Management and Assessment

s9(2)(a)  
[Redacted]



**Rear Admiral Garin Golding**  
Chief of Navy

s9(2)(a)  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]



**Hamish Rogers**  
Deputy Secretary Ministerial, Governance and Assurance

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[Redacted]



**Major General Rose King**  
Chief of Army

s9(2)(a)  
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**Richard Schmidt**  
Deputy Secretary Defence Policy and Planning

s9(2)(a)



**Melissa Thorn**  
Chief People Officer

s9(2)(a)



**Dr Huntley Wright**  
Assistant Secretary, Capability Delivery

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**Air Vice-Marshal Darryn Webb**  
Chief of Air Force

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**Major General Rob Krushka**  
Commander Joint Forces New Zealand

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**Air Vice-Marshal Andy Woods**  
Chief Joint Defence Services

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**Jacinda Funnell**  
Chief People Officer

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**Commodore Brendon Oakley**  
Chief Defence Strategy Management

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**Bridget Marks**  
Chief Financial Officer

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**Brigadier Grant Motley**  
Chief of Staff

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[Redacted]  
[Redacted]



**Warrant Officer Wiremu Moffitt**  
Warrant Officer of Defence Force

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## ANNEX A: OVERVIEW OF THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

The Ministry of Defence (the Ministry) is the Government's lead civilian advisor on defence matters. It is responsible for purchasing major capability used by the New Zealand Defence Force in order to enhance the security and national interests of New Zealand and its people. Our work can be categorised into the following four areas:

### Plan

The Ministry regularly assesses major strategic trends and conducts in-depth assessments on emerging and evolving issues that could affect New Zealand's national security interests.

These assessments inform the Government's defence policy settings.

The Ministry assesses the strategic environment and provides Government with civilian advice on Defence policy issues including advice on future investment options. The Ministry undertakes reviews of Defence policy and strategy settings as well as specific pieces of policy work as directed by the Minister such as legislative reform and planning for future capability investments.

### Equip

Once Cabinet has approved an investment of major military equipment, the Ministry is responsible for the successful delivery of the project from procurement to introduction into service. This work is done in partnership with the NZDF, through integrated teams.

The system developed by the Ministry to manage these significant procurements has been assessed as "the leading example for long-term capital planning within the public sector". The value this adds to New Zealand is the assurance that these projects are well managed and fiscal risks are mitigated.

### Partner

Strong international defence relationships help New Zealand to work closely with trusted

partners in responding to security challenges, and support New Zealand's broader foreign and economic policy objectives.

The Ministry assists the Minister to engage at a Ministerial level in bilateral and multi-lateral environments.

The Ministry also works with the NZDF to shape New Zealand's relationships with foreign militaries and security organisations. The Ministry provides advice to Government and direction on defence relationships to maximise New Zealand's security and broader interests.

The Ministry also leads the development of advice to the Government on deployments of NZDF personnel and assets, and international defence engagements. This work is done in line with New Zealand's national security priorities, jointly with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and other relevant agencies.

### Assess

The Ministry also conducts audits and assessments of the NZDF and the Ministry's military procurements to support continuous improvement as part of an annual work programme approved by the Minister.

To ensure the audit and assessment effort is efficiently targeted, the work programme focuses on areas presenting the greatest risk to the Defence system that are not being addressed by another programme of work.

### Workforce

The Ministry comprises 200 staff with the majority working on multi-year, large scale military procurement which is funded largely from capital expenditure. The Ministry's workforce changes as a result of capital projects being completed and new ones approved. Almost half of our workforce are employed on fixed term employment agreements to deliver these projects.

## Ministry of Defence by the numbers

**\$522 million**

2024/25 spend on the procurement of major military capabilities for the New Zealand Defence Force



**31**

In-flight Defence-led projects

**\$24.9 million**

The Ministry's operating expenditure in 2025/26



**80**

International bilateral **engagements** in 2024/25 at senior officials' level

**32**

Approximate number of international Ministerial **engagements** the Ministry supported (2024/25)

**3.55 / 5**

Independent review of the quality of the Ministry's policy advice



**4.1 / 5**

Minister of Defence's rating for the quality of the Ministry's policy advice



**200**

Staff working at the Ministry as at March 2026

## ANNEX B: OVERVIEW OF THE NEW ZEALAND DEFENCE FORCE

The NZDF is a modern, professional military that is ready and able to protect New Zealand's national interests at home and abroad through a range of military response options and outputs delivered across diverse geographic and operational environments. The NZDF's contributions to peace and security provides an integral component of the national security architecture.

The fundamental role of the NZDF is to have military capability - people, equipment, and information - available to meet the Government's defence and national security objectives. Maintaining a credible, combat capable and effective Armed Forces is the NZDF's highest priority.

