

## HON RON MARK, MINISTER OF DEFENCE

### NZDF Logistics Support to 2019 Solomon Islands Elections – Cabinet Documents

June 2019

This publication provides documents on Cabinet's February 2019 in-principle decision to provide an NZDF package of logistics support for the Solomon Islands Elections over the period of March-April 2019. This decision was confirmed by the Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Defence, following a subsequent submission in March 2019 that provided further detail about the deployment.

The pack comprises the following documents:

- the 5 March 2019 Defence and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade submission to the Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Defence: *Deployment of NZDF Logistics Support for Solomon Islands Elections 2019*
- the 19 February 2019 Cabinet minute: *NZDF Logistics Support to 2019 Solomon Islands Elections* [ERS-19-MIN-0003]
- the associated Cabinet paper: *NZDF Logistics Support to 2019 Solomon Islands Elections* [ERS-19-SUB-0003]

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

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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)].



5 March 2019

Prime Minister  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Minister of Defence

## DEPLOYMENT OF NZDF LOGISTICS SUPPORT FOR SOLOMON ISLANDS ELECTIONS 2019

### PURPOSE

This paper seeks final Ministerial approval for a proposed New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) deployment to Solomon Islands to provide logistical electoral support for the Solomon Islands General Election process. The deployment was approved in principle by Cabinet on 25 February. This paper provides updated details on the deployment, including a proposed deployment window between 11 March and 8 April 2019.

### Background

2. Election preparations are already underway for the Solomon Islands General Election on 3 April 2019. [REDACTED] s6(a), s6(b)(i)

3. On 12 February 2019, SIEC requested New Zealand logistical support for the election process. On 19 February 2019 New Zealand received a letter from Solomon Islands Caretaker Prime Minister Rick Hou endorsing the SIEC request. Hou also publicly welcomed Australia and New Zealand's electoral assistance.

4. On 25 February 2019, Cabinet agreed in principle to a proposed NZDF deployment of two NH90 helicopters and approximately 65 associated NZDF personnel to provide electoral support for the General Election.

5. Australia is leading the provision of support and endorses Solomon Islands' request for New Zealand assistance. The Australian Defence Force (ADF) would transport New Zealand assets (two NH90 helicopters) by air to Solomon Islands.

6. New Zealand will also contribute an election observer mission to support the elections and has already provided polling booths to SIEC.

#### *New Zealand's contribution*

7. Operational planning discussions between NZDF and ADF are ongoing and there may be some small adjustments to deployment details before the deployment. However, the following key details regarding personnel and funding have been agreed.

8. The two NH90 helicopters would be deployed to Solomon Islands between 11 and 18 March 2019 and would return to New Zealand between 6 and 8 April 2019. The ADF would transport the NH90s while our strategic airlift (B757) would support transporting New Zealand and Australian personnel to and from Solomon Islands. During the duration of the deployment, the NH90s would be based at Honiara International Airport, alongside Australia's helicopters.

9. NZDF propose to deploy a total of 55 NZDF personnel as part of the ADF-led Combined Task Force (CTF), including:

- six personnel to be integrated into the ADF Joint Taskforce Headquarters, based at the Rove Police Station in Honiara conducting command and control (NZ will fill the Deputy Commander role), situational awareness support, and logistic roles;
- 41 personnel to be integrated into the ADF Rotary Wing Taskforce, conducting flying operations, planning, maintenance, preparation, and communication ; and
- eight unarmed Security Force to protect the deployed NH90 helicopters.

10. The New Zealand threat assessment for the operation s3(a) deployed NZDF personnel would be unarmed.

*Legal arrangements for the deployment*

11. New Zealand does not have a Status of Forces Agreement with Solomon Islands that would permit a deployment of this nature.

12. In lieu of this, on 4 March 2019 New Zealand provided the Solomon Islands Government with a Third Party Note outlining the legal framework of the deployment and providing NZDF personnel with the appropriate legal rights and privileges to enable them to carry out their duties in providing logistical support for the Solomon Islands General Election.

13. Officials are working to finalise these arrangements and assess that there is a low risk that these arrangements will not be finalised before the due date of deployment.

*Financial estimates*

14. As explained in the Cabinet paper, costs of the deployment would be met within NZDF and MFAT funding baselines. The total estimated costs of this deployment would be \$0.972M (see breakdown below). The estimates are predicated on a 21 day deployment and six days of hourly operation by each helicopter over that period.

