

HON RON MARK, MINISTER OF DEFENCE

Ministerial Overseas Travel 21-01-2019-01-02-2019: Hon Ron Mark – Release of Cabinet Documents

June 2019

This publication provides the report to Cabinet from Hon Ron Mark on his overseas travel, from 21 January to 1 February 2019, to the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Israel and South Sudan, to visit a number of New Zealand Defence Force deployments and to undertake bilateral meetings.

The pack comprises the following documents:

- *Travel Report: Hon Ron Mark; Middle East and Africa 21 Jan – 1 Feb 2019* [CAB-19-SUB-0083] and the associated Cabinet minute [CAB-19-MIN-0083]
- *Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Ron Mark: Egypt, Israel and South Sudan – 21 January to 1 February 2019* [CAB-18-SUB-0602], and the associated Cabinet minute [CAB-18-MIN-0602].

This pack has been released on the Ministry of Defence website, available at: www.defence.govt.nz/publications.

The names of junior staff members have been withheld. It has also 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)] or any 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 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

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.

Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Ron Mark

Portfolio **Defence**

On 25 March 2019, Cabinet **noted** the report from Hon Ron Mark under CAB-19-SUB-0083 on his travel, from 21 January to 1 February 2019 to United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Israel and South Sudan, to visit a number of New Zealand Defence Force deployments and to undertake bilateral meetings.

Michael Webster
Secretary of the Cabinet

Hard-copy distribution:

Prime Minister
Deputy Prime Minister
Hon Ron Mark

Chair, Cabinet

**TRAVEL REPORT:
HON RON MARK; MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA 21 JAN – 1 FEB 2019**

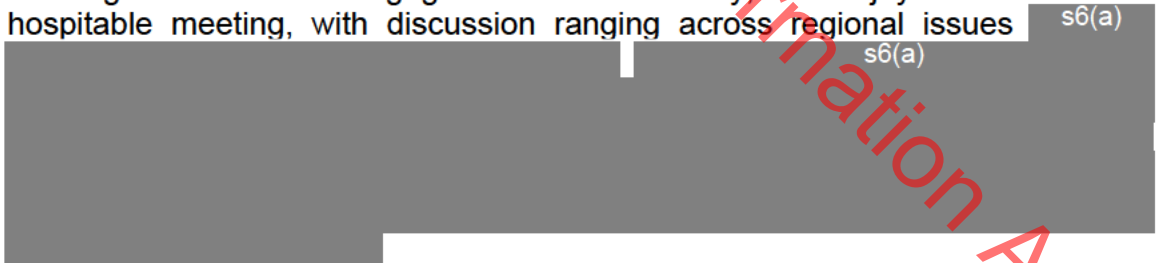
Executive Summary

1. From 21 January – 1 February 2019 I travelled to the Middle East (UAE and Israel) and Africa (Egypt and South Sudan) for a series of deployment visits and bilateral engagements. As part of continued cross-party engagement on defence and security issues, I was accompanied by Hon Tim Macindoe, Deputy Chair of the Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade Committee. This paper covers the key outcomes and issues from our engagements, with more detail provided in the Formal Messages which were released by the Embassies following our visit.

UAE

2. During our short stop in Dubai, Minister of State for Defence Affairs Mohammed Ahmed Al Bowardi travelled with a delegation from Abu Dhabi to host a bilateral meeting. As with our engagement last February, we enjoyed a warm and hospitable meeting, with discussion ranging across regional issues

s6(a) s6(a)



3. s6(a)
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Egypt

4. The first part of our visit to Egypt was a series of bilateral and multilateral engagements in Cairo. Our meeting with the Egyptian Minister of Defence, General Mohamed Zaki, commenced with an expression of appreciation for New Zealand's sustained commitment to the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) since its inception in 1982. The trust and dialogue developed over this time has allowed Egypt and Israel to engage effectively on more recent security risks associated with the emergence of terrorist groups in the Sinai Peninsula.
5. Minister Zaki expressed a desire to broaden the Defence relationship with New Zealand. [REDACTED] s6(b)(ii)
[REDACTED] s6(a)
6. Engagements with Presidential Adviser on Security, Faiza Abou el-Naga and Ambassador Swelam of the Cairo International Centre for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding were similarly positive, acknowledging New Zealand's previous support for demining in the Western Desert, and support to peacekeeping training.
7. We attended a valuable roundtable discussion at the Embassy with Five Nation Heads of Mission and Defence Attaches, covering a range of domestic and regional security issues.
8. Following engagements in Cairo, we travelled to Sharm El-Sheikh at the southern end of the Sinai Peninsula. The bulk of MFO forces redeployed here following extremist attacks in northern Sinai in 2013. The NZDF contingent conducts driving tasks, provides driver training support for the wider MFO, and engineering leadership for the wide range of projects underway on the base. [REDACTED] s6(a)
[REDACTED] s6(b)(ii)
9. [REDACTED] s6(a)