The NZDF is required to conduct overseas operations; protect our borders and ocean resources; sustain our scientists in Antarctica; respond to emergencies such as earthquakes or floods undertake search and rescue operations; assist government agencies to provide a public service; and respond to explosive ordnance disposal call outs.

### Work with other government agencies

The NZDF is a key part of New Zealand's broader security system and works in partnership with many other Government agencies to conduct activities within New Zealand, the Pacific and the Southern Ocean.

This work includes protecting New Zealand's resources, enforcing protected areas, giving effect to constitutional obligations, providing search and rescue assistance, building experience and capacity, and delivering lifesaving emergency relief.

The NZDF is part of the **External Sector** which is administered by four departments – the NZDF, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the New Zealand Customs Service. These departments are collectively responsible for managing most of New Zealand's official relationships with the rest of the world and protecting its security beyond our border.

### Veterans' Affairs

The NZDF is a large and complex organisation that also includes Veterans' Affairs (VA). As an operational unit within the NZDF, VA upholds New Zealand's responsibility to honour the service of veterans.

VA does this through service delivery to the veteran community and the provision of policy advice to the Government. The Minister for Veterans is responsible for the appropriations for VA within Vote Defence Force.

### Readiness for contingent military operations

Readiness for military operations is the most significant output the Government purchases from the NZDF. Readiness for contingent military operations is a risk-managed posture, based on response time, sustainability and cost. It provides an effective hedge against future uncertainty, facilitating the ability to generate relevant military responses for given situations.

Readiness is achieved through training activities directly related to likely military response options required by the Government and guided by the associated mission essential tasks. These activities are informed by approved training schedules based on military doctrine, partner nation training regimes, experience gained from operations, professional military judgment, and wargaming to test and prove future operating concepts.

# NZDF BY THE NUMBERS

As of February 2026

## NZDF HEADCOUNT



**2207**  
Royal New Zealand Navy

**4355**  
New Zealand Army

**2489**  
Royal New Zealand Air Force

**1759**  
Reserve Force  
(Ready Reserve only)

**2924**  
Civilian

## GENDER

Regular Force and Civilian

**74.8%**  
Male

**25.2%**  
Female

## ESTATE AND INFRASTRUCTURE FOOTPRINT



**9**  
camps and bases

**2**  
large training areas

**4700**  
more than  
4700 buildings

**81,000**  
hectares

## People

NZDF people serve voluntarily on behalf of New Zealand and New Zealanders. Members of the Armed Forces are not employees under the Public Service Act 2020 – they serve under the Defence Act 1990 and are not subject to New Zealand employment legislation. This creates special obligations on the NZDF and the Government to consider the unique interests of military personnel and the special relationship that service requires.

The Defence Act gives the Chief of Defence Force the authority to direct those who volunteer to serve in the defence and protection of New Zealand into harm's way. In return, the Chief of Defence Force has a responsibility to care for, and fairly reward and compensate, uniformed personnel for their courage, comradeship, commitment, and integrity.

The NZDF comprises three Services: the Royal New Zealand Navy, the New Zealand Army and the Royal New Zealand Air Force, as well as a reserve force and civilian staff.

The NZDF is one of New Zealand's largest education providers, and personnel are integral

members of local communities throughout the country.

NZDF personnel are extremely diverse and capable people, trained in command, planning, leadership, operations, and logistics support. They participate in and support operational deployments, training and recruitment, both in New Zealand and overseas.

Service Chiefs are the professional heads of their respective Service, responsible for delivery of their Service activities to ensure their Force Elements are trained, equipped, and prepared for operational employment.

These activities prepare soldiers, sailors and aviators to operate in uncertain, complex and austere environments that can deteriorate without warning.

While there are commonalities across the Services, each is optimised to meet the varied requirements of its environmental domain (air, land and maritime).

Service Chiefs and the Commander Joint Forces New Zealand are the primary advisors to the Chief of Defence Force on matters relating to their respective domains.

## Reserve forces

As well as full-time Regular Force personnel, the NZDF provides extra military capacity through the Reserves, who work and train for the NZDF part-time (while carrying out a full-time civilian career or study).

Reserves supplement the Regular Force by providing specialist roles and a contingent capability in the event of a large-scale or specialist military deployment. Reservists are required to be ready to step into a full-time military role at any time.

## NZDF civilian personnel

NZDF civilian employees fill a wide range of non-military specialist and corporate roles including Legal Services, Logistics, Estate and Infrastructure, Defence Intelligence and Defence Digital.

The wide variety of work they do supports and sustains an integrated, combat-ready defence force and the effectiveness of operations. Many civilian personnel are ex-Regular Force or Reservists who assist with providing the continuity and resilience necessary to support an agile and adaptable force.

## Royal New Zealand Navy

New Zealand's physical location, geographical isolation and dependence on the maintenance of maritime trade routes and sea lines of communication make New Zealand a maritime nation.

