

HON PEENI HENARE, MINISTER OF DEFENCE

Concluding New Zealand's Deployment to Afghanistan

September 2021

This publication provides documents on Cabinet's decision to conclude New Zealand's deployment to Afghanistan by May 2021 in alignment with the timeframe for international military withdrawal from Afghanistan as set out in the Doha Agreement between the United States and the Taliban. This publication also provides a submission to the Minister of Defence regarding the planning for the withdrawal of NZDF personnel from Afghanistan.

The pack comprises the following documents:

- the 7 December 2020 Cabinet minute: *Concluding New Zealand's Deployment to Afghanistan* [CAB-20-MIN-0502]
- the redacted Cabinet paper: *Concluding New Zealand's Deployment to Afghanistan* [CAB-20-SUB-0502]
- the redacted 10 February 2021 submission to the Minister of Defence: *Planning for the Withdrawal of New Zealand Defence Force Personnel from Afghanistan*.

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)]
- the entrusting of information to the Government of New Zealand on the basis of confidence by an international organisation [section 6(b)(ii)].

Information is also withheld in order to:

- maintain the constitutional conventions for the timing being which protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials [section 9(2)(f)(iv)]
- maintain legal professional privilege [section 9(2)(h)].



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.

Concluding New Zealand's Deployment to Afghanistan

Portfolios Foreign Affairs / Defence

On 7 December 2020, following reference from the Cabinet Business Committee, Cabinet:

- 1 **noted** that, in light of the downwards trajectory of the international military presence, and the timeframe for withdrawal established by the Doha Agreement, it is recommended that New Zealand conclude its 20-year deployment to Afghanistan in 2021;
- 2 **noted** the options set out in the paper attached to CAB-20-MIN-0502 for the conclusion of New Zealand's deployment to Afghanistan;
- 3 **noted** that, depending on the option selected, New Zealand could be among the first Coalition partners to withdraw, [REDACTED] s6(a), s6(b)(i)
- 4 **noted** that if the international military mission in Afghanistan withdraws earlier in 2021 than the timeframes outlined in Options 2 - 4 of the paper, then all remaining NZDF personnel would be withdrawn at that time;
- 5 **agreed** to Option 3: *A Coordinated Withdrawal*: extend the mandate for the three NZDF personnel deployed to the Afghanistan National Army Officer Academy and the three NZDF personnel deployed to the Resolute Support Mission Headquarters for five months to 31 May 2021;
- 6 [REDACTED] s9(2)(f)(iv)
- 7 **agreed** that the NZDF may temporarily exceed the Cabinet-mandated personnel numbers for this deployment for the purposes of command reconnaissance, rotation, and extraction of forces from theatre;
- 8 **noted** that the Chief of Defence Force will inform the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defence and the Minister of Foreign Affairs in advance whenever Cabinet-mandated personnel numbers are exceeded for the reasons set out in paragraph 63 of the paper attached to the submission under CBC-20-SUB-0088;
- 9 **authorised** a group of Ministers (Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Finance, and Minister of Defence) with Power to Act to approve any changes to the deployment as a result of COVID-19;

- 10 **noted** that Option 3: *A Coordinated Withdrawal* from Afghanistan, has a total estimated cost of \$0.630 million in 2020/21;
- 11 **noted** that the total estimated costs for the deployment can be funded from within existing unallocated baseline for Vote Defence Force: Operations Contributing to New Zealand's Security, Stability and Interests MCA regardless of which option is chosen;
- 12 **noted** that the Minister for Veterans has declared this deployment to be 'qualifying operational service' under the Veterans Support Act 2014, meaning any NZDF personnel that are deployed will become a 'veteran' eligible for veterans' support entitlements under the Veterans' Support Act 2014, if they do not have veteran status already;
- 13 **noted** that this deployment decision is estimated to increase the value of the veterans' support entitlements liability by a maximum of \$0.300 million depending on the option agreed;
- 14 **noted** that the total expenses associated with paragraph 13 can be met from within the existing amount of the Vote Defence Force Non-Departmental Other Expenses appropriation: Service Cost – Veterans' Entitlements regardless of which option is chosen.

Michael Webster
Secretary of the Cabinet

Released by the Minister of Defence



Cabinet Business Committee

Minute of Decision

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Concluding New Zealand's Deployment to Afghanistan

Portfolios **Foreign Affairs / Defence**

On 2 December 2020, the Cabinet Business Committee **referred** the submission under CBC-20-SUB-0088 to Cabinet on 7 December 2020 for further consideration.