Israel

10. Our visit to Israel included a meeting with the UNTSO Force Commander, and visit to Israel-occupied Golan Heights, meetings with Prime Minister (and Defence Minister) Benjamin Netanyahu, and Director-General of the Ministry of Defence Major General Udi Adam, and a call on the Defence Industry company Elbit Systems.

11. We met with the UNTSO Force Commander Major General Kristin Lund (Norway) at their Headquarters in Jerusalem. Referencing UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, Lund expressed a wish to see New Zealand, as a high quality troop contributing nation, take a lead on female representation on deployments [redacted] s9(2)(a)

12. [redacted] s6(a)

13. Following this meeting both delegations proceeded to Israel-occupied Golan Heights. The security situation is now sufficiently resolved that there was tourist activity at a previous observation post, now the site of a café.. [redacted] s6(a)

14. The following day we met with the Director General of the Israeli Defence Force, Major General Udi Adam. [redacted] s6(a)

[redacted] s6(a) s6(a)

15. [redacted] s6(a)

16.

s6(a)

17.

s6(a)

South Sudan

18. Our visit to South Sudan came at a time when there are glimmers of hope for the country's peace process, albeit with manifold risks remaining. The Revised Agreement for the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan was signed on 12 September 2018. New Zealand is s6(a) providing both the SRSG (David Shearer) and the Force Chief of Staff (a NZDF Brigadier). In addition NZDF UNMOs s6(a) and are the only non-African nation that still allows its staff to operate outside of the capital Juba. There is currently one NZDF UNMO in Malakal (near the border with Sudan) and Yambio (near the border with Democratic Republic of Congo).

19. Our visit commenced with a visit with Minister of Defence and Veterans Affairs, Kuol Manyang, a veteran of South Sudan's long independence struggle. Minister Kuol noted the cessation of hostilities between government and opposition forces. s6(b)(i)

20.

s6(b)(i)

s6(b)(i)

21. We were very pleased to meet with SRSG David Shearer and other UNMISS staff during our visit to Juba, and hear their views on the complex challenges faced by the peace process. s6(b)(ii)

However insecurity and intercommunal violence remained massive issues: there had been 180 deaths in the week prior during two cattle raiding incidents.

22. Currently 54% of UNMISS efforts are allocated to the 'protection of civilians' sites that were created near UN positions during previous periods of fighting. SRSG Shearer is keen to support repatriation from these sites, as shrinking numbers over time would liberate resources which could be used for patrolling, further increasing community security.

23. Looking ahead to the reconsideration of UNMISS's mandate in March, s6(b)(ii)

24. SRSG Shearer was highly complimentary of the quality of the NZDF contribution to UNMISS. Shearer was upfront in saying that he would like to see more Kiwis in the mission, s6(b)(ii)

25. The UNMISS Force Commander, Lieutenant General Frank Kamanzi (Rwanda) was grateful for the NZDF contribution, including the Force Chief of Staff role. s6(b)(ii)

Summary

26. At a time of shifting regional security concerns, this trip provided a valuable opportunity to engage directly with key interlocutors in the region, reiterate New Zealand's support for the rules-based order, gain insights into current and future concerns, and understand the value of NZDF commitments. I was very pleased

to be accompanied by the Hon Tim Macindoe, demonstrating that at a high level the New Zealand approach to security challenges is generally bipartisan.

