

HON RON MARK, MINISTER OF DEFENCE

Increasing Defence Diplomatic Presence in the Pacific

September 2020

This publication provides documents on Cabinet's May 2020 decision to expand the New Zealand Defence Force diplomatic presence in the Pacific by establishing one resident Defence Adviser in the Kingdom of Tonga.

The pack comprises the following documents:

- the 5 May Cabinet External Relations and Security Committee minute: *Increasing Defence Diplomatic Presence in the Pacific* [ERS-20-MIN-0005]
- the redacted Cabinet paper: *Increasing Defence Diplomatic Presence in the Pacific* [ERS-20-SUB-0005]

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)]



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.

Increasing Defence Diplomatic Presence in the Pacific

Portfolio **Defence**

On 5 May 2020, the Cabinet External Relations and Security Committee:

- 1 **noted** that the current defence diplomatic footprint in the Pacific limits New Zealand's ability to deliver on defence priorities;
- 2 **noted** the strategic and operational rationale for increasing Defence diplomatic presence in the Pacific region, as outlined in the paper under ERS-20-SUB-0005;
- 3 **agreed** that Defence establish a new resident Defence Adviser in Tonga;
- 4 s6(a)

Janine Harvey
Committee Secretary

Present:

Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern
Rt Hon Winston Peters (Chair)
Hon Kelvin Davis
Hon Grant Robertson
Hon Phil Twyford
Hon Andrew Little
Hon David Parker
Hon Nanaia Mahuta
Hon Stuart Nash
Hon Damien O'Connor
Hon Ron Mark

Officials present from:

Office of the Prime Minister
Officials Committee for ERS

Office of the Minister of Defence

Chair, External Relations and Security Committee

INCREASING DEFENCE DIPLOMATIC PRESENCE IN THE PACIFIC

Proposal

1. This paper seeks agreement to expand the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) diplomatic presence in the Pacific by establishing one resident Defence Adviser in Tonga, [REDACTED] s6(a) [REDACTED]. I am seeking Cabinet's agreement to this given established practice that proposals from NZ Inc agencies to open or close posts or significant increases or decreases in resources offshore should be endorsed by Cabinet.

Government priorities

2. This paper supports the Government priority area *to create an international reputation New Zealand can be proud of* through expanding the NZDF presence in the Pacific, contributing to the Pacific Reset strategy.

Background

3. New Zealand's Pacific Reset, announced in March 2018, responded to regional challenges with a lift in our strategic ambition and investment in the Pacific. Key to delivering on defence aspects of our Pacific partnerships is the presence in the region of Defence Advisers. Defence representation in-country underpins defence partnerships and people-to-people ties. Defence Advisers multiply our effectiveness across all our activities with those partners and support New Zealand Inc coordination.

Review of New Zealand's existing Defence presence in the Pacific

4. New Zealand currently has three Defence Advisers in the South Pacific who hold resident and non-resident accreditations to eight Pacific Island countries. Following the Pacific Reset, Defence reviewed the current placement of Advisers to determine whether they were optimally placed.

A need to establish new representation has emerged

9. There is a case for New Zealand to increase our coverage in the Pacific, [redacted]
 [redacted] s6(a)
 [redacted]
10. [redacted] s6(a)
 [redacted]
11. Enhanced Defence representation throughout the Pacific will help facilitate the building and sustainment of people-to-people ties, and increase New Zealand Defence’s cultural and regional awareness. It will also enhance the effectiveness of Defence to both coordinate existing activities (e.g. fisheries patrols), and respond to emergency situations (e.g. natural disasters).

Proposed changes to the Footprint

12. I propose the following changes to the Defence Adviser network in the South Pacific to address the limitations described above (see map at Annex A):

Resident	Accreditations	Changes
Defence Adviser Fiji (Existing)	[redacted] s6(a)	[redacted] s6(a) Accreditation to Tonga removed.
Defence Adviser Tonga (New)	[redacted] s6(a)	New resident position established in Tonga. [redacted] s6(a) [redacted] [redacted] s6(a) [redacted]
Defence Adviser Pacific (Existing)	-	[redacted] s6(a)

Alignment with New Zealand’s Interests

13. The additional Defence Adviser [redacted] s6(a) would be a [redacted] s6(a) valuable lift to New Zealand’s presence in the Pacific. This would send an important signal to our Pacific partners about our commitment to the region.

COVID-19 Implications

14. The plan was for the Defence Adviser Tonga to start in July 2020. Given the COVID pandemic and possible requirement for assistance to the Pacific, this could occur earlier should conditions allow and administrative arrangements be in place.

Next Steps

15. Should Cabinet approve, agreement would be sought from host governments to establish or change accreditations.

Financial Implications

16. There are no financial implications for this paper, as the costs can be met within Vote Defence Force. NZDF are able to fund the ongoing costs to establish a resident Defence Adviser in Tonga through cessation and reapportionment of operational expenditure currently expended on other NZDF staff deployed offshore in non-operational roles. Travel costs associated with [redacted] s6(a) [redacted] will also be provided within NZDF baselines through prudent management of wider Defence Attaché and Adviser travel requirements.

Consultation

17. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and Treasury have been consulted on these proposed changes to the Defence Adviser network in the South Pacific.

Communications

18. I propose to announce the increased footprint prior to its establishment, at a date to be confirmed following consultation with partner governments.

Proactive Release

19. A redacted version of this Cabinet paper will be prepared for proactive release.

Recommendations

20. The Minister of Defence recommends that the Committee:
 - a. **Note** that the current defence diplomatic footprint in the Pacific limits New Zealand's ability to deliver on defence priorities;
 - b. **Note** the strategic and operational rationale for increasing Defence diplomatic presence in the Pacific region;
 - c. **Agree** that Defence should establish a new resident Defence Adviser in Tonga; and,

d.

s6(a)

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Ron Mark
MINISTER OF DEFENCE

Released by the Minister of Defence

Annex A: Proposed NZ Defence Adviser Footprint in the SW Pacific

s6(a)

Released by the Minister of Defence