

HON Paul Goldsmith, MINISTER OF DEFENCE

Mandate Renewal for New Zealand's Contribution to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan

June 2026

This publication provides documents on Cabinet's 30 June 2026 decision to renew the mandate for the New Zealand Defence Force's (NZDF) support to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

The pack comprises the following documents:

- the redacted Cabinet minute of decision: *Mandate Renewal for New Zealand's Contribution to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan [FPS-26-MIN-0013]*
- the redacted Cabinet paper: *Mandate Renewal for New Zealand's Contribution to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan [FPS-26-SUB-0013]*

This pack has been released on the Ministry of Defence website, available at:

<https://www.defence.govt.nz/publications/>

It has been necessary to withhold certain information in accordance with the following provisions of the Official Information Act 1982. Where information is withheld, the relevant sections of the Act are indicated in the body of the document. Where information has been withheld in accordance with section 9(2) of the Act, no public interest has been identified that would outweigh the reasons for withholding it.

Information is withheld where making it available would be likely to prejudice:

- the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the Government of New Zealand [section 6(a)]
- the entrusting of information to the Government of New Zealand on the basis of confidence by the Government of any other country [section 6(b)(i)]
- the entrusting of information to the Government of New Zealand on a basis of confidence by any international organisation [section 6(b)(ii)].

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- maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions by or between or to Ministers of the Crown or members of an organisation or officers and employees of any department or organisation in the course of their duty [section 9(2)(g)(i)]
- maintain legal professional privilege [section 9(2)(h)]



Cabinet Foreign Policy and National Security Committee

Minute of Decision

This document contains information for the New Zealand Cabinet. It must be treated in confidence and handled in accordance with any security classification, or other endorsement. The information can only be released, including under the Official Information Act 1982, by persons with the appropriate authority.

Mandate Renewal for New Zealand's Contribution to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan

Portfolio Defence

On 30 June 2026, the Cabinet Foreign Policy and National Security Committee:

- 1 **noted** that the mandate for the New Zealand Defence Force's (NZDF) support to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) will expire on 30 September 2026 [FPS-24-MIN-0006];
- 2 [REDACTED] s6(a)
- 3 **noted** that the operational and health threat levels for personnel deployed to South Sudan is [REDACTED] s6(a)
- 4 [REDACTED] s6(a)
- 5 **agreed** to the strategic objectives for the deployment, as outlined in the submission under FPS-26-SUB-0013;
- 6 **approved** the deployment of up to three personnel to UNMISS from 1 October 2026 until 30 September 2028;
- 7 **authorised** the Chief of Defence Force to bid for a further two roles within the mission, if the opportunity to do so arises;
- 8 [REDACTED] s6(a)
- 9 **noted** that the total estimated cost of the deployment is \$2.143 million with \$0.800 million in the 2026/27 financial year, \$1.073 million in the 2027/28 financial year, and \$0.270 million in the 2028/29 financial year;

- 10 **noted** that the above decisions can be fully funded from unallocated funding available within the Vote Defence Force *Operations Contributing to New Zealand's Security, Stability and Interests* Multi-Category Appropriation;
- 11 **noted** that the above decisions are estimated to increase the value of the Veterans' support entitlement by \$0.527 million, which can be funded within the existing unallocated baseline for Vote Defence Force Appropriation *Service Cost – Veteran's Entitlement*;

12 [REDACTED] s6(a)

13 [REDACTED] s6(a)

Jenny Vickers
Committee Secretary

Present:

Rt Hon Christopher Luxon
Hon David Seymour
Rt Hon Winston Peters (Chair)
Hon Nicola Willis
Hon Mark Mitchell
Hon Todd McClay
Hon Chris Penk
Hon Casey Costello

Officials present from:

Office of the Prime Minister
Office of the Chair of FPS
Office of the Minister of Defence
Officials Committee for FPS

Office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs

Office of the Minister of Defence

Chair, Foreign Policy and National Security Committee

MANDATE RENEWAL FOR NEW ZEALAND'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SOUTH SUDAN

Proposal

1. This paper seeks Cabinet's decision on the future of the New Zealand Defence Force's (NZDF) deployment to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

Relation to Government Priorities

2. A contribution to UNMISS demonstrates New Zealand's commitment to a strong and effective rules-based order and is in line with our defence, foreign affairs, and national security priorities.

Executive Summary

3. This paper recommends that Cabinet approve a mandate extension s6(a) deploying up to three personnel for a further two years, until September 2028.

4. s6(a) The paper also recommends that Cabinet renews the Chief of Defence Force's (CDF) authority to bid for two additional roles within the mission, if suitable opportunities arise at a later date which support New Zealand's strategic objectives.

5. s6(a)

6. The recommended option can be fully funded from unallocated baseline within the "Vote Defence Force: Operations Contributing to New Zealand's Security, Stability and Interests MCA", and no additional funding is required.

7. s6(a) this paper presents only one alternative option for the future of our commitment to UNMISS – to conclude the operation and withdraw personnel by 30 September 2026. This option is not recommended.