<b>Element of deployment</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Agency and appropriation</b>
2 x NH90 helicopters	\$0.360M	NZDF (Vote Defence Force)
55 x NH90 support staff	\$0.477M	MFAT (Vote ODA)
Reconnaissance and planning team	\$0.032M	MFAT (Vote ODA)
Incremental fuel costs	\$0.103M	MFAT (Vote ODA)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$0.972M</b>	

15. As depicted above, the total operating cost of the NH90 helicopters would be \$0.360M. NZDF budgets for NH90 operating costs under the rotary wing output, which would cover these costs.

16. Personnel costs would total \$0.477M (in addition to salaries) for the 55 personnel operating and supporting the NH90s and include Transport, Allowances and Real Life Support, which includes accommodation, essential facilities and food.

17. The remaining cost of the deployment would be \$0.135M, including reconnaissance and planning as well as additional fuel costs in the region. These costs would be covered by MFAT (Vote ODA).

*Risks*

18. [Redacted] s6(a)

19. This deployment would not have a negative impact on domestic non-discretionary activities. Should a Humanitarian Assistance / Disaster Relief (HADR) event occur in the Pacific that required the deployment of NZDF NH90s, the two NH90s deployed to Solomon Islands might require re-tasking (depending on the status of aircrew and helicopters in New Zealand).

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

**Consultation**

21. This paper has been jointly prepared by the Ministry of Defence, MFAT and the NZDF. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (Policy Advisory Group), New Zealand Police and the Treasury were consulted.

Released by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Defence

## Recommendations

22. It is recommended that you:

- a. **note** that on 25 February Cabinet agreed in principle to a proposed NZDF deployment of two NH90 helicopters and personnel to provide logistical support to the Solomon Islands General Election, as requested by Solomon Islands;
- b. **note** that Cabinet delegated final approval for the details of the deployment to the Prime Minister and Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence, in consultation with the Minister of Finance;
- c. **note** that the total cost of the deployment is currently estimated at \$0.972M and that this cost would be met within MFAT and NZDF baselines (\$0.360M from Vote Defence Force and \$0.612M from Vote ODA);
- d. **agree** to the deployment of 55 NZDF personnel and two NH90 helicopters between 11 March and 8 April to provide logistical support for elections; and
- e. **forward** to the Prime Minister for concurrence; and
- f. **forward** to the Minister of Finance for his information.

**KEVIN SHORT**

Air Marshal  
Chief of Defence Force  
Date:

**HELENE QUILTER**

Secretary of Defence  
Date:

**JONATHAN KINGS**

Deputy Secretary, Ministry of  
Foreign Affairs and Trade  
Date:

Released by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and  
the Minister of Defence



# 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.*

### NZDF Logistics Support to 2019 Solomon Islands Elections

**Portfolios** Foreign Affairs / Defence

On 19 February 2019, the Cabinet External Relations and Security Committee:

- 1 **noted** that Solomon Islands will hold a General Election on 3 April 2019, s6(a), s6(b)(i)  
[REDACTED]
- 2 **noted** that the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission has requested New Zealand logistical support for the elections, in the form of helicopters and a patrol boat to assist with the transportation of officials and materials;
- 3 **noted** that supporting the Solomon Islands General Election would be a tangible demonstration of New Zealand's support for good governance in the Pacific and the embedding of democratic norms in the region, consistent with the Strategic Defence Policy Statement and the government's objectives under the Pacific Reset;
- 4 **agreed in principle**, subject to paragraph 5 below, to provide New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) logistics support to the Solomon Islands General Election during March – April 2019, including the deployment of:
  - 4.1 two NH-90 helicopters with approximately 55 associated personnel;
  - 4.2 approximately 10 general support personnel;
- 5 **authorised** the Prime Minister and Joint Ministers (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Defence), in consultation with the Minister of Finance, to provide final approval for NZDF logistics support pending finalisation of the deployment planning, legal framework and costs;
- 6 **noted** that the request for a patrol boat will be declined, as its deployment would compromise existing commitments to other New Zealand agencies and the Australian Defence Force has offered to transport New Zealand's NH-90s by air;
- 7 **noted** that the total estimated cost of the deployment is currently assessed as \$1.08 million, and that this cost will be met within Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and NZDF baselines (\$0.36 million from Vote Defence Force and \$0.72 million from Vote Official Development Assistance);

