

HON ANDREW LITTLE, MINISTER OF DEFENCE

Counter Terrorism Information Facility in Singapore: Proposal to Continue Participation

July 2023

This publication provides details pertaining to Cabinet's 7 June 2022 decision to contribute NZDF personnel to the Counter Terrorism Information Facility in Singapore and to review New Zealand's commitment to the facility in nine months.

The pack comprises the following documents:

- Counter Terrorism Information Facility in Singapore: Proposal to Continue Participation Cabinet Paper [ERS-22-CAB-0016]
- Counter Terrorism Information Facility in Singapore Proposal to Continue Participation Minute [ERS-22-MIN-0016]

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. 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)].

Information is also withheld in order to:

- 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)]



Cabinet External Relations and 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.

Counter Terrorism Information Facility in Singapore: Proposal to Continue Participation

Portfolio Defence

On 7 June 2022, the Cabinet External Relations and Security Committee (ERS):

1 **noted** that on 16 March 2021, ERS:

1.1 agreed to contribute one New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) Analyst to the Counter Terrorism Information Facility (CTIF) in Singapore, from April 2021 to 30 June 2022;

1.2 directed officials to review the New Zealand commitment to the CTIF nine months after the commitment to assess the value of the deployment, and to report back to Cabinet with advice on a possible long-term deployment, including its value, size, nature, risks and budget implications;

[ERS-21-MIN-0004]

2 **noted** that the CTIF review found that the NZDF commitment to the CTIF supports New Zealand's Counter Terrorism Strategy and is valued by other contributing nations

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

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

4 s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i)

5 **agreed** to extend the contribution of one NZDF Analyst to the CTIF;

6 **noted** that the estimated cost of this posting from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2024 is \$0.561 million (FY2022/23: \$0.328 million; FY2023/24: \$0.233 million);

7 **noted** that the estimated annual average cost from 2024/25 and out years is \$0.265 million;

8 **noted** that the estimated costs can be met within the existing *Vote Defence Force: Protection of New Zealand and New Zealanders* through prioritisation of current baseline;

9

s6(a)

10

noted that officials will communicate this decision to Singapore and partner nations before it is announced publicly.

Janine Harvey
Committee Secretary

Present:

Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern (Chair)
Hon Grant Robertson
Hon Kelvin Davis
Hon Andrew Little
Hon David Parker
Hon Poto Williams
Hon Kris Faafoi
Hon Peeni Henare
Hon Kiri Allan
Hon Dr David Clark

Officials present from:

Office of the Prime Minister
Officials Committee for ERS

Released by the Minister of Defence

Office of the Minister of Defence

Chair, Cabinet External Relations and Security Committee

PROPOSAL TO CONTINUE THE NEW ZEALAND DEFENCE FORCE'S PARTICIPATION IN THE COUNTER TERRORISM INFORMATION FACILITY IN SINGAPORE

Proposal

1. To seek approval to continue the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF)'s current contribution to the Singaporean Counter Terrorism Information Facility (CTIF), and to delegate future decisions on maintaining, extending or withdrawing the current commitment to the Chief of Defence Force.

Relation to Government priorities

2. New Zealand's contribution to the CTIF supports the Government's priorities by:
- 2.1. Supporting New Zealand's Counter-Terrorism Strategy, the National Security and Intelligence Priorities (NSIPs), and aligns with New Zealand's *Engagement Strategy for Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism in South East Asia 2018-22*.¹
 - 2.2. Supporting the Minister of Defence's *People* priority which ensures that NZDF personnel have the skills and experience they need to deliver government directed requirements safely and effectively, both at home and abroad.
 - 2.3. Being consistent with the Minister of Defence's *Pacific* priority. The modest personnel commitment to the CTIF based in Southeast Asia will not affect the NZDF's ability to prioritise the Pacific as envisaged in the Defence Assessment 2021. The *Defence Assessment 2021*² supports a focus on the Pacific as the region where Defence can have the greatest material impact, but does not preclude targeted and discretionary contributions to security outcomes elsewhere.

