

HON CHRIS PENK, MINISTER OF DEFENCE

MINISTERIAL TRAVEL 28 MAY TO 1 JUNE 2026

July 2026

This publication provides the Cabinet proposal and report back on Hon Chris Penk travel over the period 28 May to 01 June 2026, to Singapore for the Shangri-La Dialogue.

The pack comprises the following documents:

- the May 2026 Cabinet paper and associated minute of decision *Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Chris Penk– May/June 2026* [CAB-26-SUB-0149 and CAB-26-MIN-0149].
- the June 2026 Cabinet paper and associated minute of decision *Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Chris Penk – May/June 2026* [CAB-26-SUB-0208 and CAB-26-MIN-0208].

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

www.defence.govt.nz/publications

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 a basis of confidence by the government of any other country [section 6(b)(i)].



Cabinet

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.

Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Chris Penk – May/June 2026

Portfolio **Defence**

On 4 May 2026, Cabinet:

- 1 **authorised** absence of Hon Chris Penk from New Zealand, from 28 May to 1 June 2026, to travel to Singapore to attend the Shangri-La Dialogue and undertake bilateral engagements;
- 2 **agreed** that he be accompanied by two members of staff, one of whose costs will be met through Vote Defence;
- 3 **approved** the estimated expenditure of up to \$29 925 for the travel expenses of the Ministerial party as a charge to Vote Internal Affairs (Members of the Executive – Travel);
- 4 **noted** that he will also be accompanied by a delegation from the Ministry of Defence and the New Zealand Defence Force, whose costs will be met by their agencies;
- 5 **agreed** that in his absence:
 - 5.1 Hon Mark Mitchell act as Minister of Defence and Minister for Veterans;
 - 5.2 Hon James Meager act as Minister for Building and Construction;
 - 5.3 Hon Paul Goldsmith act as Minister Responsible for the GCSB and NZSIS;
 - 5.4 Hon Simon Watts act as Minister for Space;
- 6 **noted** that leave from Parliament has been approved.

Rachel Hayward
Secretary of the Cabinet

Office of the Minister of Defence

Chair, Cabinet

Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Chris Penk – May 2026

- 1 I seek Cabinet approval to travel to Singapore from 28 May to 01 June under my Defence portfolio.
- 2 The Prime Minister has approved the travel in-principle, and House leave has been secured.

Purpose of Travel

Shangri-La Dialogue

- 3 Hosted annually by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, last year's Shangri-La Dialogue brought together 47 Heads of State and Defence Ministers, including, but not limited to, my counterparts from the US, China, Australia, Canada, Papua New Guinea, Malaysia and leaders from NATO.

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s6(a)

- 5 New Zealand has been represented at Shangri-La Dialogue by successive Defence Ministers since at least 2004.

- 6 I have been invited to speak at a plenary session on 'Priorities within Asia's shifting landscapes' and while in Singapore, I will conduct a range of bilateral meetings with my counterparts.

Ministerial Party

- 7 I would be accompanied by two members of staff from my office, a political staff member with travel costs met by Vote Internal Affairs: Members of the Executive – Travel, and my Defence Private Secretary with travel costs met by Vote Defence.
- 8 Officials from the Ministry of Defence and New Zealand Defence Force would also accompany me at departmental cost.

Travel Costs

9 The estimated costs of the travel (including my staff members travel) are:

Airfares:	\$17,000
Accommodation:	\$9,500
Other expenses	\$2,000
Contingency (5%)	\$1,425
Total:	\$29,925

Acting Ministers

10 In my absence, Acting Ministers in my portfolios will be:

- 10.1 Defence: Hon Mark Mitchell
- 10.2 Building and Construction: Hon James Meager
- 10.3 Veterans: Hon Mark Mitchell
- 10.4 GCSB and NZSIS: Hon Paul Goldsmith
- 10.5 Space: Hon Simon Watts

Proactive release

11 This paper will be proactively released on the Ministry of Defence's website. Proactive release is subject to redactions as appropriate under the Official Information Act 1982.

Recommendations

I recommend that Cabinet:

- 1 **authorise** my absence from New Zealand from approximately 28 May – 01 June, to travel to Singapore for the Shangri-La Dialogue;
- 2 **agree** that I be accompanied by two members of staff from my office;
- 3 **note** that I will be accompanied by a delegation from the Ministry of Defence and the New Zealand Defence Force, whose costs will be met by departmental budgets;
- 4 **approve** the estimated expenditure of \$29,925 for my travel expenses and a member of staff from my office, as a charge to Vote: Internal Affairs [Members of the Executive – Travel];
- 5 **agree** that in my absence, Acting Ministers in my portfolios will be:
 - 5.1 Defence: Hon Mark Mitchell

- 5.2 Building and Construction: Hon James Meager
 - 5.3 Veterans: Hon Mark Mitchell
 - 5.4 GCSB and NZSIS: Hon Paul Goldsmith
 - 5.5 Space: Hon Simon Watts
- 6 **note** that this Cabinet paper will be proactively released following return to New Zealand by the Ministry of Defence.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Chris Penk

Minister of Defence

Released by the Minister of Defence



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

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Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Chris Penk – May/June 2026

Portfolio

Defence

On 29 June 2026, Cabinet **noted** the report from Hon Chris Penk under CAB-26-SUB-0208 on his travel, from 28 May to 1 June 2026, to Singapore to attend the Shangri-La Dialogue and undertake bilateral engagements.