8 **noted** that the New Zealand threat assessment for operating in Solomon Islands and that any deployed NZDF personnel would be unarmed.

s6(a)

Janine Harvey  
Committee Secretary

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**Present:**

Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern  
Rt Hon Winston Peters  
Hon Grant Robertson  
Hon Andrew Little  
Hon Stuart Nash  
Hon Ron Mark

**Officials present from:**

Office of the Prime Minister  
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade  
Ministry of Defence

**Hard-copy distribution:**

Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Minister of Defence

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the Minister of Defence



Chair  
External Relations and Security Committee

## **NZDF LOGISTICS SUPPORT TO 2019 SOLOMON ISLANDS ELECTIONS**

### **Proposal**

This paper seeks Cabinet's *agreement in principle* to an imminent NZDF deployment to Solomon Islands to provide logistics support over their General Election period, March-April 2019.

It is proposed that Cabinet delegate authority to the Prime Minister and Joint Ministers (Foreign Affairs and Defence) to provide final approval for the details of this deployment, in consultation with the Minister of Finance.

### **Executive Summary**

2. On 12 February 2019, the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission (SIEC) requested New Zealand logistical support for the Solomon Islands 2019 General Election, specifically two helicopters (NH-90s) and a patrol boat to transport officials and equipment for electoral purposes. SIEC also asked that New Zealand coordinate its support with Australia, which is leading provision of support to Solomon Islands' election management. Australia endorses this request.

3. Supporting the 2019 Solomon Islands General Election would be a tangible demonstration of New Zealand's support for good governance in the Pacific and the embedding of democratic norms in the region, consistent with New Zealand's Strategic Defence Policy Statement and the Government's objectives under the Pacific Reset.

4. With only 7 weeks until polling day on 3 April, Cabinet's approval in principle is sought for deployment to Solomon Islands of two NH-90 helicopters and approximately 65 associated NZDF personnel over a period of up to 21 days to provide logistical support for the General Election. The Australian Defence Force (ADF) has offered to transport New Zealand's NH-90s by air.

5. The request for a patrol boat will be declined as its deployment would compromise existing commitments to other New Zealand agencies.

6. New Zealand has already provided polling booths and is preparing advice to respond positively to an earlier request from Solomon Islands to provide election observers<sup>1</sup>. The observers and polling booths combined with this additional proposed

<sup>1</sup> The polling booths were transported to Solomon Islands via an NZDF C-130 on 7 January 2019.



logistical assistance, would comprise New Zealand's full package of support for the Solomon Islands General Election process.

7. Cabinet's agreement in principle to this deployment would allow NZDF to plan alongside the ADF and its larger contribution. Further details of the deployment would be advised in a subsequent Submission to Ministers and it is proposed that Cabinet delegate authority to the Prime Minister and Joint Ministers (Foreign Affairs and Defence) to provide final approval for the details of the deployment, in consultation with the Minister of Finance.

8. The total estimated cost of this deployment is currently assessed as \$1.08M and would be met from within MFAT and NZDF baselines.

9. The New Zealand threat assessment for operating in Solomon Islands s6(a)  
s6(a) NZDF personnel providing logistical electoral support would be unarmed.

## Background

10. Solomon Islands will hold its General Election on 3 April, with the election period extending from February through to the end of April. Election preparations are proceeding and the threat to security expected to s6(a) s6(a), s6(b)(i)

11. New Zealand is already planning to contribute an election observer mission to support the elections and has already provided polling booths. The SIEC has now also identified a need for New Zealand logistics support, in collaboration with Australia, to safeguard the integrity of the elections process and reach a growing voter population.

12. Australia is leading provision of support to Solomon Islands' election management, following a request from SIEC and RSIPF in October 2018. Australia is preparing to deliver a broad package of support options, including provision of air, maritime and land transport and logistical support, medical evacuation support, communications assistance, catering oversight, provision of electoral observers, and Australian Federal Police (AFP) and ADF presence. Australian support would be logistics-focused rather than a security contribution under Australia's 2017 bilateral security treaty with Solomon Islands.<sup>2</sup>

13. Australia has sought New Zealand participation in order to deliver a combined package of assistance (communicated at both High Commissioner and Chief of Defence Force level) and Solomon Islands Caretaker Prime Minister Rick Hou has publicly confirmed his request for Australian and New Zealand electoral assistance.

