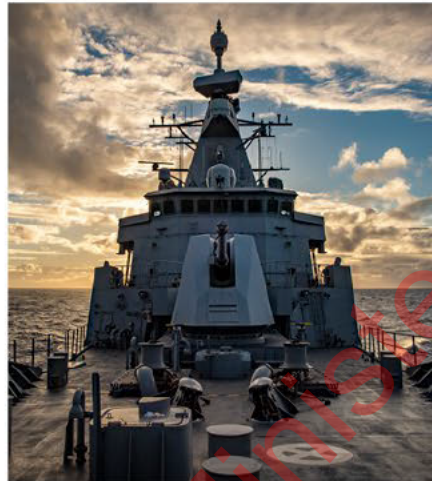




2026 BRIEFING TO THE INCOMING MINISTER OF DEFENCE

Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

August 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 5)
- 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, and
- 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), and
- 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 6) for the Defence portfolio. Under the Defence Act 1990 (the Defence 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 Defence 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 Defence 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 Defence 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.

Inspector General of Defence

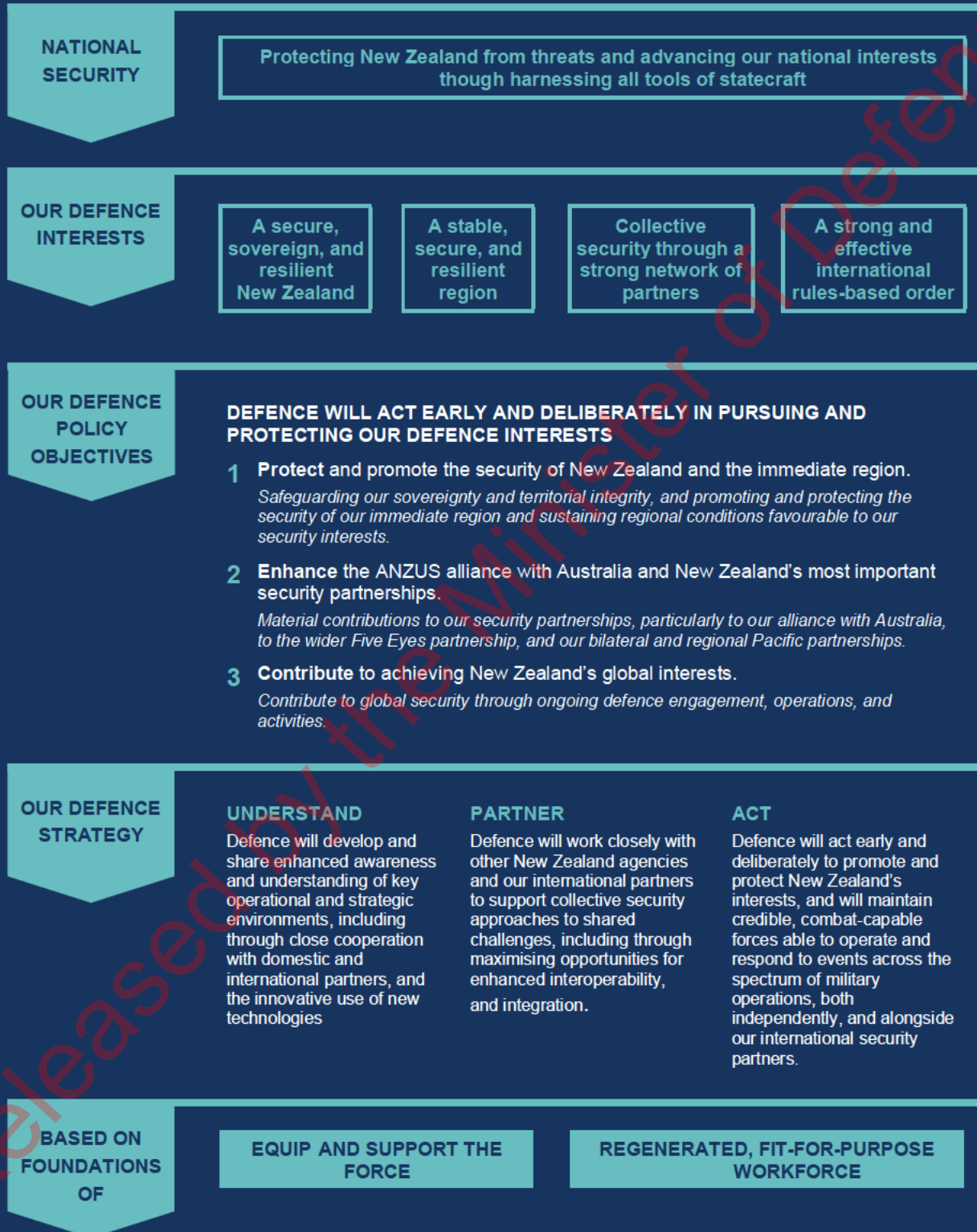
Established in 2023 the **Inspector General of Defence** (IGD) can investigate matters or disclosures in relation to the activities of the New Zealand Defence Force.