Background

8. New Zealand's contribution to UNMISS (known as 'Operation SUDDEN') commenced when UNMISS was established in 2011, and it is one of the two UN peacekeeping missions to which New Zealand contributes. The current NZDF deployment to UNMISS, which was last renewed in 2024, extends through to 30 September 2026.

9. The mandate for the NZDF's deployment comprises three personnel, with CDF authority to bid for an additional two positions. Under the current mandate, personnel perform support and planning roles at the UNMISS headquarters in South Sudan's capital city, Juba (see a map of the area of operations at Annex A).

10. UNMISS was initially established for a period of one year, to support peace and security in the then-newly independent South Sudan. The UN Security Council (UNSC) has consistently renewed the mission, [REDACTED] s6(a)

[REDACTED] s6(a)

11. The security environment in South Sudan continues to be inherently fragile². [REDACTED] s6(a)

12. [REDACTED] s6(a)

[REDACTED] s6(b)(ii)

In 2026, a UNSC Resolution decreased the maximum total number of personnel permitted to deploy to UNMISS by 4,500 people⁴. [REDACTED] s6(a) s6(b)(ii)

[REDACTED] s6(a), s6(b)(i)

[REDACTED] s6(a)

[REDACTED] s6(a)

14. [REDACTED] s6(a)

this peacekeeping mission plays an important role in improving humanitarian conditions in an extremely fragile context. [REDACTED] s6(a)

¹ UNSC Resolution 2820 (2026) provides the current mandate for UNMISS which extends until 30 April 2027, which focuses on protecting civilians, supporting the delivery of humanitarian assistance, supporting peace processes, and upholding human rights.

² There is widespread violence in the country, stalling of the Peace Process, substantial humanitarian needs, and political tensions ahead of the general elections planned for December 2026.

³ [REDACTED] s6(a)

⁴ UNSC Resolution 2820 (2026) sets the maximum number of military personnel to 12,500 and the maximum number of police personnel to 2,101.

Options analysis

Proposed strategic objectives⁵

15. Officials propose the following strategic objectives for the NZDF's ongoing support to UNMISS:

- a. To help maintain New Zealand's credibility as a supporter of the international rules-based order by making a tangible contribution to a UN peacekeeping mission in Africa.
- b. To make an effective contribution to supporting UN peacekeeping efforts in South Sudan, thereby reinforcing its stability and economic development, and broader regional stability.
- c. To reinforce New Zealand's relationship with the UN and strengthen partnerships with other troop contributing countries, s6(a)
- d. For the NZDF to gain experience operating in a challenging security environment and enhance the skills necessary for responding to future crises and conflict.

Criteria for options analysis

16. The two options presented in this paper for the future of the NZDF's contribution to UNMISS are assessed against four criteria: alignment with New Zealand's strategic priorities; partnerships; regional interests; and operational considerations. Fiscal impacts of each option are outlined further in the paper, separate to this analysis.

	Strategic priorities	Partnerships	Regional interests	Operational considerations
1. Extension	s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i)			
2. Withdraw				

Option one: Mandate extension s6(a) **(recommended)**

Personnel commitment	Up to three personnel
Duration	Two years: 1 October 2026 to 30 September 2028
s6(a)	

⁵ If approved by Cabinet, Defence's delivery against the proposed strategic objectives will be monitored and assessed, through internal processes, throughout the lifecycle of the deployment. Ministers will be updated on the outcomes of these assessments periodically.

s6(a)	
Delegation of authority to Chief of Defence Force	Authority to bid to the UN for an additional two roles within UNMISS, if the opportunity arises.

17. Option one sees Cabinet approve an NZDF deployment of up to three personnel to UNMISS for two years.

s6(a), s6(b)(ii)
s6(a)

18. s6(a)

19. Option one provides the Chief of Defence Force with authority to bid for two further roles within UNMISS (i.e. up to five in total).

s6(a)
Providing the Chief of Defence Force with this authority means that New Zealand can respond rapidly to an appropriate UN invitation,
s6(a)
s6(a)

Benefits of a mandate extension s6(a)

Benefits	Analysis
Credibility as a supporter of the international rules-based order	New Zealand's peacekeeping deployments provide tangible evidence that New Zealand supports the UNSC's primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.
NZDF capacity building	NZDF personnel hold roles within UNMISS' headquarters in Juba, which facilitates command and control of over 10,000 peacekeepers. This provides personnel with valuable professional training and experience supporting a large-scale mission within the UN construct with austere conditions.
New Zealand's relationships with the UN and African countries	UNMISS is New Zealand's only UN military footprint in Africa. Africa has the highest concentration of peacekeeping missions s6(a)

s6(a)

	s6(a)
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Risks of a mandate extension s6(a)

Risk	Analysis
	s6(a)
	s6(a) s6(b)(ii)
Further deterioration of the security environment	s6(a)

Option two: Withdraw all personnel (not recommended)

Commitment	Withdraw all NZDF personnel
Date for completion	By 30 September 2026

21. Option two provides Cabinet with the opportunity to conclude New Zealand's military support to UNMISS and withdraw all personnel at the end of the current mandate.

