

HON ANDREW LITTLE, MINISTER OF DEFENCE

Ministerial Travel June 2023: Fiji

August 2023

This publication provides the Cabinet proposal and report back on Hon Andrew Little's travel to Fiji to sign a Status of Forces Agreement between Aotearoa New Zealand and the Republic of Fiji .

The pack comprises the following documents:

- the May 2023 Cabinet paper and associated Minute of Decision *Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Andrew Little [CAB-23-SUB-0199 and CAB-23-MIN-0199]*
- the July 2023 Cabinet paper and associated Minute of Decision *Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Andrew Little [CAB-23-SUB-0327 and CAB-23-MIN-0327]*

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

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 Andrew Little

Portfolio **Defence**

On 29 May 2023, Cabinet:

- 1 **authorised** the absence of Hon Andrew Little from New Zealand, from 12 to 15 June 2023 to travel to Fiji to sign an Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Fiji and the Government of New Zealand;
- 2 **agreed** that he be accompanied by one member of staff;
- 3 **approved** the estimated expenditure of up to \$10,151 for the travel expenses of the ministerial party as a charge to Vote: Internal Affairs (Members of the Executive – Travel);
- 4 **noted** that travel to and from Fiji will be by Royal New Zealand Airforce aircraft;
- 5 **noted** that he will also be accompanied by officials from the New Zealand Defence Force and Ministry of Defence, whose costs will be met by their agencies;
- 6 **agreed** that in his absence:
 - 6.1 Hon Kelvin Davis act as Minister for the Public Service;
 - 6.2 Hon Peeni Henare act as Minister of Defence;
 - 6.3 Hon David Parker act as Minister Responsible for the GCSB, Minister Responsible for the NZSIS, and Lead Coordination Minister for the Government’s Response to the Royal Commission’s Report into the Terrorist Attack on the Christchurch Mosques;
 - 6.4 Hon Ginny Andersen act as Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations;
- 7 **noted** that the House is not sitting during his absence.

Rachel Hayward
Secretary of the Cabinet

Office of the Minister for Defence

Chair, Cabinet

Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Andrew

1 I seek Cabinet approval to travel to Fiji in my capacity as Minister of Defence from Monday 12 June to Thursday 15 June to:

1.1 Sign an Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Fiji and the Government of New Zealand on Cooperation in the field of Defence and the Status of Visiting Forces [ERS-23-MIN-0013 Minute refers] with my Fijian counterpart, the Minister for Home Affairs and Immigration; and

1.2 Conduct a bilateral call with the Minister for Home Affairs and Immigration.

2 The Prime Minister has approved the travel in-principle.

Purpose of Travel

3 The main purpose of my visit will be to sign an Agreement on Cooperation in the field of Defence and the Status of Visiting Forces which will provide the legal framework for cooperation between our respective military forces and simplify the legal arrangements that underpin joint military activities.

4 Additionally, a new coalition Government is in place in Fiji under the leadership of Prime Minister Sitiiveni Rabuka following Fiji's December 2022 election. Prime Minister Rabuka and other senior ministers in the new Fijian Government have repeatedly indicated a desire to engage with traditional partners, including New Zealand. This visit would provide an opportunity for me to meet my Fijian counterpart early in both our tenures as Ministers. The proposed travel would build on recent engagements by the Minister of Foreign Affairs in March and the Deputy Prime Minister.

Ministerial Party

5 I would be accompanied by one staff member from my office.

6 A small delegation from the New Zealand Defence Force | Te Ope Kātua o Aotearoa and Ministry of Defence | Manatū Kaupapa Waonga would accompany me at departmental expense.

Travel Costs

7 Air transport would be by Royal New Zealand Air Force aircraft.

8 The estimates costs of the travel (including my staff member's travel are):

Accommodation:	\$3,988
Meals (based on NZD \$85 DIA standard):	\$1,020
Surface travel:	\$1,000
Insurance:	\$500
Provision for document printing:	\$250
Communications:	\$50
Koha/cultural gifts:	\$1,000
Contingency (30%)	\$2,342
Total:	\$10,151

Acting Ministers

9 The following Ministers would act in my portfolios:

9.1 Public Service – Hon Kelvin Davis MP; and

9.2 Government Communications Security Bureau, New Zealand Security Intelligence Service and Lead Coordination Minister for the Government's Response to the Royal Commission's Report into the Terrorist Attack on the Christchurch Mosques – Hon David Parker MP; and

9.3 Defence – Hon Peeni Henare MP; and

9.4 Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations – Hon Ginny Andersen MP.

Proactive release

10 It is proposed that this paper is proactively released by Ministry of Defence | Manatū Kaupapa Waonga with appropriate redactions in accordance with CO (18) 4 after 30 business days following return..