Janine Harvey
Committee Secretary

Present:

Hon Grant Robertson (Chair)
Hon Kelvin Davis
Hon Dr Megan Woods
Hon Chris Hipkins
Hon Carmel Sepuloni
Hon Andrew Little
Hon David Parker
Hon Nanaia Mahuta
Hon Poto Williams
Hon Damien O'Connor

Officials present from:

Office of the Prime Minister
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Released by the Minister of Defence

Office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs
Office of the Minister of Defence
Chair, Cabinet Business Committee

CONCLUDING NEW ZEALAND'S DEPLOYMENT TO AFGHANISTAN

Proposal

1. To seek a decision on the timing for the conclusion of New Zealand's 20-year deployment to Afghanistan.

Relation to government priorities

2. New Zealand's deployment to Afghanistan has reflected our contribution to counter-terrorism efforts in support of the international rules-based order.

Executive Summary

3. This paper seeks Cabinet's decision on the timing for the conclusion of New Zealand's 20-year deployment to Afghanistan. New Zealand's current deployment mandate expires on 31 December 2020. A short mandate extension is recommended to ensure New Zealand's deployment to Afghanistan concludes at the appropriate time, taking into account partner expectations around withdrawal notification periods. This advice is provided for Cabinet's consideration at the earliest possible opportunity following the General Election.
4. Four options are offered for Cabinet's consideration:

Option 1	<i>An Immediate Withdrawal</i> of all six NZDF personnel in December 2020.
Option 2	<i>An Early Withdrawal</i> of all six NZDF personnel in March 2021.
Option 3	<i>A Coordinated Withdrawal</i> of all six NZDF personnel in May 2021 [Recommended] .
Option 4	<i>A Phased Withdrawal</i> of NZDF personnel in two stages through the period May to December 2021.

5. Regardless of the option selected, if the international military mission in Afghanistan were to move to withdraw earlier than the mandate end date, all remaining NZDF personnel would also be withdrawn at that time. s6(a)

6. The United States (US)-Taliban Agreement ('the Doha Agreement') sets a timeframe for withdrawal of all international military personnel from Afghanistan by May 2021. In line with the Doha Agreement, peace talks have commenced between the Afghan Government and the Taliban to secure a ceasefire and political settlement to Afghanistan's long-running conflict. s6(a)

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

7. Current indications however are all pointing to an international military withdrawal. All that remains to be determined is when this will occur. In this context, after 20 years of contributions, New Zealand must decide how best to conclude our deployment on our terms and in a manner reflecting our longstanding commitment to the Afghan Government and the international community.

Problem definition: conflict continues and a military resolution is not possible

8. The Taliban continues to incrementally strengthen its position across the country through its campaign of armed conflict against Afghan security forces and attacks against civilian targets, as has been the trend since the Afghan Government assumed primary responsibility for Afghanistan's security from NATO in 2014. The conflict in Afghanistan is not able to be resolved militarily by Afghanistan's security forces, even with the support of the RSM. However, the commitment and endurance of the RSM has helped to encourage the Taliban to pursue a diplomatic resolution of the conflict alongside its campaign of armed conflict.

A political resolution represents the only viable prospect for a lasting peace

9. The Doha Agreement was announced in February 2020, following 18 months of discussions between the US and the Taliban. The Agreement:
 - i) Offers a pathway towards peace through intra-Afghan negotiations between the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban, which are intended to consider a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire and a political resolution to the conflict;
 - ii) Includes a guarantee from the Taliban to prevent Afghanistan being used as a safe haven by groups seeking to commit terrorist attacks against the US or its allies; and
 - iii) Sets the course towards the withdrawal of US and all Coalition forces from Afghanistan by May 2021.

But Intra-Afghan peace talks will be challenging...

10. The commencement of Intra-Afghan peace talks in September 2020 was an important first step for diplomacy (the Taliban has previously labelled the Afghan Government as illegitimate and refused to engage with them). However, the talks have already been fraught and unfold against a backdrop of increased Taliban violence.

s6(a)

11. Negotiations will likely face significant challenges due to conflicting objectives,

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

Issues such as the rights of women and girls, interpretation of Islamic law and the ongoing conflict between Afghan security forces and Taliban fighters are likely to generate friction. Despite these impediments, the intra-Afghan negotiations are considered the only viable opportunity for peace in Afghanistan at this time.

There is a timeline for international military withdrawal in 2021

12. The Doha Agreement announced an initial drawdown of US forces in Afghanistan from 12,000 to 8,600 and set a 14-month timeline for withdrawal of all international military personnel from Afghanistan by May 2021, in return for pledges by the Taliban, including counter-terrorism guarantees. The initial drawdown to 8,600 was completed in July 2020 and US forces have further decreased to 4,500 in November 2020. The US also announced in November 2020 that its personnel numbers would decrease to 2,500 by mid-January 2021.

13. [REDACTED] s6(a), s6(b)(i) [REDACTED] In describing NATO's approach for the RSM, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has publicly stated that "we went into Afghanistan together, we are adjusting together, and when the conditions are right, we will leave together".¹

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

Though that timeline could still change...

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

New Zealand's deployment in Afghanistan

Current contributions

16. Since Cabinet last considered the Afghanistan deployment in June 2019 [CAB-19-MIN-0261 refers], New Zealand's deployment has decreased from 13 to six personnel. This is due to developments at the Afghanistan National Army Officer

¹ NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, "Statement on Afghanistan" released 11 September 2020.