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.

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 May 2026, the then Minister of Defence identified four 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.

Maintain operational effectiveness and strengthen New Zealand's international partnerships

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

Defence continues 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. This includes supporting a variety of international engagements and increased contributions to collective security efforts globally, with a particular focus on enhancing New Zealand's alliance with Australia and promoting stability in the Indo-Pacific.

Strengthen New Zealand industry

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

Implement the Defence Capability Plan and improve the quality of advice provided to Cabinet

Defence is implementing the pipeline of projects outlined in the *2025 Defence Capability Plan* at pace. In addition, the two-yearly review cycle of the DCP 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 Ministry is working to review and enhance its policy advice, in line with all-of-government policy improvement work, and to support quality investment advice to deliver on the DCP.

Further details on delivery of these priorities are provided in the subsequent pages.

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, and reach 2% of GDP, by 2033.

Implementation

Delivery of the DCP is progressing well, with significant investment decisions that align with strategic priorities already announced. Across Budgets 2025 and 2026, there has been \$5.8 billion of total new investment in Defence.

Budget 2026

In Budget 2026, \$700 million of capital funding, the majority over the next four years, and an \$85.5 million per annum average operating uplift were provided to implement projects identified in the DCP. This included:

- **Maritime fleet renewal programme:** \$51 million operating funding over the next four years in the overall programme looking at the make-up of New Zealand's maritime fleet. For more details see the section below. There is also funding for two uncrewed systems with final business cases under development:
 - Uncrewed surface vessels and enabling systems to provide long-duration intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance over the South-West Pacific.
 - A polar-capable uncrewed aerial system to conduct a range of missions from Royal New Zealand Navy vessels to enhance maritime domain awareness and supplement polar patrol capability.

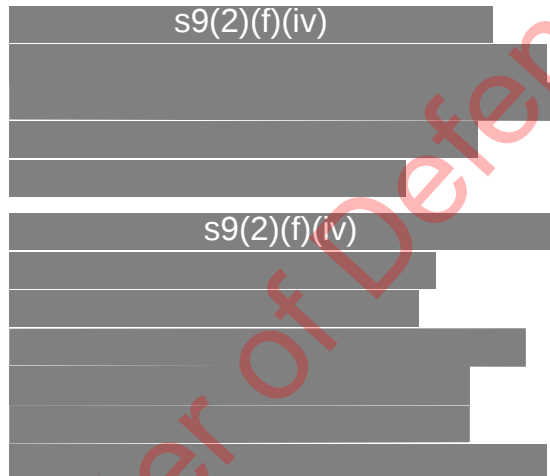
- **Maritime sustainment and restoration:** \$143 million capital and \$72 million operating over four years for critical maintenance on the Anzac frigates and HMNZS *Canterbury*.
- s6(a) for further work to extend the life of the frigates while the fleet renewal programme develops options for their replacement.
- **Training:** Building a modern secure training facility at Linton Military Camp to prepare soldiers for mission planning in contemporary combat scenarios.
 - There is also \$23 million capital and \$2.5 million operating over four years for initial design work to modernise recruit training, which includes targeted funding for immediate critical upgrades in areas such as the rifle range at Waiouru as well as simulation and other tools.
- **Updating classified digital services:** Funding the next phase of a programme of work to update classified digital services. s9(2)(f)(iv)
- **Technology accelerator:** \$1.5 million capital and \$16 million operating over four years on a pilot programme focused on connecting industry with Defence to solve specific military challenges.
- **Defence housing programme – Homes for Families:** Continuing the long-term programme to provide new housing at various defence locations.