27. It was heartening to see and repeatedly hear of the positive impact of our Defence professionals in the operational theatres in which they served. The quality of our personnel continues to provide the government with a range of options to support New Zealand's policy on regional and global security issues.

s9(2)(g)(i)

28. On a personal note it was extremely rewarding to visit the Multinational Force and Observers locations in the Sinai Peninsula, Egypt, where I served in 1982 and 1983. While the form of the mission, and the threat that it faces has changed significantly in the intervening years, the structure that we established following the signing of the Peace Treaty has endured, and is now seen as a model for steps towards enduring peace in other conflicts including Syria and Yemen.

Proactive Release

29. I propose to proactively release this paper within 30 business days. This release will be subject to redaction as appropriate under the Official Information Act 1982.

Recommendations

30. I recommend that Cabinet:

Note this report

Hon Ron Mark
Minister of Defence

5 March 2018



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

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Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Ron Mark

Portfolio **Defence**

On 3 December 2018, Cabinet:

- 1 **authorised** the absence of Hon Ron Mark from New Zealand from 21 January to 1 February 2019 to travel to Egypt, Israel and South Sudan to gain a first-hand understanding of some of the international operations currently being conducted by the New Zealand Defence Force;
- 2 **agreed** that he be accompanied by one member of staff;
- 3 **approved** the estimated expenditure of up to \$49,100 for the travel expenses of the Ministerial party as a charge to Vote: Internal Affairs (Members of the Executive – Travel);
- 4 **noted** that he will also be accompanied by officials from the New Zealand Defence Force and the Ministry of Defence, whose travel costs will be met from their respective Votes;
- 5 **agreed** that he invite one Member of Parliament from the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Select Committee on the visit, whose travel costs will be met from their Leader's Budget;
- 6 **agreed** that in his absence the Rt Hon Winston Peters act as Minister of Defence and Minister for Veterans.

Michael Webster
Secretary of the Cabinet

Hard-copy distribution:

Prime Minister
Deputy Prime Minister
Hon Ron Mark

Chair
Cabinet

PROPOSED OVERSEAS TRAVEL: HON RON MARK: Egypt, Israel and South Sudan – 21 January to 1 February 2019

Proposal

1. I seek Cabinet approval to travel to Egypt, Israel and South Sudan in my capacity as the Minister of Defence over the period 21 January to 1 February 2019.

Travel

2. The purpose of the travel is to gain first-hand understanding of some of the international operations currently being conducted by the New Zealand Defence Force. The Government has recently extended the mandates for these missions, so it is important for me to obtain further insights from those on the ground about the challenges they will be facing over the remainder of the mandate, as part of our ongoing monitoring and assessment of our missions around the world. It will also serve to directly acknowledge the service of our personnel who operate in difficult and dangerous environments on behalf of the Government.
3. I also intend to conduct counterpart calls with relevant Ministers in the countries where our personnel serve.
4. I will be away from New Zealand from Monday 21 January 2019 until Friday 1 February 2019. The programme is planned to include 3 days in Egypt (including Cairo and Sinai), 3 days in Israel, 2 days in South Sudan, plus travel time.
5. The Prime Minister has approved the travel in principle. The travel will occur prior to the House sitting in 2019.

Delegation Details

6. I propose to travel with one staff member from my office, alongside officials from the New Zealand Defence Force and the Ministry of Defence. Additionally, I intend to invite one MP from the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Select Committee to accompany me if available. Any MP travel would be funded from their Leader's budget.

Estimated Costs

7. Indicative costs for this travel are:

<u>Minister of Defence and one staff</u>	
Airfares, Taxes and Insurance	\$ 36500
Accommodation, meals, transport	\$ 9000
Receptions/hospitality, gifts	\$ 1300
Contingency (@5%)	\$ 2300
Total	\$ 49100

Acting Ministers

8. The Rt Hon Winston Peters has agreed to act in the Defence and Veterans' portfolios.

Recommendations

9. The Minister of Defence recommends that Cabinet:

- a) **authorise** his absence from New Zealand from 21 January to 1 February 2019 to travel to Egypt, Israel and South Sudan;
- b) **approve** the expenditure of \$49100 for the travel expenses of the Minister and one staff member as a charge to Vote Internal Affairs: Members of the Executive – Travel; and
- c) **agree** that in his absence the Rt Hon Winston Peters will act in the Defence and Veterans' portfolios.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Ron Mark
Minister of Defence