Academy (ANAOA)² and the RSM Headquarters,³ which have resulted in the disestablishment of positions held by the NZDF. The table below sets out the current six positions held by NZDF personnel (position descriptions are at Appendix A).

Table 1: Current NZDF roles in Afghanistan

	Role	Deployed to
1.	CJ35 Operations Plans	RSM Headquarters
2.	Gender Advisor (Ministry of Interior)	RSM Headquarters
3.	Gender Advisor (Ministry of Defence)	RSM Headquarters
4.	Commanding Officer Kandak Mentor	ANAOA
5.	G7(Training) Staff Officer 2 Training	ANAOA
6.	G35(Operations Plans) Staff Officer 2 Assurance	ANAOA

17. The three NZDF personnel deployed to the ANAOA are mentors, who support the development of the increasingly independent and Afghan-led institution. Of the three NZDF personnel with RSM Headquarters roles, one leads operational planning for RSM “train, advise, assist” activities. The two other personnel are Gender Advisors, who support Women, Peace and Security-related initiatives in their work with the Afghan Ministries of Interior and Defence. The RSM seeks to support Afghanistan’s security forces, to enable them to maintain security in the country more effectively. New Zealand’s deployment contributes to that objective.

18. s6(a), s6(b)(i)

The NZDF deployment over time

19. After 20 years of continuous contributions, the NZDF deployment in Afghanistan is one of New Zealand’s longest-lasting deployments. Once concluded, New Zealand’s contributions in Afghanistan would have involved over 3,500 NZDF personnel and over NZ\$109M in official development assistance. Our deployments have cost the

² The ANAOA is Afghanistan’s premier training Academy for Afghan Army Officer Cadets, instilling leadership skills in them to take on command positions within the Afghan Army. The UK leads the international contribution at the ANAOA. The Afghan Army has progressed to the stage where it now delivers all training at the ANAOA, with international personnel acting as mentors. As of 10 September 2020, 5000 Afghan Army Officer Cadets have been trained at the ANAOA. ANAOA produces more than 70% of the Officers in the Afghan National Army.

³ s6(a), s6(b)(i)

lives of ten New Zealanders, the most significant New Zealand loss of life in a conflict since the Vietnam War.

20. New Zealand's deployments in Afghanistan began as a contribution to the US-led (United Nations Security Council endorsed) effort to dismantle the terrorist group Al-Qaeda in the wake of the September 11 attacks. As the international intervention has evolved it has continued to align with New Zealand's values. Since 2001, the efforts of New Zealand and our partners have effectively contained extremist groups within Afghanistan and have contributed to significant improvements in social outcomes and infrastructure in Afghanistan.
21. New Zealand's deployments contributed valued niche capabilities to the counter-terrorist campaign, and supported the development of the Afghan National Army, the Afghan Special Forces and the Afghan National Police. The New Zealand Provincial Reconstruction Team (NZPRT) and the New Zealand Aid Programme funded projects left a lasting impact on the lives of Afghans in Bamyan Province through tangible governance, development and security support from 2003-2013 (for more detail – see Appendix B: *The outcomes of NZDF deployments in Afghanistan 2001-2020*). Our deployment in Afghanistan has also strengthened New Zealand's defence relationships with the US, NATO and other operational partners.
22. However, the substantial international intervention, which at its height included over 130,000 personnel from 51 NATO and partner nations, [REDACTED] s6(a)
[REDACTED] s6(a)
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] s6(a)

Where to from here?

23. With only six NZDF personnel currently deployed, New Zealand's deployment has already decreased markedly over time since its high point when up to 140 NZDF personnel were deployed as part of the NZPRT 2003-2013, as well as Special Air Service deployments over that period.
24. While we continue to see the need to support Afghanistan and the intra-Afghan peace talks, military deployments are not usually intended to continue indefinitely. We are now able to contemplate concluding our deployment having seen the process through to an appropriate exit-point: the commencement of the Intra-Afghan peace talks and the publicised international drawdown in 2021.
25. [REDACTED] s9(2)(f)(iv)
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

26. For a full picture of New Zealand's current deployments refer Appendix C.

Options

27. Cabinet is asked to consider four options for the conclusion of New Zealand's deployment to Afghanistan. These options are all predicated on the full withdrawal of all remaining NZDF personnel from Afghanistan, bringing an end to New Zealand's

military contribution. Officials do not anticipate seeking a further extension to these mandates.

- 28. Any of the NZDF positions in Afghanistan could be disestablished before the mandate expires in the options below (in which case, the personnel would be withdrawn and relevant Ministers would be notified).
- 29. Should the international military mission in Afghanistan withdraw at any point prior to a 2021 mandate expiry, if chosen, of the NZDF deployment mandate in Afghanistan, then all NZDF personnel would also be withdrawn at that time.