The Navy's people and ships respond to a range of situations and operational contexts such as:

- maritime combat operations,
- search and rescue,
- underwater recovery,
- trade and resource protection,
- defence engagement,
- peacekeeping, and

- humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

The Navy's projection, sustainment, presence and profile provide the Government with an important tool to respond quickly to emergency situations around New Zealand's 15,000-kilometre coastline, the Southern Ocean and into the Asia-Pacific region.

The Navy's capabilities operate across the ninth largest Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the world providing presence and response to detect and deter, as directed by Government, to support the peace, stability and prosperity of New Zealand.

## New Zealand Army

The Army is a modern, agile, light combat force that is regarded as world-class among our military partners and strategic stakeholders. The Army provides utility and contingency options to Government across a diverse range of missions and tasks.

The Army generates combat ready, multi-purpose land forces, trained and equipped to protect and defend New Zealanders and our national security interests.

The Army's land forces consist of multiple deployable groups that are interoperable with the Navy, the Air Force, our ally Australia and partners. The Army is designed to be flexible enough to suit multiple threats, environments or missions. Operating as a combined group or as a discrete capability contribution, the Army provides the following combat capabilities:

- special forces,
- light infantry,
- light engineering,
- protected mobility,
- artillery,
- reconnaissance, and
- surveillance.

To meet a wide range of contingencies, combat elements are complemented by support elements that include logistics, communications, engineering and health. Utilising long-established relationships, both globally and in the region, the Army is a valued partner, protecting New Zealand's interests at home and abroad.

## Royal New Zealand Air Force

The Air Force working alongside the Navy, the Army, and a broad range of government and non-government agencies, supports the protection of New Zealand's interests and responds rapidly to emerging situations at home, across the Pacific, and globally.

The Air Force is a highly trained and agile force that employs advanced airborne and ground-based technologies to deliver air and space domain effects. It maintains personnel at directed readiness to respond to domestic and deployed operations. To prepare, project, protect, operate and sustain the Air Force, capabilities include:

- long range surveillance,
- strike,
- anti-submarine warfare,
- search and rescue,
- air mobility fixed and rotary wing,
- space domain operations and awareness,
- training and force generation, and
- air base infrastructure and functions needed to support air and space operations.

## The Defence Estate

The Defence Estate, maintained by the NZDF on behalf of the Government, comprises 81,000 hectares of land (the third largest Crown holding) and over 4,700 buildings across nine camps and bases, two primary land training areas at Waiouru and Tekapo, and numerous regional support facilities in urban centres.

The Estate requires a wide range of environments (land, maritime and air) and assets (property, infrastructure, land and facilities) to generate and maintain military skills and capabilities for over 14,500 personnel and security partners. It enables the NZDF to carry out the tasks required by the Government, respond to contingencies and support other government agencies and communities.

The Estate is a strategic asset for both the NZDF and the nation with a carrying value of \$5.290 billion as at 30 June 2025. Since 2024, buildings and infrastructure have increased 14% in value. Investment in the Defence Estate is vital to enable defence policy and DCP delivery. It needs to provide for realistic but safe training and effective operations, the wellbeing of NZDF personnel, and support economic growth and resilience in the regions.

The NZDF has a dedicated organisation to manage, plan and deliver a more modern estate. However, the gap between the actual and the desired Estate continues to widen, directly risking Defence Output delivery, personnel wellbeing, and readiness for operations.

The NZDF requires a fit-for-purpose, sustainable and resilient Defence Estate that enables the full range of tasks the Government requires of it. The NZDF camps and bases, training areas and regional facilities suffer from historic under investment and deferred maintenance, resulting in significant asset degradation. This exposes the NZDF to a continued very high risk of asset failure that compromises its ability to operate in a

deteriorating security environment and meet defence policy expectations stated in the DCP.

The Defence Estate Portfolio Plan (DEPP 2025) approved by Cabinet in August 2025 represents investments in the Estate Portfolio to 2040. The portfolio approach aligns with the DCP indicative funding envelope and priorities, and external reports such as the Quarterly Investment Intentions report to The Treasury. It includes significant Capital and Operating expenditure investments regardless of funding source and initiator. It is a significant change from the 2016 and 2019 Estate Plans, which focused on investments to regenerate existing Estate assets and were referred to as 'Defence Estate Regeneration Plans' – 'DERP'.

A separate Defence Estate Strategy presents the objectives and key actions required to deliver a fit for purpose and sustainable Estate that enables Defence Outputs. s6(a)

## Defence diplomacy

The NZDF maintains a network of Defence Attachés and Advisers around the world. There are 18 DA resident posts, with non-resident accreditations to a further 31 countries and three organisations (the United Nations, NATO and the European Union).