Benefits of withdrawing all personnel from UNMISS

Benefits	Analysis
Strategic benefits	Officials perceive no strategic benefit from withdrawal outside of cost savings.
Operational benefits	s6(a) resources required for raising and training personnel for this deployment would be spared.

Risks of withdrawing all personnel from UNMISS

Risk	Analysis
Credibility as a supporter of the international rules-based order	All UN member states are expected to maintain a tangible peacekeeping footprint. As such, withdrawing all support for one of the two UN missions to which New Zealand contributes would likely negatively affect our reputation as a credible supporter of the international rules-based order.
New Zealand's relationships with the UN and African countries	Withdrawing all support for UNMISS would negatively impact New Zealand's reputation as a consistent and reliable contributor to UN peacekeeping missions s6(a)
NZDF capacity building	s6(a) Due to high demand for UNMISS positions in the context of downsizing of this mission, it would be

	difficult for the NZDF to regain entry into this mission, should the Government have interest in doing so at a later date.
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s6(a)

Released by the Minister of Defence

Financial Implications

Option one: Mandate extension s6(a)

25. The recommended option to maintain and renew New Zealand’s current commitment of up to three personnel to UNMISS, with authority for the Chief of Defence Force to approve two further roles if opportunities arise from 1 October 2026 to 30 September 2028 is estimated to cost a total of \$2.143 million. This option can be fully funded from unallocated funding available within the *Vote Defence Force: Operations Contributing to New Zealand’s Security, Stability and Interests MCA*.

Estimated direct costs (\$'M)	FY25/26	FY26/27	FY27/28	FY28/29
Maintain and renew New Zealand's current commitment of up to 3 personnel to UNMISS, with Authority for the Chief of Defence Force to approve two further roles if opportunities arise. (Option 1 – Recommended)	-	0.800	1.073	0.270

26. This deployment is likely to be declared “qualifying operational service” under the Veterans’ Support Act 2014 and is estimated to increase the value of the Veterans’ support

s6(a)

entitlement by \$0.527 million. This can be fully funded from within the existing unallocated funding in Vote Defence Force Appropriation Service Cost – Veteran’s Entitlement.

Option two: Withdraw

27. The option to withdraw all NZDF personnel from UNMISS by 30 September 2026 would not incur any expenditure.

s9(2)(h)

Consultation

33. This paper was jointly prepared by the Ministry of Defence, the NZDF, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) National Security Group, the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service, the Government Communications Security Bureau, and the Treasury, were consulted, and their views have been reflected in the paper. The DPMC Policy Advisory Group was informed.

Next Steps, Communications and Proactive Release

s9(2)(h)

34. This paper will be proactively released in due course. Officials recommend that Cabinet's decision on the future of the NZDF's support to UNMISS be announced before this mandate term concludes on 30 September 2026. If Cabinet elects to conclude New Zealand's commitment, partners will be advised in due course and all NZDF personnel will withdraw by 30 September 2026.

35. Officials will continue to monitor developments within UNMISS, particularly those developments which affect operational risk. Ministers will be provided with updates as appropriate.

Recommendations

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence recommend that the Committee:

1. **Note** that the mandate for the New Zealand Defence Force's support to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan will expire on 30 September 2026.
2. [Redacted] s6(a)
3. **Note** that the operational and health threat levels for personnel deployed to South Sudan is [Redacted] s6(a)
4. [Redacted] s6(a)
5. **Agree** to the proposed strategic objectives for the deployment.

EITHER

Option one: Mandate extension with additional risk mitigations (recommended)

6. **Approve** the deployment of up to three personnel to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan from 1 October 2026 until 30 September 2028.
7. **Agree** to delegate authority to the Chief of Defence Force to bid for a further two roles within the mission, if the opportunity to do so arises.
8. [Redacted] s6(a)
9. **Note** that the total estimated cost of the deployment is \$2.143 million with \$0.800 million in financial year 2026/27, \$1.073 million in financial year 2027/28, and \$0.270 million in financial year 2028/29.
10. **Note** this option can be fully funded from unallocated funding available within the *Vote Defence Force: Operations Contributing to New Zealand's Security, Stability and Interests MCA*.
11. **Note** this option is estimated to increase the value of the Veterans' support entitlement by \$0.527 million. This can be funded within the existing unallocated baseline for *Vote Defence Force Appropriation Service Cost – Veteran's Entitlement*.

12. [REDACTED] s6(a)

13. [REDACTED] s6(a)

OR

Option two: Withdraw (not recommended)

14. **Agree** to withdraw all New Zealand Defence Force support to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan by 30 September 2026.
15. **Note** the total estimated cost to withdraw NZDF support from the United Nations Mission in South Sudan by 30 September 2026 is nil.

Authorised for lodgement

Rt Hon Winston Peters
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon Chris Penk
MINISTER OF DEFENCE

Annex:

- A. Map of the area of operations for the United Nations Mission in South Sudan

Annex A: Map of the area of operations for the United Nations Mission in South Sudan

s6(a)

Released by the Minister of Defence