Option 1: An Immediate Withdrawal by 31 December 2020

30. Option 1 does not propose any mandate extension for the three NZDF personnel deployed to the ANAOA and the three NZDF personnel deployed to the RSM Headquarters. All personnel would be withdrawn by 31 December 2020, before the existing mandate expires.

31. [Redacted] s6(a), s6(b)(i), s9(2)(h)
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

32. [Redacted] s6(a), s6(b)(i)
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

33. This option would very likely mean that New Zealand would be among the first Coalition partners to exit from Afghanistan [Redacted] s6(a), s6(b)(i)
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

Option 2: An Early Withdrawal by 31 March 2021

34. Option 2 proposes: extension of the mandate for the three NZDF personnel deployed to the ANAOA and the three NZDF personnel deployed to the RSM Headquarters by three months, withdrawing them by 31 March 2021.

35. [Redacted] s6(a), s6(b)(i)
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

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

36. [redacted] s6(a), s6(b)(i) [redacted] New Zealand would likely be among the first Coalition partners to exit Afghanistan, [redacted] s6(a), s6(b)(i) [redacted]

Option 3: A Coordinated Withdrawal by 31 May 2021 [Recommended]

37. Option 3 proposes: extension of the mandate for the three NZDF personnel deployed to the ANAOA and the three NZDF personnel deployed to the RSM Headquarters by five months, withdrawing them by 31 May 2021. This option is recommended by officials.

38. [redacted] s6(a), s6(b)(i) [redacted]

39. The withdrawal of all NZDF personnel from Afghanistan by 31 May 2021 is in alignment with the Doha Agreement's timeframe for international military withdrawal from Afghanistan. In the event that the international military presence were to remain beyond May 2021, this option could see New Zealand among the first Coalition partners to withdraw.

40. Conversely, concluding New Zealand's military contributions in Afghanistan on our own terms in mid-2021 would reduce our exposure to risk in the event of a complicated and drawn-out international withdrawal or a breakdown or plateau in intra-Afghan negotiations through 2021.

Option 4: A Phased Withdrawal by 31 December 2021

41. Option 4 proposes:
- Extension of the mandate for the three NZDF personnel deployed to the ANAOA in Afghanistan by five months, withdrawing them by 31 May 2021; and
 - Extension of the mandate for the three NZDF personnel deployed to the RSM Headquarters in Afghanistan by a maximum of 12 months, withdrawing them by 31 December 2021 (or earlier, if international forces withdraw prior to this date).

42. [redacted] s6(a), s6(b)(i) [redacted]

43. [redacted] s6(a), s6(b)(i) [redacted]

44. This 12-month extension would be signalled as a definite (and latest possible) withdrawal date. In the event the international withdrawal is deferred beyond 2021, then New Zealand would still exit in December 2021. No further mandate extensions are anticipated. On the other hand, should the international military withdrawal from Afghanistan occur *before* December 2021, then the three NZDF personnel deployed to the RSM Headquarters would also be withdrawn at this time.

Next steps

45. The NZDF deployment will withdraw in line with the option selected by Cabinet unless the international military presence withdraws earlier, in which case the NZDF deployment would be withdrawn at that time.

46. [Redacted] s6(a), s6(b)(i)
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

47. Work will continue on the Bamyán Ranges Clearance Project.⁴ Quarterly update reports on this work are provided to the Minister of Defence, and referred to the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs. The next report is due in November 2020. The project is scheduled to be completed in May 2022. This timeframe will not be affected by the withdrawal of NZDF personnel.

48. The MFAT-managed Official Development Assistance (ODA) contributions to the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan of US\$2M per year in 2019 and 2020 have also been completed. This has brought New Zealand's ODA contributions to Afghanistan to just over NZ\$109M since 1995. [Redacted] s9(2)(f)(iv)
[Redacted]

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

49. There will be a number of challenges facing Afghanistan when the international military presence withdraws.

50. [Redacted] s6(a), s6(b)(i)
[Redacted]

51. [Redacted] s6(a), s6(b)(i)
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

⁴ This project is undertaking additional clearance of five live firing ranges used by the NZPRT for training to maintain operational readiness while deployed in Bamyán Province 2003-2013, to bring these in line with current international standards.

52. [Redacted] s6(a), s6(b)(i)
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

Threat level

53. The unmitigated operational threat level for Afghanistan is assessed [Redacted] s6(a)
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

The impact of COVID-19

54. [Redacted] s6(a) Afghanistan has suffered significant health and economic impacts as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. [Redacted] s6(a)
[Redacted]

55. [Redacted] s6(a), s6(b)(i)
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

56. Officials continue to monitor the effects of COVID-19 on missions in which NZDF personnel are deployed and will advise the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence of any significant developments. Authorisation for Ministers with Power to Act (Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Finance, and Minister of Defence) is sought to approve changes to the deployment, if any arise as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Legal considerations

International legal basis for the NZDF Afghanistan deployment

57. The legal basis for the presence of NATO RSM forces in Afghanistan is the consent of the Afghan Government. The legal framework for the RSM is provided by a 2014 NATO–Afghanistan Status of Forces Agreement, which notes the legal basis for the presence and activities of NATO forces in Afghanistan and defines the terms and conditions under which they are deployed. This Agreement was also welcomed by the United Nations Security Council in Resolution 2189 of 12 December 2014.