<sup>2</sup> Australia is committed under its bilateral treaty with Solomon Islands to provide rapid security assistance in the event of future national disasters or outbreaks of civil unrest.

## Comment

*What would we be doing?*

14. The NZDF support, as currently planned, would consist of two NH-90 helicopters<sup>3</sup> and approximately 65 associated personnel for approximately 21 days in late March and early April 2019 (see estimated breakdown of NZDF personnel and roles below).

Personnel	Functions
10	General support personnel
12	Aircrew
10	Command and control
33	Logistics and NH90 support
<b>Total: 65</b> (approximations based on early NZDF planning)	

15. The proposed New Zealand contribution would augment the ADF's planned contribution of four MRH-90 helicopters (a variant of the NH-90), and general support personnel would operate as part of the broader, ADF-led operation, co-locating with ADF units in Solomon Islands. The planned Australian contribution would also include communications specialists, medical assistance, a possible fixed wing aircraft, general logistics support s6(b)(i)

16. The two NZDF NH-90s would transport election officials, and deliver necessary materials and supplies to polling stations around Solomon Islands. This is necessary as the SIEC has estimated that they will require more than 1200 polling stations, a substantial increase on the 867 stations used in the 2014 election. Many of these are located in remote areas, including in inland areas that are difficult to reach. The NH-90s would also provide aero-medical evacuation support if required. NZDF planning has been predicated on six hours of operation by each helicopter per day, for up to 21 days.

17. The NZDF is currently finalising with the ADF the roles for the 10 general support personnel, who would augment the ADF presence. At this stage the roles could include:

- marine technicians to assist with maintenance of small boats;
- catering supervisors and/or chefs to assist deployed personnel; and
- communications experts to support the existing Solomon Islands High Frequency radio network.

18. A Senior National Officer embedded within the ADF Headquarters would support the New Zealand contribution in close liaison with the New Zealand High Commission in Honiara.

<sup>3</sup> The SIEC request for helicopter support highlights that long range would be especially useful, as well as being able to land in inaccessible locations. The NZDF NH-90 helicopter is best suited to performing these functions.

19. Defence officials would continue to refine planning in the coming weeks, and final personnel numbers, basing, legal framework and funding details would be advised in the subsequent Submission to Ministers.

*Why should we contribute?*

20. A visible, effective New Zealand contribution serves our objectives in the Strategic Defence Policy Statement and the Pacific Reset to prioritise defence engagement in the Pacific and promote good governance. It would also be highly valued by the Solomon Islands Government. The support would tangibly enhance Solomon Islands' capacity to conduct a successful and safe election, maximising participation in an open democratic election process, and strengthening the bilateral relationship with Solomon Islands. It would build on New Zealand's previous contributions, including to the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI).

21. This election is the first since the conclusion of RAMSI in 2017, s6(a)

This election is particularly challenging due to increased numbers of polling stations and voter registrations, a high risk weather season, and because these elections are being held under new legislation.

22. New Zealand and Australia already work closely with Solomon Islands on security issues through our respective policing programmes and we want to ensure that this election is run effectively, transparently and safely. Working in partnership with Australia on elections assistance deepens that collaborative investment.

*How will we get there?*

23. The ADF has offered to transport New Zealand's NH-90 helicopters to Honiara. The ADF's return of the helicopters to New Zealand would be expected within a week of the 3 April election. There is a risk that the ADF might be unable to make this support available due to unforeseen circumstances, in which case Ministers would be informed.

24. NZDF personnel would travel to and from Solomon Islands on either defence air or civil air transport.

*Operational risk assessment*

25. New Zealand's standing threat assessment for operating in Solomon Islands s6(a) This is a non-combat logistics support deployment of unarmed NZDF personnel and there are only limited security concerns during the election period.

**Legal framework**

26. While New Zealand has received the request from SIEC, any potential New Zealand contribution to support the 2019 elections would be contingent upon receiving a further appropriate invitation from the Government of Solomon Islands. The subsequent Submission to Ministers will advise on the receipt of a formal request from the Government of Solomon Islands.

27. New Zealand does not have a Status of Forces Agreement with Solomon Islands that would permit a deployment of this nature. If this deployment is agreed in principle by

Cabinet, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and NZDF officials will work to establish an appropriate legal framework to permit the presence of NZDF personnel in Solomon Islands. Ministers will be advised on the final arrangement in the subsequent Submission.

