

HON Judith Collins KC, MINISTER OF DEFENCE

Ministerial Overseas Travel: HON Judith Collins KC – April 2025

July 2025

This publication provides the Cabinet Minute of Decision and submission on Hon. Judith Collins KC's travel over the period 28 April to 2 May, to travel to Manila, Republic of the Philippines to sign the New Zealand – Philippines Status of Visiting Forces Agreement.

The pack comprises the following documents:

- the Cabinet paper and associated Minute of Decision *Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Judith Collins KC - April 2025* [CAB-25-MIN-0136 and CAB-25-SUB-0136],
- the Cabinet paper and associated Minute of Decision *Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Judith Collins KC - April 2025* [CAB-25-MIN-0163 and CAB-25-SUB-0163].

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

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

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)]

Further information is withheld to:

- protect the free and frank expression of opinions [section 9(2)(g)(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 Judith Collins KC - April 2025

Portfolio **Defence**

On 28 April 2025, Cabinet:

- 1 **authorised** the absence of Hon Judith Collins KC from New Zealand, from 28 April to 2 May 2025, to travel to Manila, Republic of the Philippines to sign the New Zealand – Philippines Status of Visiting Forces Agreement;
- 2 **agreed** that she be accompanied by two staff members from her office, one of whose costs will be met by Vote Defence;
- 3 **approved** the estimated expenditure of up to \$25,252.50 for the travel expenses of the ministerial party, as a charge to Vote Internal Affairs (Members of the Executive – Travel);
- 4 **noted** that she will also be accompanied by an official from the Ministry of Defence, whose costs will be met by their agency;
- 5 **agreed** that in her absence:
 - 5.1 Hon Paul Goldsmith act as Attorney-General, Minister Responsible for the GCSB and Minister Responsible for the NZSIS;
 - 5.2 Hon Chris Penk act as Minister of Defence;
 - 5.3 Hon Tama Potaka act as Minister for Digitising Government;
 - 5.4 Hon Louise Upston act as Minister for the Public Service;
 - 5.5 Hon Simon Watts act as Minister for Space;
- 6 **noted** that the House is not sitting during her absence.

Rachel Hayward
Secretary of the Cabinet

Office of the Minister of Defence

Chair, Cabinet

Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Judith Collins KC – April 2025

- 1 I seek Cabinet approval to travel to the Republic of the Philippines from 28 April – 2 May to sign the New Zealand-Philippines Status of Visiting Forces Agreement (SOVFA).
- 2 The Prime Minister has approved the travel in principle, and House leave is not necessary as Parliament will not be sitting during this period.

Purpose of Travel

- 3 In Manila I will meet with Secretary of National Defense Teodoro and we will sign the New Zealand-Philippines SOVFA. A significant deliverable in our bilateral relationship, this timing will enable the SOVFA to be ready for consideration by the Philippines Senate, following the 2025 mid-term elections on 12 May. [REDACTED] s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i)

Ministerial Party

- 4 I would be accompanied by one member of staff from my Office (travel costs met by Vote Internal Affairs: Members of the Executive – Travel), and my Defence Private Secretary (travel costs met by Vote Defence).
- 5 An official from the Ministry of Defence will also accompany me at departmental cost.

Travel Costs

- 6 The estimated costs of the travel (including my staff member's travel) are:

Airfares:	\$20,550.00
Accommodation:	\$2000.00
Meals	\$1000.00
Surface travel	\$100.00
Gifts	\$400.00
Contingency (5%)	\$1202.50

Total: \$25,252.50

Acting Ministers

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

- 7.1 Attorney-General: Hon Paul Goldsmith
- 7.2 Defence: Hon Chris Penk
- 7.3 Digitising Government: Hon Tama Potaka
- 7.4 GCSB: Hon Paul Goldsmith
- 7.5 NZSIS: Hon Paul Goldsmith
- 7.6 Public Service: Hon Louise Upston
- 7.7 Space: Hon Simon Watts

Proactive release

8 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 April – 2 May, to travel to the Republic of the Philippines;
- 2 **note** that House leave is not necessary as Parliament will not be sitting during this period;
- 3 **agree** that I be accompanied by two members of staff from my office;
- 4 **note** that I will be accompanied by an official from the Ministry of Defence, whose costs will be met by departmental budgets;
- 5 **approve** the estimated expenditure of \$25,252.50 for my travel expenses and a member of staff from my office, as a charge to Vote: Internal Affairs [Members of the Executive – Travel];
- 6 **agree** that in my absence, Acting Ministers in my portfolios will be:
 - 6.1 Attorney-General: Hon Paul Goldsmith
 - 6.2 Defence: Hon Chris Penk
 - 6.3 Digitising Government: Hon Tama Potaka
 - 6.4 GCSB: Hon Paul Goldsmith
 - 6.5 NZSIS: Hon Paul Goldsmith

6.6 Public Service: Hon Louise Upston

6.7 Space: Hon Simon Watts

- 7 **note** that this Cabinet paper will be proactively released following return to New Zealand by the Ministry of Defence.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Judith Collins KC

Minister of Defence

Proactively released by the Minister of Defence



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

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Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Judith Collins KC - April 2025

Portfolio

Defence

On 19 May 2025, Cabinet **noted** the report from Hon Judith Collins KC under CAB-25-SUB-0163 on her travel, from 28 April to 2 May 2025, to Manila, Republic of Philippines to sign the New Zealand – Philippines Status of Visiting Forces Agreement and undertake bilateral meetings.

Diana Hawker
for Secretary of the Cabinet

Office of the Minister of Defence

Chair, Cabinet

Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Judith Collins KC

I recommend that Cabinet note this report on my travel from 28 April – 2 May 2025 to the Republic of the Philippines under my Defence portfolio.

Report

- 1 During my visit to Manila, I signed the New Zealand-Philippines Status of Visiting Forces Agreement (SOVFA) and called on Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr at Malacañang Palace. I also held a bilateral meeting and joint press conference with Philippine Secretary of National Defense Gilberto Teodoro, met with Senate President Francis Escudero, and laid a wreath at Rizal Park.
- 2 At the New Zealand Residence, Secretary Teodoro and I addressed 100 guests (from defence and other government departments, academia and the diplomatic and New Zealand communities) at a reception to mark the SOVFA signing.
- 3 My engagements in Manila were warm and the conversation was free-flowing, especially with Secretary Teodoro. Regional security issues [REDACTED] s6(a) [REDACTED] were discussed in all my meetings. The alignment between New Zealand and the Philippines as small countries with like-minded values and a commitment to upholding the rules-based order and UNCLOS was clear.
- 4 I took the opportunity to reiterate that, in the face of heightened geostrategic competition, defence cooperation has never been more important. The SOVFA was recognised as important from a strategic perspective, as well as operationally. I described the SOVFA as a “two-way street” where it could facilitate humanitarian assistance and disaster response efforts. A key theme was the shared challenges in respect to natural disasters, and how the SOVFA would build familiarity between forces to enhance interoperability in future engagements [REDACTED] s6(a) [REDACTED].
- 5 My visit and the SOVFA signing received extensive, positive media coverage, including making the front page of leading daily newspapers in Manila and was widely reported on the internet and social media. This spoke to the significance of the signing, given Japan’s Prime Minister was visiting Manila at the same time.

Proactive release

6 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 Judith Collins KC

Minister of Defence

Proactively released by the Minister of Defence