58. The formal mechanism for New Zealand’s participation in the RSM is a legally binding Agreement which was signed by way of Exchange of Letters on 28 October 2016 and

provided for the participation of New Zealand as an operational partner. In 2019, the commitments contained in the Agreement were extended by a legally-binding Letter from the New Zealand Ambassador in Brussels to NATO HQ. That letter extended New Zealand's contribution to the RSM "for the period to 31 December 2020" and reflected the changes in the number of personnel.

59. [Redacted] s6(a), s9(2)(h)
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

60. [Redacted] s6(a), s9(2)(h)
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

Status of Forces

61. [Redacted] s6(a), s9(2)(h)
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

62. [Redacted] s6(a), s9(2)(h)
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

Rotations

63. In 2012, Cabinet agreed to the inclusion in all NZDF deployment papers of a provision that allows NZDF to temporarily exceed Cabinet-mandated personnel numbers for the purposes of command reconnaissance, rotation, and extraction of forces in and out of theatre [CAB Min (12) 10/2 refers]. In July 2018, Cabinet noted the 2012 decision and agreed that this convention should continue [CAB 18-MIN-0346 refers]. The Chief of Defence Force would inform the Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Defence in advance whenever a rotation, extraction or command reconnaissance is planned above the mandated numbers for specific contributions.

Ability to service New Zealand’s standing commitments or deploy in an emergency

64. The proposed deployment can be undertaken without impacting the ability of the NZDF to meet standing obligations within the Pacific, or emergency responses.

Financial implications

65. There are four options for the extension of the Afghanistan deployment which relate to the duration of the deployment. All four options have the same numbers of personnel deploying. Options 2-4 can be funded from within the existing unallocated appropriation for Operations Contributing to New Zealand’s Security, Stability and Interests. No additional funding is required. Option 1 has no financial implications, as it proposes withdrawal within the existing funded mandate period.

Vote Defence Force	NZ \$million					
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total
Estimated cost of proposed deployment Option 1: <i>An Immediate Withdrawal</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-
Estimated cost of proposed deployment Option 2: <i>An Early Withdrawal</i>	0.433	-	-	-	-	0.433
Estimated cost of proposed deployment Option 3: <i>A Coordinated Withdrawal</i>	0.630	-	-	-	-	0.630
Estimated cost of proposed deployment Option 4: <i>A Phased Withdrawal</i>	0.688	0.752	-	-	-	1.440
Additional Funding Required	-	-	-	-	-	-

Impact on veterans’ support entitlement liability

66. As a result of a recent change to accounting standards on employee entitlements, NZDF is now required to recognise veterans’ support entitlements at the point the veteran becomes eligible to receive financial support from the Crown. A liability for these entitlements was established on the non-departmental schedule of assets and liabilities of NZDF on 1 April 2020 as a result. The change in accounting approach requires the recognition of an upfront expense (being all the relevant expected future costs discounted to today’s dollars) with a corresponding increase in liabilities when a policy decision (such as a deployment) increases the value of the liability, even though the settlement of this liability occurs over a period of time.

67. NZDF personnel meet the definition of a ‘veteran’ under the Veterans’ Support Act 2014, and thereby become eligible for veterans’ support entitlements, when they undertake ‘qualifying operational service’. The Minister for Veterans has declared this deployment to be ‘qualifying operational service’ under the Act, so any NZDF personnel who serve on this deployment who do not already have ‘veteran’ status, will become eligible.

68. The impact of this deployment decision is an estimated increase in the veterans’ support entitlement liability of \$0.300 million in 2020/21 if Option 3 or Option 4 is agreed. The impact is forecast to be Nil if Option 1 or Option 2 is agreed. The \$0.300 million expense is able to be funded within the existing appropriation for Service Cost – Veterans’ Entitlements. No additional funding is required.

Consultation

Jointly prepared by	Ministry of Defence; the New Zealand Defence Force; Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Consulted	Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (NAB, NSG); Government Communications and Security Bureau; the Treasury
Informed	Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PAG)

Communications

69. Detailed communications advice relating to public announcement and messaging to international partners is being provided separately to Ministers by officials. A careful communications strategy will be important.

70. [Redacted] s6(a), s6(b)(i)
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

71. [Redacted] s6(a), s6(b)(i)
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

Proactive release

72. A redacted version of this Cabinet paper, should it be approved, will be proactively released following the public announcement of withdrawal from Afghanistan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

73. The Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence recommend that the Committee:

1. **Note** that, in light of the downwards trajectory of the international military presence, and the timeframe for withdrawal established by the Doha Agreement, it is recommended that New Zealand conclude its 20-year deployment to Afghanistan in 2021.