Executive Summary

3. This paper recommends that Cabinet agree to maintain New Zealand's commitment of one NZDF Analyst to the CTIF, a multinational and open source counter-terrorism information sharing and collaboration facility in Singapore.

4. It also seeks Cabinet's agreement to delegate authority to the Chief of Defence Force for future decisions on maintaining, extending or withdrawing the current commitment of one NZDF Analyst to the CTIF. This is consistent with other non-operational NZDF outputs, such

¹ This includes enhancing regional counter terrorism frameworks by supporting groupings and initiatives to encourage greater coordination and focus.

² Considered by Cabinet in November 2021 (ERS-21-MIN-0039).

as the Information Fusion Centre³ in Singapore, and the Defence Intelligence Liaison posts, which are managed within the Chief of Defence Force's authority.⁴ Defence officials will ensure the Minister of Defence is informed of any developments or changes to the NZDF's current commitment to the CTIF where appropriate.

5. The CTIF was established in 2020 to enable regional militaries and law enforcement agencies to better detect and analyse regional terrorist threats and areas identified as enablers of terrorism. [Redacted] s6(a)

6. In March 2021, Cabinet agreed to contribute one NZDF analyst to the CTIF from April 2021 to 30 June 2022 with future contributions to be informed by a review [CAB-21-MIN-0073 refers]. The review was conducted between May 2021 and February 2022 by the NZDF in consultation with relevant agencies. It found that overall, the NZDF's commitment to the CTIF has strong strategic and relationship value for New Zealand and supports New Zealand's Counter Terrorism Strategy [Redacted] s6(a)

7. The original request to contribute to the CTIF was brought to Cabinet in 2021 due to the potential involvement of multiple other New Zealand Government security agencies [Redacted] s9(2)(g)(i). As a collaborative facility from both military and law enforcement agencies, there is an opportunity for law enforcement to contribute to the CTIF. [Redacted] s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i)

8. New Zealand's interests weigh in favour of maintaining our contribution to the CTIF. Our involvement in the CTIF supports New Zealand's national security interests by contributing to collective efforts to counter violent extremism and terrorism in Southeast Asia; [Redacted] s6(a)

9. [Redacted] s6(a)

³ The Information Fusion Centre is a regional maritime security centre hosted by the Singaporean Navy, which aims to facilitate information collaboration between partners to enhance maritime security. New Zealand has a Liaison Officer posted to the Information Fusion Centre.

[Redacted] s6(a)

Background

What is the CTIF and how is it shaping regional counter terrorism efforts?

10. The CTIF is a multinational, open source, CT information sharing and collaboration facility in Singapore. It has been established to enable regional militaries and law enforcement agencies to better detect and analyse regional terrorist threats and areas identified as enablers of terrorism.⁵ [REDACTED] s6(a)

[REDACTED] s6(a)

11. [REDACTED] s6(a)

[REDACTED] the CTIF has encouraged a collaborative culture and inter-agency approach in the region, which New Zealand supports. This includes allowing contributions from law enforcement agencies, the intra-regional and inter-regional membership of the group, and the Head of the CTIF being rotated amongst ASEAN members annually. [REDACTED] s6(a)

⁵ The region covers much of South East Asia, Australia and New Zealand.

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

12. The CTIF is intended to complement, rather than duplicate, existing regional CT initiatives such as the Indonesian-led ASEAN 'Our Eyes Initiative' (OEI)⁷ and the Interpol Regional Counter Terrorism Node (RCTN)⁸. [REDACTED] s6(a)

Findings from the nine-month review of the CTIF

13. In March 2021, Cabinet agreed to contribute one NZDF Analyst to the CTIF from April 2021 to 30 June 2022 with a review to be undertaken by officials to inform any future contribution [CAB-21-MIN-0073 refers]. The review was carried out by the NZDF in consultation with appropriate agencies, covering the period April 2021 to February 2022.