28. As the New Zealand contribution would consist of unarmed personnel across a range of logistics support roles, it is not anticipated that specific Rules of Engagement would be required for this deployment.

29. New Zealand personnel deployed to Solomon Islands would do so without permission to engage in security operations. In the event that the security situation was to deteriorate in Solomon Islands, further advice to Ministers would be provided.

### Consultation

30. This paper was prepared by the Ministry of Defence, New Zealand Defence Force and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, in consultation with the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (National Security Group, Policy Advisory Group) and Treasury.

### Financial Implications

31. Officials are in the process of assessing the financial implications of this deployment. Some costs, (particularly those relating to in-country support, accommodation, and travel), are dependent on further planning and discussions around cost-sharing with the ADF, subsequent to Cabinet's consideration of this proposal.

32. Current total estimated costs of this deployment are \$1.08M (see breakdown of costs below). Cost estimates are predicated on a 21 day deployment, and 6 days of hourly operation by each NH-90 helicopter during that time.

Element of deployment	Cost	Agency and appropriation
NH-90	\$0.360M	NZDF (Vote Defence Force)
55 x NH 90 support staff	\$0.515M	MFAT (Vote FAT)
10 x additional supporting personnel	\$0.102M	MFAT (Vote FAT)
Incremental fuel costs	\$0.103M	MFAT (Vote FAT)
<b>Total cost: \$1.08M</b> (approximations based on early NZDF planning)		

33. As depicted above, the total operating cost of the NH-90 helicopters would be \$0.360M. NZDF budgets for NH-90 operating costs under the rotary wing output, and this funding would cover the expense.

34. Personnel costs are comprised of the additional \$0.515M cost (on top of salaries) for the 55 personnel operating and supporting the NH-90 helicopters, and \$0.102M cost

of the 10 personnel in additional supporting roles. The remaining cost of the deployment would be \$0.103M, which covers the incremental fuel cost in the Pacific. Funding for personnel and incremental fuel costs would be covered by Vote ODA.

35. As explained above, the costs of the deployment would be met within the NZDF and MFAT funding baselines. The final costs for this deployment, as well as the funding mechanisms utilised, would be advised in the subsequent Submission to Ministers.

### Publicity

36. Ministers may wish to release a statement on the New Zealand support to the Solomon Islands General Election closer to the time of the deployment. This could be a single statement that references the full package of New Zealand support for the elections.

### Proactive Release

37. It is intended that this paper be proactively released subject to necessary redactions.

### Recommendations

38. The Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence recommend that Cabinet:

1. **note** that Solomon Islands will hold a General Election on 3 April, s6(a), s6(b)(i)  
[Redacted]
2. **note** that the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission has requested New Zealand logistical support for the elections in the form of helicopters and a patrol boat to assist with the transportation of officials and materials;
3. **note** that supporting the Solomon Islands General Election would be a tangible demonstration of New Zealand's support for good governance in the Pacific and the embedding of democratic norms in the region, consistent with the Strategic Defence Policy Statement and the Government's objectives under the Pacific Reset;
4. **agree in principle** to provide NZDF logistics support to the Solomon Islands General Election during March-April 2019, including the deployment of:
  - i. two NH-90 helicopters with approximately 55 associated personnel; and,
  - ii. approximately 10 general support personnel;
5. **delegate** authority to the Prime Minister and Joint Ministers (Foreign Affairs and Defence), in consultation with the Minister of Finance, to provide final approval for NZDF logistics support pending finalisation of the deployment planning, legal framework and costs;
6. **note** that the request for a patrol boat will be declined as its deployment would compromise existing commitments to other New Zealand agencies and the ADF has offered to transport New Zealand's NH-90s by air;

7. **note** that the total estimated cost of the deployment is currently assessed as \$1.08M, and that this cost will be met within MFAT and NZDF baselines (0.36M from Vote Defence Force and 0.72M from Vote FAT);
8. **note** that the New Zealand threat assessment for operating in Solomon Islands s6(a) that any deployed NZDF personnel would be unarmed.

Authorised for lodgement

Rt Hon Winston Peters  
**MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

Hon Ron Mark  
**MINISTER OF DEFENCE**

Released by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and  
the Minister of Defence