2. **Agree to:**

2.1. **Option 1: An Immediate Withdrawal:** withdraw the three New Zealand Defence Force personnel deployed to the Afghanistan National Army Officer Academy and the three New Zealand Defence Force personnel deployed to the Resolute Support Mission Headquarters by 31 December 2020.

OR

2.2. **Option 2: An Early Withdrawal:** extend the mandate for the three New Zealand Defence Force personnel deployed to the Afghanistan National Army Officer

Academy and the three New Zealand Defence Force personnel deployed to the Resolute Support Mission Headquarters for three months to 31 March 2021.

OR

- 2.3. **Option 3: A Coordinated Withdrawal (Recommended):** extend the mandate for the three New Zealand Defence Force personnel deployed to the Afghanistan National Army Officer Academy and the three New Zealand Defence Force personnel deployed to the Resolute Support Mission Headquarters for five months to 31 May 2021.

OR

- 2.4. **Option 4: A Phased Withdrawal:** extend the mandate for the three New Zealand Defence Force personnel deployed to the Afghanistan National Army Officer Academy for five months to 31 May 2021; and extend the mandate for the three New Zealand Defence Force personnel to the Resolute Support Mission Headquarters for 12 months to 31 December 2021.

3. **Note** that, depending on the option selected, New Zealand could be among the first Coalition partners to withdraw, [REDACTED] s6(a), s6(b)(i)
4. **Note** that if the international military mission in Afghanistan withdraws earlier in 2021 than the timeframes outlined in options 2-4, then all remaining NZDF personnel would be withdrawn at that time.
5. [REDACTED] ss(2)(f)(iv)
6. **Agree** that the New Zealand Defence Force may temporarily exceed the Cabinet-mandated personnel numbers for this deployment for the purposes of command reconnaissance, rotation, and extraction of forces from theatre.
7. **Note** that the Chief of Defence Force will inform the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defence and the Minister of Foreign Affairs in advance whenever Cabinet-mandated personnel numbers are exceeded for the reasons set out in paragraph 63 of the paper.
8. **Authorise** Ministers with Power to Act (Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Finance, and Minister of Defence) to approve any changes to the deployment as a result of COVID-19.
9. **Note** that *An Immediate Withdrawal* from Afghanistan (Option 1) has no financial implications, as it proposes withdrawal within the existing funded mandate period.
10. **Note** that *An Early Withdrawal* from Afghanistan (Option 2) has a total estimated cost of \$0.433 million in 2020/21.
11. **Note** that *A Coordinated Withdrawal* from Afghanistan (Option 3: Recommended) has a total estimated cost of \$0.630 million in 2020/21.

12. **Note** that *A Phased Withdrawal* from Afghanistan (Option 4) has a total estimated cost of \$1.440 million (\$0.688 million in 2020/21 and \$0.752 million in 2021/22).
13. **Note** that the total estimated costs for this deployment can be funded from within existing unallocated baseline for Vote Defence Force: Operations Contributing to New Zealand's Security, Stability and Interests MCA regardless of which option is chosen.
14. **Note** the Minister for Veterans has declared this deployment to be 'qualifying operational service' under the Veterans Support Act 2014, meaning any NZDF personnel that are deployed will become a 'veteran' eligible for veterans' support entitlements under the Veterans' Support Act 2014, if they do not have veteran status already.
15. **Note** this deployment decision is estimated to increase the value of the veterans' support entitlements liability by a maximum of \$0.300 million depending on the option agreed.
16. **Note** that the total expenses associated with recommendation 15 can be met from within the existing amount of the Vote Defence Force Non-Departmental Other Expenses appropriation: Service Cost – Veterans' Entitlements regardless of which option is chosen.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Nanaia Mahuta
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon Peeni Henare
MINISTER OF DEFENCE

APPENDIX A: POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

CJ35 Operations Plans - Resolute Support Mission Headquarters

Rank: Colonel

Duties

- Support CJ3 (Operations) with understanding of current planning activity in the CJ5 (Plans) Br
- Support the CJ5 with understanding of current operations.
- Provide an immediate staff and planning resource to support Combined Joint Operations Centre (CJOC) crisis and branch planning.
- Responsible for synchronisation, integration and coordination of Train, Advise, Assist (TAA) related activity across Afghanistan in consultation with CJ7 (Training).
- Oversee the finalisation of operational planning prior to handover to the CJOC for execution.
- Assist in RSM policy and Standard Operating Procedure development.
- Provide incidental and routine reporting back to HQJFNZ.
- Represent NZ on all national matters including rest and relaxation, reporting and other personnel management requirements.