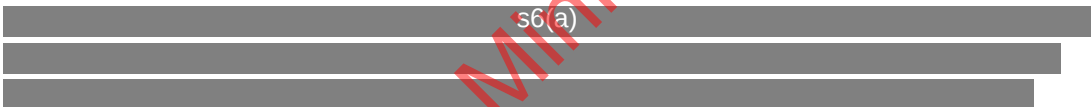
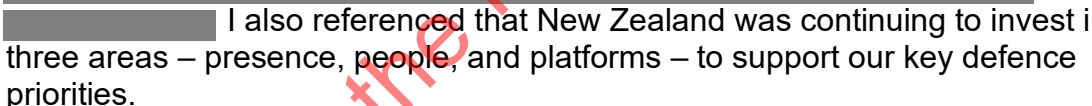
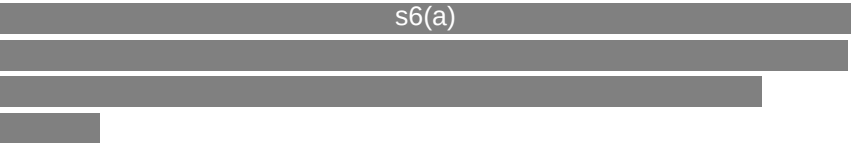
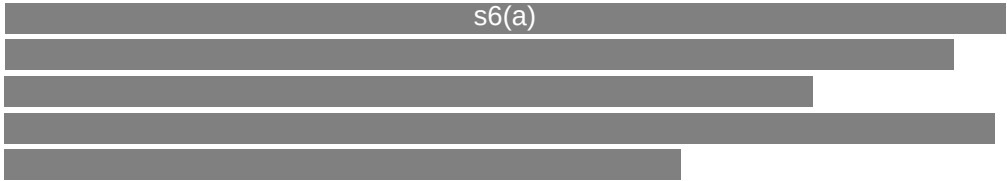
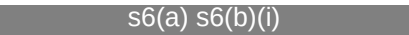
Rachel Hayward
Secretary of the Cabinet

Released by the Minister of Defence

Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Chris Penk

I recommend that Cabinet note this report on my travel from 28 May – 1 June 2026 to Singapore for the annual Shangri-La Dialogue.

Report

- 1 This year's Shangri-La Dialogue brought together over 39 Defence Ministers, alongside media, think tanks, academia and industry representatives to discuss defence and security in the Indo-Pacific.
- 2 The dialogue presented a useful opportunity to meet several of my counterparts, and to reaffirm New Zealand's commitment to spending more on defence; using the NZDF more actively in the region; and having a defence force that is more combat capable.
- 3 I spoke in the second plenary session alongside the Lithuanian Minister of Defence and the ASEAN Secretary General. The plenary focussed on the intensifying superpower rivalry in the Indo-Pacific, and how the region was adapting through military deterrence, defence diplomacy and partnerships.
- 4  s6(a)
 I also referenced that New Zealand was continuing to invest in three areas – presence, people, and platforms – to support our key defence priorities.
- 5 I met with 16 counterparts on the margins of the formal programme. Some of the prevalent themes from these conversations are below:
 - 5.1 **Partnering in an increasingly contested world:** All of the partners I met with were eager to deepen defence partnerships with New Zealand.  s6(a)
 - 5.2  s6(a)
 - 5.3 **The Middle East and Strait of Hormuz:**  s6(a) s6(b)(i)

 s6(b)(i)


s6(b)(i)
s6(a)

- 5.4 **Ukraine:** Ukraine, including the increasing role of drones in modern warfare, was raised across many bilateral meetings. New Zealand's support was acknowledged by European partners.
- 5.5 **Preservation of the rules-based system:** A common theme was the increasingly interconnected nature of the world, and therefore that conflict in the Middle East and Europe had a flow on effect in the Indo-Pacific. Partners agreed that should large countries be allowed to abstain from the rules-based system, it would set worrisome precedence for the future across all regions.
- 5.6 **Defence Capability, Industry and Technology:** Increased defence spend saw significant discussion. s6(a)
s6(b)(i)
Many partners expressed a focus on expanding their defence industry, to increase self-reliance and resilience.
- 6 While in Singapore, I met with Royal New Zealand Navy personnel who are in the region while HMNZS Canterbury undergoes scheduled maintenance. I also spent some time at Singapore's Defence Science and Technology Agency hearing about their work on uncrewed maritime vessels.

Proactive release

- 7 This paper will be proactively released, subject to redactions as appropriate under the Official Information Act 1982.

Recommendation

I recommend that Cabinet note this report.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Chris Penk

Minister of Defence