Budget 2025

In Budget 2025, the Government made investment decisions worth more than \$3 billion for priority projects under the DCP. This included:

- 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.



As well as new investments, the Government released the *Defence Estate Portfolio Plan* 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.

Maritime Fleet Renewal programme

As outlined in the DCP, most of the Royal New Zealand Navy fleet will reach end of life by the mid-2030s, which is why a Maritime Fleet Renewal programme has been established.

New Zealand is prioritising discussions with the Royal Navy and Royal Australian Navy to inform the next stage for potentially replacing the Anzac frigates and ongoing service arrangements.

The decision to prioritise discussions with partners and focus on the Japanese designed Mogami class frigate selected by Australia and the UK's Type 31 frigate to inform the business case reflects our need to be interoperable and

to work with those we already have strong and enduring defence and security arrangements with. These two combat vessel programmes are mature and are at a stage that allows adequate analysis against New Zealand requirements.

However, no final decisions have been made, and no solution ruled out. Advice on next steps is expected to be provided to Cabinet before the end of 2027.

Replacement of New Zealand's Anzac frigates has been identified as future indicative investment in the 2029–2039 period. Selection of combat capabilities within the future fleet will be determined through the usual business case process.

Assurance

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

An updated classified Integrated Investment Plan is provided to you twice a year to show a summary of the detailed investments underpinning the DCP. The latest version of Plan is available to your Office, which reflects Budget 2026 decisions.

A quarterly report is provided to EXP Ministers every three months to provide detail on progress in implementation of the plan. The latest version of this report, for the quarter ending in June, is available to your Office. This report is intended to supplement Quarterly Investment Reporting 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 is being 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, underway now, and expected to continue through 2026 and into 2027, focused on developing and balancing prioritised options. s9(2)(f)(iv)

Phase 3 – Deliver, will involve the drafting of advice to Cabinet setting out options and an updated DCP for public release in 2027.

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.

s9(2)(f)(iv)

DEFENCE INDUSTRY AND STRATEGY

Defence 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.

Defence is using its international engagement programme to champion New Zealand defence companies and help open pathways into overseas markets. Industry engagement is increasingly being built into inbound and outbound visit programmes. The core message is that New Zealand firms are producing high-quality capabilities and components sought by partner defence forces, and international Prime Suppliers that partner with New Zealand companies will be better positioned to succeed in the New Zealand defence market.

Defence Industry Advisory Council

The Defence Industry Advisory Council (the Council) was established in 1994 as a ministerial advisory body reporting to the Minister of Defence.

The Strategy committed to re-invigorating the Council. New Terms of Reference and membership were refreshed in May 2026. The Council's mandate now includes 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.

The Council is Defence's partner in implementing the Strategy. The new Chair is Sarah Ramsay, who is the Chief Executive Officer at United Machinists.

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.

Collective deterrence depends on strong partnerships. 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]
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]

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.

s6(a)

Contingent on any early Ministerial overseas travel to meet with your counterparts, the Ministry will provide your office with full briefings to support these specific 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.

There is an **opportunity to travel to Australia to meet your counterparts on 18–20 August.** s6(a)

[Redacted]

s6(a)

Engagement in the Pacific

There are 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)

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 scheduled to take place 21–24 September.

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 27–30 October.

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 May 2026 ahead of an **FPDA Defence Ministers Meeting** in 2027.

s6(a)

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 2026/27 is \$29.280 million. This includes additional funding of \$2.444 million that was approved through Budget 2026, predominantly to support growth in New Zealand's defence industry, delivery of the Defence Capability Plan (DCP), and to fund personnel resources for the Maritime Fleet Renewal Programme.

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 29 acquisition projects with total budgets of \$6.7 billion, with \$1.5 billion of this total remaining to be spent (as at 31 July 2026).

The Ministry is currently appropriated for \$279.641 million in 2026/27. s9(2)(f)(iv)



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 Poseidon and C130J Hercules 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 2026/27 financial year include \$4,209 million for Departmental Output Expenses and \$1,062 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 2026/27 equates to 1.21% of GDP (1.16% in 2025/26). As a result of the planned commitments in the DCP this is forecast to rise to 2 percent of GDP by 2033.