Gender Advisor (Ministry of Interior) - Resolute Support Mission Headquarters

Rank: Lieutenant Colonel (Equivalent)

Duties

- TAA Ministry of Interior (Mol) on the recruitment of women in the Afghanistan National Police (ANP) in conjunction with the Human Resource Management TAA efforts as described in Mol recruitment plan and assist with relevant revisions, when necessary.
- TAA Mol regarding construction and development of female facilities for ANP towards providing a safe and secure working environment for women and enhance recruitment and retention.
- TAA Mol Women/Children/Human Rights Department Director in the compilation and prioritization of their annual procurement requirements.
- Mentor and advise the Women/Children/Human Rights Department Director in the execution of her leadership responsibilities and the role of the organisation within the Ministry for implementation of approved strategies, policies and programs.
- Provide input to the Afghan Security Forces Fund Planning, Programming, Budgeting and Execution process including cost methodologies for annual and forecasted expenditures for all Mol Gender requirements.
- Support the RSM Section Head Gender Advisor with inputs for recurring reports to include the Periodic Mission reviews, Quarterly Report, Special Investigator General

for Afghan Reconstruction, progress of Mol towards achieving established milestones, etc.

- Mentor and coordinate work of the Mol Gender Project Manager towards achieving established goals.
- Prepare high level briefs, correspondence and presentations for use by RSM Section Head Gender Advisor.
- Perform like duties elsewhere within the organisation as directed.
- Undertake operation deployments and/or Temporary Duty assignments both within and without NATO boundaries.

Gender Advisor (Ministry of Defence) - Resolute Support Mission Headquarters

Rank: Major (Equivalent)

Duties

- Work closely with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Mol and Ministry of Defence Gender Integration Offices.
- Establish positive and sustainable relations with the local women's organisations.
- Facilitate the integration of a gender perspective into SOP's and policies to positively influence the attitude and discipline towards mixed gender acceptance and integration.
- Identify lessons and provide advice for improving gender consideration as described in the UNSCR 1325 and 1820.
- Work closely with the RSM Headquarters gender specialists.
- Undertake tasks based on UNSCR 1325/ 1820 / 1888/ 1889 /1960 and NATO Directive 40-1.
- Perform like duties elsewhere within the organisation as directed.
- Undertake operational deployments and/or temporary duty assignments both within and without NATO boundaries.

Commanding Officer Mentor (Kandak) - Afghanistan National Army Officer Academy

Rank: Lieutenant Colonel

Duties

- Build and maintain an effective relationship with the Kandak Commanding Officers (COs).
- Provide mentoring and advice to the Kandak COs in order to develop leadership and command of the Kandaks.
- Provide mentoring and advice to the Kandak COs in order to develop institutional resilience in the following:
 - Application and accountability for doctrinal process – planning, orders, ARR, report drafting etc.
 - Application of the various ANAOA policies including discipline of both staff and Officer Cadets,
 - Execution of the ANAOA syllabus.
 - Execution of the ANAOA Assessment Strategy – Officer Cadet Personal File maintenance, formative and summative assessment, remediation policy, Training Objective attainment and Cadet Review Board delivery.
 - Maintenance of Lines of Communication including the use of IT systems.
 - Maintenance of an effective daily routine.
- Provide mentoring and advice to the Kandak COs in order to develop instructor excellence in the following:
 - Preparation and the effective/efficient delivery of the syllabus content.
 - Attendance of staff on Instructor Development Courses.
 - Promoting accountability through assessment.
- Support the collation of lessons learnt to develop the efficiency of the training at ANAOA to be fed both into the Kandak and Mentoring Mission.
- Support the Chief Mentor in the development of the ANAOA Campaign Plan
- Provide advice on maintenance and management of the Kandak infrastructure, and any future developments.
- Any other duties and tasks as required by the Chief Mentor.

G7 Staff Officer 2 Training - Afghanistan National Army Officer Academy

Rank: Major

Duties

- Advise the Remediation Officer in ANAOA, monitor the application of the remediation policy and act as the Senior Military Instructor and adviser on all remediation matters within G7 (Training).
- As required assist Kandaks in support of remediation.
- Liaise with assessment and Kandaks with regard to remediation progress.
- Focus on RSM and Bridmal ability to direct, plan and deliver ANAOA Leadership, Drill and Military training, within a Tolay or Kandak context.
- Support, influence and contribute to the development of the Bridmal staff, and Officer Cadet training at ANAOA.
- Collate lessons identified, and develop good practice guidelines, to enhance training and S1 (Administration) and S4 (Logistics) outputs.
- Coordinate and provide continuation training for UK Mentors (deliver weapon handling, ranges and force protection scenarios).
- Any other duties as directed by the Chief Instructor (CI) or Chief Mentor.

G35 Staff Officer 2 Assurance - Afghanistan National Army Officer Academy

Rank: Major

Duties

- Advise the mentoring effort in all aspects of Training Development and Assessment (TDA).
- Senior advisor responsible for the collection, objective analysis, information distribution and reporting of assessments, lessons learnt and transition data.
- In consultation with CI, SO2 Training and SO2 TDA: develop, manage and advise on maintenance of training standards across ANAOA.
- Any other tasks in support of the wider development of the G7 effort as directed by the Chief Mentor and Chief Instructor.