DAs are the face of New Zealand's bilateral defence relationships overseas. They advocate for, and assist with, the implementation of defence relationships and provide military perspectives on significant geostrategic events through diplomatic post reporting. The NZDF also maintains a Military Adviser at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

## Governing the NZDF

The NZDF delivers Defence Outputs and outcomes for New Zealanders in partnership with the Ministry of Defence and in accordance with the Defence Act 1990, the Veterans' Support Act 2014, and other regulations.

The command structure of the NZDF is a chain that emanates from the Crown through to the Chief of Defence Force, then branches out to the three Services; the Royal New Zealand Navy, the New Zealand Army and the Royal New Zealand Air Force, as well as Joint Forces New Zealand. Military command is executed from the New Zealand Defence Force Headquarters.

The NZDF Governance Framework supports the NZDF's strategic decision-making process. The NZDF has recently (2025) implemented a new governance structure to create greater clarity in the roles of each committee and efficiency within the system. The new structure is described below:

- **The Military Governance Board (MGB)** defines the purpose of and provides the strategic military leadership of the NZDF. It agrees to and delivers the NZDF's Military Strategy.
- **The Organisational Governance Board (OGB)** coordinates NZDF structure and systems to deliver the MGB's directed strategy.
- **The Investment Committee** makes coordinated investment decisions to enable the OGB's directed delivery strategy.
- **The Planning and Performance Committee** governs delivery of business-as-usual outputs in line with the intent provided by the OGB.
- **The Risk and Assurance Committee** assesses the effectiveness of the NZDF's control and risk management frameworks and delivers an independent assurance function for the Chief of Defence Force. It also provides insights and recommendations to the OGB when significant risks are identified.

## Governance arrangements with the Ministry of Defence

The CDF and the Secretary of Defence also co-chair the **Capability Governance Board**, which provides ongoing assurance that projects, programmes and the capital investment portfolio will deliver the expected outcomes and benefits.

In addition to the joint governance arrangements that are part of the Capability Management System, a joint **Defence Business Committee** (DBC) supports work between the agencies on organisational and policy priorities.

[Redacted text block]

## Statutory and non-statutory appointments

### Defence Employer Support Council

The Minister of Defence is responsible for appointing the members of the **Territorial Employer Support Council** (the Council). The Council was established under the Defence Act 1990 in order to promote service in the Territorial Forces and to advise the Minister on related matters. Ministerial approval was given in 2016 for the Council to operate and be referred to as the **Defence Employer Support Council** (DESC).

The DESC consists of a Chair, an NZDF representative (currently Chief of Army, Major General Rose King, and up to eight appointed members.

The DESC is independent of the NZDF, holding four meetings each year. [Redacted text block]

## Youth Development

The NZDF supports youth development programmes in the community. Each year,

approximately 180 qualified NZDF personnel drawn from the Regular Force, Reserves, and NZDF Civil Staff deliver development and training support to more than 5,000 youth trainees and cadets.

The NZDF has arrangements with the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Education, and Blue Light Ventures delivering a range of positive youth and social intervention programmes in a safe and rewarding environment.

Under the Defence Act, the NZDF provides the New Zealand Cadet Forces with military style training and supervision in a disciplined environment.

### Limited Service Volunteers Scheme

The Limited Services Volunteer (LSV) Scheme is an intensive residential six week training course established to help young people aged 18–24 who are at risk of long-term unemployment.

The course assists participants in gaining resilience, fitness and new skills. Sponsored and partly funded by the Ministry of Social Development and supported by the New Zealand Police, the programme utilises the expertise of NZDF personnel to encourage young people to find a pathway into employment or education. The LSV scheme currently has the capacity to train up to 1,200 voluntary trainees annually.

Future plans include efforts to provide enhanced pathways for suitable LSV graduates to be offered careers in the NZDF.

[Redacted text block]

### New Zealand Cadet Forces

The New Zealand Cadet Forces (NZCF) is the oldest and second largest youth organisation in New Zealand. The NZCF is a disciplined, uniformed organisation which provides military-

based leadership, personal development and operational training to people aged between 13 and 18 years old. There are currently 98 Cadet Units with approximately 3,400 Cadets and a further 350 Adult Cadet Officers.

Through its three branches (Sea, Army, and Air), the NZCF provides personnel with a three-year training curriculum, while a number of unit, area and national courses provide further experience and qualifications in specific training areas.

Cadets learn a variety of skills, both practical and personal, which can have positive flow-on effects in other areas of their lives, from school to future employment.

#### **Military-Style Academy**

While Oranga Tamariki (OT) is responsible for the operation of the Youth Military Academy, the NZDF contributed in several defined areas, particularly where youth development expertise and lessons from experience with Limited Service Volunteers was relevant. NZDF involvement ranged from participation in the Youth Military Academy Steering Committee, curriculum design (including seconded support within the OT planning team), staff training and access to facilities to support staff development.

Released by the Minister of Defence