14. Overall, the review found:

14.1. The NZDF commitment to the CTIF supports New Zealand's CT strategy and is valued by other contributing nations [REDACTED] s6(b)(i)

14.2. The current commitment of one NZDF analyst is proportionate to the size of our defence force. [REDACTED] s6(a)

14.4. [REDACTED] s6(a)

14.5. The CTIF is expected to become a mainstay of regional CT and CVE architecture. [REDACTED] s6(a)

⁷ The Our Eyes Initiative is a cooperation pact for intelligence information exchanges related to terrorism and radicalisation initiated by Indonesia and signed by Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Thailand and Singapore.

⁸ Interpol Regional Counter Terrorism Nodes are located in terrorism hotspots and provide direct support to law enforcement in those regions to enhance their counter-terrorism response.

s6(a)

15. The review also recommended consideration be given to concluding Cabinet authorisation of NZDF's future contributions to the CTIF, and that these become a routine Defence activity with delegated authorisation to the Chief of Defence Force.

s9(2)(g)(i)

16. Such a role, not associated with a specific operation, would normally reside within the Chief of Defence Force's mandate. This is consistent with the

s6(a)

NZDF's contribution of a Liaison Officer to the Information Fusion Centre hosted by the Singaporean Navy. As with CTIF, the benefits of these posts primarily relate to the maintenance of regional Defence and Intelligence relationships and they are considered non-operational.

Options

Cabinet is asked to consider one of two options: maintain NZDF's current contribution to the CTIF of one person, or withdraw. Cabinet is also asked to consider delegating future decisions associated with maintaining, extending or withdrawing the current commitment to the Chief of Defence Force.

Option 1: Maintain the current CTIF contribution (recommended)

Role	Description
1x CTIF Analyst (current)	s6(a)

Benefits associated with Option 1

17. New Zealand's interests weigh in favour of maintaining our contribution to the CTIF. Our involvement in the CTIF supports New Zealand's national security interests, reinforces international partnerships, progresses foreign policy objectives relating to bilateral security partnerships and will bring operational benefits to the NZDF in future.

18. For New Zealand, the Southeast Asian region presents the closest persistent threat of terrorism and violent extremism, and both pose a risk to New Zealanders working in or travelling through the region. In addition to this, terrorist events further afield can impact on events in New Zealand, and vice versa. The 15 March 2019 terrorist attack in Christchurch

for instance, continues to impact the global terrorist environment, including as a source of inspiration for violent extremism in Southeast Asia.⁹

19. In addition to our security, CT and CVE are ongoing issues of concern in Southeast Asia and remain priorities for New Zealand's Southeast Asian partners. New Zealand's commitment to the CTIF enables us to be a trusted, reliable and valuable partner in a multi-national regional effort to share information and gain better situational awareness and understanding of a common threat. Our continued participation in the CTIF also provides opportunities for New Zealand to strengthen our bilateral security relationships with regional security partners without over investing at the cost of other NZDF commitments. s6(a)

20. s6(a)

21. Agreement is also sought for future decisions on maintaining, extending or withdrawing the current commitment to be delegated to the Chief of Defence Force. This would make this commitment consistent with other similar offshore Defence Intelligence postings, such as the NZDF's contribution to the Information Fusion Centre, which are considered non-operational and sit under the purview of the Chief of Defence Force.

22. As a collaborative facility from both military and law enforcement agencies, there is an opportunity for law enforcement to contribute to the CTIF. s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i)

Benefits to New Zealand Defence personnel

23. This commitment supports the Minister of Defence's *People* priority. Information sharing within the CTIF is done through interpersonal relationships bilaterally. Although benefits relating to NZDF Analyst's technical competencies are likely to come

s6(a)

the NZDF will have played an important role in supporting information sharing and cooperation amongst participating regional partners.

⁹ The March 2019 terrorist attack on the Christchurch masjidain was the inspiration for a foiled terror plot on two mosques in Singapore in December 2020.