In line with the Pacific Reset and the Strategic Defence Policy Statement 2018, Defence is further lifting its long standing engagement in the Pacific. Current Defence activities in the Pacific include humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations, maritime surveillance and a range of activities designed to lift partner capacity and capability. There are no current peace support operations in the Pacific, but a future requirement for these cannot be ruled out. A combination of complex disruptors (such as climate change and the economic impact of Covid-19) will test Pacific states' capacities, and will likely require greater levels of assistance.

The Middle East and Africa region is also a longstanding theatre of operations where, together with our partners, the NZDF can deploy to counter piracy, terrorism, instability, and transnational crime.

s6(a)

Released by the Minister of Defence

Submission to the Minister of Defence

PLANNING FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF NEW ZEALAND DEFENCE FORCE PERSONNEL FROM AFGHANISTAN

MoD ref: 011-2021

NZDF tracking: 2021-028

Type of submission:	Routine	Distributed by (office):	Defence
Addressed to:	Minister of Defence	For referral to:	Prime Minister
For referral to:	Minister of Foreign Affairs		
Purpose:	To provide an update on planning for the withdrawal of the remaining six New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) personnel from Afghanistan.		

Recommendations:

- Note** that in December 2020 Cabinet agreed to conclude New Zealand's deployment to Afghanistan and withdraw the six remaining New Zealand Defence Force personnel by 31 May 2021;
- Note** that conditions have changed since advice was provided to Cabinet in December 2020 and this affects the withdrawal planning;
- Note** that, as a result, it is now expected that New Zealand Defence Force personnel will be able to withdraw from Afghanistan by mid-March 2021;
- Refer** a copy of this paper to the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs for information.

Approved by:



HON PEENI HENARE

Minister of Defence

Date: 10 FEB 2021

Recommended by:



K.R. SHORT
Air Marshal
Chief of Defence Force

Date: 09 FEB 21



ANDREW BRIDGMAN
Secretary of Defence

Date: 10.2.21

9 February 2021

Minister of Defence

PLANNING FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF NEW ZEALAND DEFENCE FORCE PERSONNEL FROM AFGHANISTAN

Purpose

1. To provide an update on planning for the withdrawal of the remaining six New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) personnel from Afghanistan.

Context

New Zealand's withdrawal

2. In December 2020 Cabinet decided to conclude New Zealand's deployment to Afghanistan by 31 May 2021 [CAB-20-MIN-0502 refers] in light of the downwards trajectory of the international military presence and the timeframe for withdrawal established by the United States – Taliban agreement (the "Doha Agreement").
3. Key partners have now been advised of the decision and the NZDF has commenced planning to withdraw the six remaining personnel deployed to Afghanistan—three personnel from the UK-led Afghanistan National Army Officer Academy (ANAOA) and three personnel associated with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Resolute Support Mission Headquarters (RSM).
4. Advice to Cabinet in December emphasised the uncertainty around the timeline for the withdrawal of the international military presence and the possibility that conditions on the ground might change, affecting New Zealand's withdrawal process. It is now clear that conditions have changed, affecting the NZDF's withdrawal planning timeline.

Changing conditions

5. A six-month notice period for withdrawal is customary to allow replacement personnel to be sourced from other contributing nations and this has been appreciated by our partners.

s6(a)

s6(a), s6(b)(ii)

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

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

s6(a)

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

Next steps

8. The UK and NATO have been engaged throughout the planning process, and officials will continue to work closely with partners through diplomatic and military channels.

9. NZDF is now working with partners [redacted] s6(a), s6(b)(i) [redacted] to identify air transport timeframes for the withdrawal.

10. All personnel will be expected to deliver a negative COVID-19 test result prior to departing Afghanistan, and will complete mandatory isolation requirements in transit countries and on return to New Zealand.

11. The NZDF will undertake a modest flag-lowering ceremony in theatre to mark the conclusion of New Zealand's contribution.

s9(2)(f)(iv)

13. Officials are currently working with Ministers' offices to determine the timing of the public announcement of New Zealand's withdrawal.

14. Ministers' offices will be updated on the withdrawal process and timing in the coming weeks. The Minister of Defence will be notified via the *Defence Weekly Report*.

Recommendations

15. It is recommended that you:
- a. **Note** that in December 2020 Cabinet agreed to conclude New Zealand's deployment to Afghanistan and withdraw the six remaining New Zealand Defence Force personnel by 31 May 2021;
 - b. **Note** that conditions have changed since advice was provided to Cabinet in December 2020 and this affects the withdrawal planning;
 - c. **Note** that, as a result, it is now expected that New Zealand Defence Force personnel will be able to withdraw from Afghanistan by mid-March 2021;
 - d. **Refer** a copy of this paper to the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs for information.



KR SHORT
Air Marshal
Chief of Defence Force
Date: 09 FEB 21



ANDREW BRIDGMAN
Secretary of Defence
Date:

10 February 2021

Released by the Minister of Defence