

HON JUDITH COLLINS KC, MINISTER OF DEFENCE

MINISTERIAL TRAVEL 16 – 23 OCTOBER 2025

January 2026

This publication provides the Cabinet proposal and report back on Hon Judith Collins KC's travel over the period 16 – 23 October 2025 to the United States of America in order to meet with counterparts under her Defence and GCSB/NZSIS portfolios.

The pack comprises the following documents:

- The October 2025 Cabinet paper and associated minute of decision *Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Judith Collins KC – October 2025* [CAB-25-MIN-0343 and CAB-25-SUB-0343]
- the November 2025 Cabinet paper and associated minute of decision *Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Judith Collins KC – October 2025* [CAB-25-MIN-0419 and CAB-25-SUB-0419].

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)]
- 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 Judith Collins KC - October 2025

Portfolios **Defence / GCSB / NZSIS / Space**

On 6 October 2025, Cabinet:

- 1 **authorised** the absence of Hon Judith Collins KC from New Zealand, subject to leave from Parliament being secured, from s6(a) October 2025, to travel to:
 - 1.1 Washington DC, USA for bilateral meetings;

s6(a)
- 2 **agreed** that she be accompanied by two members of staff, one of whose costs will be met by Vote Defence;
- 3 **approved** the estimated expenditure of up to s6(a) 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 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 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 James Meager act as Minister for Digitising Government, Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Space;
- 6 **noted** that leave from the House has been sought.

Diana Hawker
for Secretary of the Cabinet

Office of the Minister of Defence

Office of the Minister Responsible for the GCSB

Office of the Minister Responsible for the NZSIS

Office of the Minister for Space

Chair, Cabinet

Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Judith Collins KC – October 2025

- 1 I seek Cabinet approval to travel to the USA s6(a) October under my Defence and GCSB/NZSIS portfolios.
- 2 The Prime Minister has approved the travel in-principle, and House leave has been sought.

Purpose of Travel

- 3 In Washington DC I will seek calls with key Defence, Space, and Intelligence counterparts. This will provide a valuable opportunity to strengthen bilateral ties and deepen mutual understanding.

s6(a)

Ministerial Party

- 6 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).
- 7 A delegation from the Ministry of Defence and the New Zealand Defence Force would also accompany me at departmental cost.

Travel Costs

- 8 The estimated costs of the travel (including my staff members' travel) are:

Airfares:

Accommodation:

Meals

Other expenses

Contingency (5%)

Total:

s6(a)

Acting Ministers

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

9.1.1 Attorney-General: Hon Paul Goldsmith

9.1.2 Defence: Hon Chris Penk

9.1.3 Digitising Government: Hon James Meager

9.1.4 GCSB: Hon Paul Goldsmith

9.1.5 NZSIS: Hon Paul Goldsmith

9.1.6 Public Service: Hon James Meager

9.1.7 Space: Hon James Meager

Proactive release

10 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, subject to leave from Parliament being secured, from approximately s6(a) October, to travel to the USA s6(a)

2 **note** that leave from Parliament has been sought from the Party Whip;

3 **agree** that I be accompanied by two members of staff from my office;

4 **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;

- 5 **approve** the estimated expenditure of s6(a) 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 James Meager
 - 6.4 GCSB: Hon Paul Goldsmith
 - 6.5 NZSIS: Hon Paul Goldsmith
 - 6.6 Public Service: Hon James Meager
 - 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

Minister Responsible for the GCSB

Minister Responsible for the NZSIS

Minister for Space



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

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Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Judith Collins KC – October 2025

Portfolios **Defence / GCSB / NZSIS / Space**

On 24 November 2025, Cabinet **noted** the report from Hon Judith Collins KC under CAB-25-SUB-0419 on her travel, from 16 to 23 October 2025, to Washington DC, United States of America for bilateral meetings.

Rachel Hayward
Secretary of the Cabinet

Office of the Minister for Defence
Office of the Minister Responsible for GCSB
Office of the Minister Responsible for NZSIS
Office of the Minister for Space
Chair, Cabinet

Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Judith Collins KC– October 2025

I recommend that Cabinet note this report on my travel to Washington DC, United States of America from 16 October to 23 October to meet with Defence and Intelligence counterparts.

Report

- 1 My visit to Washington provided an opportunity to meet with Secretary of War, Pete Hegseth and a wide range of US cabinet secretaries and senior officials, mostly in relation to my Space and National Security portfolios. A full list of who I met with is as follows:
 - 1.1 Secretary of War, Pete Hegseth (accompanied by Undersecretary of War for Policy, Elbridge Colby and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Dan Caine)
 - 1.2 Secretary of Homeland Security, Kristi Noem
 - 1.3 US Attorney General, Pam Bondi
 - 1.4 Director of the CIA, John Ratcliffe
 - 1.5 Acting Director of the NSA, Lieutenant General, William J. Hartman
 - 1.6 Deputy Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Counterterrorism, Dr Sebastian Gorka
 - 1.7 Principal Deputy Director in the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, T.H. Aaron Lukas
 - 1.8 Senior NASA and Commerce officials in the Space portfolio
- 2 I also placed a wreath at Arlington National Cemetery and visited the Rocket Lab's Neutron rocket production facility in Maryland.
- 3 In my meetings with Defence and Intelligence counterparts, I emphasised that New Zealand is a reliable security partner, and underscored the deep appreciation New Zealand has for the US' role in upholding global security. Secretary Hegseth and Undersecretary Elbridge Colby acknowledged New

Zealand's commitment to doubling its defence expenditure under the Defence Capability Plan 2025. [REDACTED] s6(a)

- 4 I took the opportunity across many of my meetings to highlight the importance of sustained US presence in the Indo-Pacific, including in the South Pacific and Antarctica. [REDACTED] s6(a), s6(b)(i)

- 5 [REDACTED] s6(a)

- 6 [REDACTED] s6(a)

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

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

- 9 [REDACTED] s6(a)

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

s6(a), s6(b)(i)



11

s6(a)



Proactive release

- 12 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.

Recommendation

I recommend that Cabinet note this report.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Judith Collins KC

Minister of Defence

Minister Responsible for the GCSB

Minister Responsible for the NZSIS