Risks associated with Option 1

Risk	Assessment
Human rights considerations	s6(a)

Option 2: Withdraw

24. Should Cabinet select withdrawal, the NZDF officials would inform Singapore of the decision to withdraw our analyst from the CTIF at the conclusion of the mandated period.

Risks associated with Option 2 (Withdraw)

Risk	Assessment
Reputation and Relationships	<p>s6(a)</p> <p>Withdrawal is likely to undermine our reputation as a supporter for countering violent extremism and terrorism in the region. It could be interpreted by our defence and security partners as a lack of commitment to regional counter terrorism co-operation.</p> <p>s6(a)</p>
Defence People priority	s6(a)

Financial implications

25. The proposed posting can be funded within the existing baseline for Vote Defence Force. The following table sets out the expenditure and funding arrangements for this posting:

Vote Defence Force	FY22/23	FY23/24	Total	2024/25 and out years
Estimated cost per annum of proposed posting	0.328	0.233	0.561	0.265
Total funded from existing appropriation:				
Vote Defence Force: Protection of New Zealand and New Zealanders	0.328	0.233	0.561	0.265
Additional Funding Required	-	-	-	-

26. This posting does not amount to “qualifying operational service” under the Veterans’ Support Act 2014, and therefore it has no impact on the Veterans’ Support Entitlement Liability.

s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i)

Consultation

29. This paper was jointly prepared by the Ministry of Defence and the New Zealand Defence Force. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (National Security Group), New Zealand Police, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Treasury and the National Assessments Bureau were consulted. The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (Policy Advisory Group) has been informed.

Next steps and proactive release

30. Should Cabinet approve the renewal of New Zealand’s contribution to the CTIF, it is recommended that Singapore be notified of Cabinet’s decision before it is announced publically. Partner messaging will occur through official channels.

31. Should Cabinet decide not to renew New Zealand’s contribution, it is recommended that this decision not be made public until Singapore and key partners have been advised.

32. A redacted version of this Cabinet paper will be proactively released once Singapore has been advised.

Recommendations

The Minister of Defence recommends that the Committee:

1. **note** in March 2021, Cabinet agreed to contribute one New Zealand Defence Force analyst to the CTIF from April 2021 to 30 June 2022 with future contributions to be informed by a review conducted by the New Zealand Defence Force in consultation with appropriate agencies;

2. **note** that the CTIF review found the New Zealand Defence Force commitment to the CTIF supports New Zealand's Counter Terrorism Strategy and is valued by other contributing nations [redacted] s6(a), s6(b)(i)

3. [redacted] s6(a)

[redacted] s9(2)(g)(i)

5. **agree** to one of the following two options:

Option 1: Continue with New Zealand's current contribution to the Counter Terrorism Information Facility (Recommended)

5.1 **agree** to extend the contribution of one New Zealand Defence Force Analyst.

5.1.1. **agree** to conclude Cabinet oversight of this posting and to delegate future decisions associated with maintaining, extending or withdrawing the commitment of this position to the Chief of Defence Force.

5.1.2. **note** the estimated cost of the posting from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2024 is \$0.561M (FY22/23: \$0.328M; FY23/24: \$0.233M).

5.1.3. **note** the estimated annual average cost from 2024/25 and out years is \$0.265M.

5.1.4. **note** that the estimated costs can be met within the existing Vote Defence Force: Protection of New Zealand and New Zealanders through prioritisation of current baseline.

5.1.5.

[redacted] s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i)

5.1.6. **note** should New Zealand elect to continue our contribution, officials would communicate this to Singapore and partner nations before it is announced publically.

Option 2: Withdraw

5.2. **agree** to withdraw the current New Zealand Defence Force Analyst attached to the Counter Terrorism Information Facility by 30 June 2022.

5.2.1. **note** that should New Zealand elect to withdraw, officials would notify Singapore and partner nations of Cabinet's decision before it is announced publically.

5.2.2.

s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i)

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Peeni Henare
Minister for Defence

Released by the Minister of Defence