

## HON JUDITH COLLINS KC, MINISTER OF DEFENCE

### SOLOMON ISLANDS: FINAL EXTENSION AND CONCLUSION OF NEW ZEALAND DEPLOYMENT TO SOLOMON ISLANDS INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE FORCE

November 2024

This publication provides a June 2024 Ministerial submission on the final extension and conclusion of New Zealand deployments to the Solomon Islands International Assistance Force. This was approved by the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Finance, Minister of Defence and Minister of Police in June 2024.

The pack comprises a submission to Ministers from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand Defence Force, and Ministry of Defence, *Solomon Islands: Final extension and conclusion of New Zealand deployment to Solomon Islands International Assistance Force*, dated 21 June 2024.

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

- national security information and information that would impact the international relations of the Government of New Zealand [s6(a)]
- information provided by other Governments with an expectation that it would be protected [s6(b)(i)].

Information is also withheld in order to:

- protect the privacy of natural persons [s9(2)(a)]
- maintain the effect conduct of public affairs through the free and frank advice provided by Defence [s9(2)(g)(i)]
- maintain legal professional privilege [s9(2)(h)].



21 June 2024

Prime Minister	For approval by	24 June 2024
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs	For approval by	24 June 2024
Minister of Finance	For approval by	24 June 2024
Minister of Defence	For approval by	24 June 2024
Minister of Police	For approval by	24 June 2024

### Solomon Islands: final extension and conclusion of New Zealand deployment to Solomon Islands International Assistance Force

**BRIEFING** Decision Submission

**PURPOSE** To notify Ministers that the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) deployment to the Solomon Islands International Assistance Force (SIAF) is due to conclude soon and to seek approval to extend the existing mandate one final time until 31 July 2024.

### Recommended referrals

Associate Minister of Foreign Affairs	For information by	24 June 2024
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### Contact details

NAME	ROLE	DIVISION	WORK PHONE
s9(2)(g)(i)	Unit Manager	Pacific Melanesia and Micronesia Division	s9(2)(a)
s9(2)(g)(i)	Director, Pacific and Australia	International Branch	s9(2)(a)

### Minister's Office to complete

<input type="checkbox"/> Approved	<input type="checkbox"/> Noted	<input type="checkbox"/> Referred
<input type="checkbox"/> Needs amendment	<input type="checkbox"/> Declined	<input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawn
<input type="checkbox"/> Overtaken by events	<input type="checkbox"/> See Minister's notes	

### Comments

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### Key points

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- In response to rioting in the capital Honiara in November 2021 and at the formal request of the Solomon Islands Government, New Zealand has maintained a defence deployment to Solomon Islands since December 2021 as part of the Solomon Islands International Assistance Force (SIAF) led by Australia. s6(a)  
s6(a)
- The current mandate from Ministers with Powers to Act (MWPTA) allows for the deployment of up to 15 New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) personnel until 30 June 2024, with the NZDF maintaining a steady state presence of four personnel.
- s6(b)(i)
- s6(b)(i)
- New Zealand's interests are best served by extending our operational mandate until 31 July 2024 s6(a) This would reaffirm New Zealand's commitment and ability to respond to the security needs of Solomon Islands and the wider Pacific region s6(a)  
s6(a)  
s6(a)
- The total estimated cost of extending the deployment of four personnel to Solomon Islands until 31 July 2024 is NZ\$0.053 million, which will be funded through Vote Defence Force baseline.
- s6(a)



Bernadette Cavanagh  
for Acting Secretary of Foreign Affairs and  
Trade

Date: 21 June 2024



Tony Davies  
Air Marshal  
Chief of Defence Force

Date: 21 JUN 24



pp Andrew Bridgman  
Secretary of Defence  
Date: 21/06/2024

## Solomon Islands: Final extension and conclusion of New Zealand deployment to Solomon Islands International Assistance Force Recommendations

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It is recommended that you:

- |   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                 |
|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | <b>Note</b> that New Zealand has a mandate until 30 June 2024 to deploy up to 15 personnel, with a steady state of four personnel in Solomon Islands, as part of the Solomon Islands International Assistance Force (SIAF). | <b>Yes / No</b> |
| 2 | s6(b)(i)                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <b>Yes / No</b> |
| 3 | s6(a)                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>Yes / No</b> |
| 4 | s6(b)(i)                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <b>Yes / No</b> |
| 5 | <b>Approve</b> the extension of New Zealand's deployment of four New Zealand Defence Force personnel to SIAF until no later than 31 July 2024                                                                               | <b>Yes / No</b> |
| 6 | <b>Note</b> that the estimated marginal cost of the proposed extended deployment of up to four New Zealand Defence Force personnel to Solomon Islands until no later than 31 July 2024 is NZ\$0.053 million.                | <b>Yes / No</b> |
| 7 | s6(a)                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>Yes / No</b> |
| 8 | <b>Refer</b> a copy of this submission to the Associate Minister of Foreign Affairs for information.                                                                                                                        | <b>Yes / No</b> |

Rt Hon Christopher Luxon  
Prime Minister

Rt Hon Winston Peters  
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of  
Foreign Affairs

Date:        /        /

Date:        /        /

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Hon Nicola Willis  
Minister of Finance