The appropriated funding will allow the NZDF to deliver year two of the DCP. Maritime Fleet Renewal, Frigate Sustainment and Extension, Defence Information, Science and Technology, and Land Training and Simulation are the key new investments. Budget 2026 new annual operating funding included:

- \$43.5 million (\$174 million over four years) to meet cost increases and ensure NZDF personnel and equipment is ready to deploy to protect New Zealand's interests.
- \$5 million (\$20 million over four years) to regenerate operational trades and critical support functions.
- \$30 million (\$120 million over four years) to bring Defence Force pay closer to market rates, and to meet additional non-discretionary remuneration increases.
- \$1.5 million (\$6 million over four years) for Veterans' Affairs to meet new legal obligations with processing of applications to support veterans.
- s6(a) to support implementation of the DCP as well as operating costs related to major projects.

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.

s6(a)

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

NZDF's Performance Plan which included Budget 2026 decisions was finalised at the end of July.

Performance Plans provide assurance that agencies can deliver within set baselines and support ongoing Budget planning and decision making.

s9(2)(f)(iv)

s9(2)(f)(iv)

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	

Released by the Minister of Defence

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



Brook Barrington
Secretary of Defence



Sarah Minson
Deputy Secretary Capability Delivery



Anton Youngman
Deputy Secretary Strategy Management and
Assessment



Hamish Rogers
Deputy Secretary Ministerial, Governance and
Assurance

New Zealand Defence Force



Air Marshal Tony Davies
Chief of Defence Force



Rear Admiral Mat Williams
Vice Chief of Defence Force



Rear Admiral Garin Golding
Chief of Navy



Major General Rose King
Chief of Army



Richard Schmidt
Deputy Secretary Defence Policy and Planning



Air Vice-Marshal Darryn Webb
Chief of Air Force



Melissa Thorn
Chief People Officer



Major General Rob Krushka
Commander Joint Forces New Zealand



Dr Huntley Wright
Assistant Secretary, Capability Delivery



Air Vice-Marshal Andy Woods
Chief Joint Defence Services



Mathew Parr
Chief Financial Officer



Jacinda Funnell
Chief People Officer



Commodore Brendon Oakley
Chief Defence Strategy Management



Bridget Marks
Chief Financial Officer



Brigadier Grant Motley
Chief of Staff



Warrant Officer Wiremu Moffitt
Warrant Officer of Defence Force

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 (NZDF) 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 Capability Management System developed by Defence 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 approximately 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 because of capital projects being completed and new ones approved. Almost half of our workforce is employed on fixed term employment agreements to deliver these projects.

ANNEX B: OVERVIEW OF THE NEW ZEALAND DEFENCE FORCE

The New Zealand Defence Force (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 31 July 2026

NZDF HEADCOUNT



2237

Royal New Zealand Navy

4491

New Zealand Army

2471

Royal New Zealand
Air Force

1687

Reserve Force
(Ready Reserve only)

2884

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 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.

A joint **Strategic Governance Board (SGB)** also supports work between both agencies on strategic organisational and policy priorities.

s6(a)

Armed Forces Discipline Legislation Amendment Bill

The Armed Forces Discipline Legislation Amendment Bill modernises the military justice system to make it easier to navigate and administer, better enabling command to focus on operational outputs. It also makes the military justice system fairer, more transparent, and more closely aligned to the civilian justice system. The reforms include a new streamlined and independent pathway for charges for serious offending to be laid to Court Martial, and a minor discipline sanction regime for minor military discipline lapses, as an alternative to charges being laid at summary trial.

On 4 August 2026, the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Select Committee reported back to the House, unanimously recommending all amendments and that the Bill be passed. s6(a)

Statutory and non-statutory appointments

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 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. s6(a)

Youth Development

The NZDF supports youth development programmes in the community. Each year, approximately 185 qualified NZDF personnel drawn from the Regular Force, Reserves, and NZDF Civil Staff deliver development and training support to more than 5,500 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 supports a maximum of 1,200 trainees annually with MSD and NZDF managing delivery levels based on need and safe capacity.

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

s9(2)(g)(i)

s6(a)

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 to 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