Recommendations

- 1 I recommend that Cabinet:
 - 1.1 **authorise** my absence from New Zealand from Monday 12 June 2023 to Thursday 15 June 2023;
 - 1.2 **agree** that I be accompanied by one staff member from my office;
 - 1.3 **approve** the estimated expenditure of \$10,151 for the travel expenses of the Ministerial party, as a charge to Vote: Internal Affairs [Members of the Executive – Travel];
 - 1.4 **note** that a small delegation from the New Zealand Defence Force | Te Ope Kātua o Aotearoa and Ministry of Defence | Manatū Kaupapa Waonga would accompany me at departmental expense;
 - 1.5 **agree** that in my absence the following Ministers would act in my portfolios:
 - 1.5.1 Public Service – Hon Kelvin Davis MP; and
 - 1.5.2 Government Communications Security Bureau, New Zealand Security Intelligence Service and Lead Coordination Minister for the Government’s Response to the Royal Commission’s Report into the Terrorist Attack on the Christchurch Mosques – Hon David Parker MP; and
 - 1.5.3 Defence – Hon Peeni Henare MP; and
 - 1.5.4 Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations – Hon Ginny Andersen MP.
 - 1.6 **note** that the House is not sitting during my absence.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Andrew Little

Minister of Defence



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

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Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Andrew Little

Portfolio **Defence**

On 24 July 2023, Cabinet **noted** the report from Hon Andrew Little under CAB-23-SUB-0327 on his travel, from 13 to 15 June 2023, to Suva, Fiji for a bilateral visit and to sign a Status of Forces Agreement and Statement of Intent.

Rachel Hayward
Secretary of the Cabinet

Released by the Minister of Defence

Office of the Minister of Defence

Chair, Cabinet

Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Andrew Little

I recommend that Cabinet note this report on my travel to Suva, the Republic of Fiji, from 13 to 15 June 2023.

Report

- 1 The purpose of my travel to Fiji was to meet with my ministerial counterpart Hon Pio Tikoduadua, Minister for Home Affairs and Immigration (responsible for defence). During my visit to Fiji, I also signed a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) and Statement of Intent (SOI), which have been in development since 2017 and 2022 respectively.
- 2 This was my first visit to the Pacific since taking over the Defence portfolio, and it afforded me the opportunity to demonstrate the importance that New Zealand places on our bilateral defence relationship, and to the Pacific more broadly.
- 3 Fiji is a significant defence relationship for New Zealand, and it was evident that it is built on close cooperation and strong people-to-people ties. My visit also allowed me to extend my gratitude for Fiji's contribution to the Cyclone Gabrielle response in February, when a 34-strong Fijian Humanitarian Assistance Disaster Relief (HADR) Task Force was deployed to New Zealand.

Bilateral meeting with Hon. Pio Tikoduadua

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s6(a)

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s6(a)

Status of Forces Agreement

- 6 The signing of the Status of Forces agreement is a significant milestone for our bilateral defence relationship. It sets out the legal framework for military cooperation in each other's territories, which will help ease the administrative burden on militaries in light of our high tempo of defence engagement.
- 7 With a SOFA in place with Fiji, I expect military engagement to continue to increase in tempo, consistent with our desire to strengthen both our presence in, and commitment to, the Pacific region. With increasing numbers of extreme weather events as a result of climate change, our two nations will be in a position to respond more rapidly to requests for HADR support.

Statement of Intent

- 8 The Statement of Intent with Fiji, which I also signed alongside Hon Tikoduadua, sets out the defence priority areas for cooperation between our two countries in three key areas: capacity development and training of defence personnel; maritime security; and collective disaster and humanitarian response coordination. While these are already areas in which Fiji and New Zealand already actively engage, this arrangement will help re-affirm key priority areas for this important defence relationship.

Other engagements in Fiji

- 9 While in Fiji, Minister Tikoduadua and I attended a wreath-laying ceremony at Fiji's National War Memorial our respective military personnel. I also had the opportunity to meet with members of the New Zealand Defence Force and Ministry of Defence staff posted to Suva, representatives from the New Zealand High Commission, and senior-level diplomats and defence advisors/attachés from Five Country partners.

Proactive release

- 10 I intend that the Ministry of Defence | Manatu Kaupapa Waong will proactively release this paper subject to redactions as appropriate under the Official Information Act 1982.

Recommendation

- 11 I recommend that Cabinet note this report on my travel to Suva, the Republic of Fiji to meet with my Fijian counterpart and sign a Status of Forces Agreement and Statement of Intent.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Andrew Little

Minister of Defence