Date:        /        /

Hon Judith Collins KC  
Minister of Defence

Date:        /        /

Hon Mark Mitchell  
Minister of Police

Date:        /        /

Released by the Minister of Defence

# Solomon Islands: Final extension and conclusion of New Zealand deployment to Solomon Islands International Assistance Force Report

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## Background

1. In November 2021, the security situation in Solomon Islands' capital Honiara rapidly deteriorated, resulting in civil unrest and rioting. On 29 November 2021, Cabinet agreed in principle to a New Zealand deployment in conjunction with Australia s6(a) s6(a) provided that a request for support was received from Solomon Islands (CAB-21-MIN-0510). Cabinet also authorised the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Police, and the Minister of Defence to take decisions on the deployment as Ministers with Powers to Act (MWPTA).
2. After receiving a formal request for support from the Solomon Islands Government on 30 November 2021, MWPTA agreed to deploy up to 60 NZDF and 11 New Zealand Police (NZP) personnel for up to 30 days alongside Australia, Papua New Guinea, and Fiji. The Australian-led joint regional presence became known as the Solomon Islands International Assistance Force (SIAF) and was instrumental in helping to stabilise the security situation and prevent further violence and destruction of property in Honiara.
3. The deployment was subsequently extended several times and the number of personnel reduced significantly as the security environment improved. New Zealand's current mandate, which was last extended by MWPTA in September 2023 allows for the deployment of up to 15 NZDF personnel until 30 June 2024, although the NZDF maintains a steady state presence of four personnel in Honiara. Since 1 January 2022, no NZP personnel have been deployed under SIAF s6(b)(i)

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4. The security situation in Solomon Islands has improved markedly from late-2021 when the SIAF was first deployed. The SIAF has played a key role in helping maintain calm. The rioting, violence and destruction of property seen in 2021 has not reoccurred. Tensions have heightened during potential flashpoints, such as the 2023 Pacific Games and National General Election in April 2024, however these have not resulted in any significant incidents.

5. s6(b)(i)

6. s6(b)(i)

7. s6(b)(i)

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s6(b)(i)

8. It is in New Zealand's interests to extend our operational mandate for the existing four NZDF personnel until 31 July 2024 s6(a) Concluding our deployment earlier would contradict New Zealand's commitment and ability to respond to the security needs of Solomon Islands and the wider region s6(a)

s6(a)

9. With only four NZDF personnel deployed to Solomon Islands and little equipment left in-country (most equipment was transported back to New Zealand on HMNZS Canterbury following the NZDF's support to the Solomon Islands election), the NZDF does not need additional time to pack down.

10. s6(a)

Should New Zealand receive any additional requests to extend our SIAF deployment, officials will return to Ministers with advice on how to address these s6(a)

### Threat Assessment

11. s6(a)

12. The overall mitigated health threat is assessed as **HIGH** due to the risk of infectious diseases and insect-borne diseases, in relation to the time period on the ground in the Area of Operations. Solomon Islands has well-established community transmission of COVID-19,

s6(a)

### Detention Policy Framework

13. As the proposed deployment falls within the scope of New Zealand's 2022 Detention Policy Framework as a 'coalition deployment' a Detention Risk Assessment has been undertaken under the Framework to assess the likelihood of NZDF personnel participating in a Detention Operation or being responsible for the transfer of Detainees under the SIAF.

14. s9(2)(h)

15. Based on the current operation, and the specific roles NZDF personnel continue to fill under this deployment, there is a **low** chance of NZDF participating in a Detention Operation. The continued absence of any deliberate or contingency detention operation under the SIAF means there is currently no reasonable likelihood that NZDF personnel will participate in a Detention Operation under the SIAF.

16. Accordingly, the Detention Policy Framework is not further engaged. This assessment will be reviewed regularly during the course of this deployment including where the nature of the operation, planned tasks or NZDF roles change to ensure this assessment remains valid.

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Financial implications for the New Zealand Defence Force

17. The estimated marginal cost of the proposed extended deployment of four NZDF personnel to Solomon Islands to 31 July 2024 is NZ\$0.053 million. The table below sets out the expenditure and funding arrangements for this deployment.
18. The estimated cost of the extension of the mission can be funded from within the existing baseline for Vote Defence Force: Operations Contributing to New Zealand's Security, Stability and Interests MCA – Output Class 5.0.

Vote Defence Force Minister of Defence	\$m – increase/(decrease)				
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29 and Outyears
Extension of four personnel until 31 July 2024	0.053	-	-	-	-

Legal basis for New Zealand deployment

19. s6(a), s9(2)(h)

[Redacted content]

20. s6(a), s9(2)(h)

[Redacted content]

s6(a)

[Redacted content]

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

[Redacted content]





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22.

s6(a)

Outside of the deployment, New Zealand currently has a s6(a) defence relationship with Solomon Islands, with one non-resident Defence Adviser accredited to Solomon Islands. Personnel from the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) have also been invited to attend on an ad hoc basis some courses under the NZDF Mutual Assistance Programme (MAP) and the NZDF Pacific Defence Gender Network. One NZDF Officer is based in Honiara under a secondment to the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency.

23.

s6(a)

24. Aside from Defence, s6(a) NZP advisors are in-country under our International Development Cooperation (IDC) programme providing policing advisory support through the *Solomon Islands Policing Support Programme* (SIPSP). SIPSP focuses on community policing development and is an ongoing activity.

Released by the Minister of Defence