

## **Rt Hon Helen Clark**

Prime Minister of New Zealand

## **Hon Mark Burton**

Minister of Defence

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### **A modern defence force for New Zealand's needs**

The government today announced a comprehensive plan to build a modern, efficient and high quality defence force to meet New Zealand's strategic needs and enable New Zealand to contribute usefully to international operations in which it engages.

The key components of the new direction for the New Zealand Defence Force will be:

- a joint approach to structure and operations to improve co-ordination between the Army, Navy and Air Force;
- a modernised Army with new equipment placing it in the first tier of forces internationally;
- a practical Navy fleet with vessels better matched to New Zealand's security interests and needs;
- a refocused and updated Air Force;
- a sustainable funding plan to provide financial certainty.

Net operating funding available for the Defence Force will increase by over \$300 million over the next five years and around \$700 million over the next ten years. It is estimated that up to one billion dollars capital injection will be required over the next ten years, and that total capital investment over that period will exceed two billion dollars.

Prime Minister Helen Clark said the new defence plan, *A Sustainable Defence Force Matched to New Zealand's Needs*, provides a coherent, comprehensive and sustainable strategy for the Defence Force.

"The new plan aims to develop depth in our defence capability, rather than continue with inadequate breadth. Over the past ten years, the Defence Force was asked to perform a wide range of roles with unsuitable equipment. Highly trained personnel were under-equipped, or left with equipment which was often antiquated, and often both.

"This plan gives the New Zealand Defence Force a sustainable and affordable path forward. The Army, Navy and Air Force are being given well defined roles, modern equipment to match those roles, and certainty of funding to ensure that they can effectively perform the tasks that New Zealand asks of them.

"The plan is based on comprehensive reviews of New Zealand's strategic position and our requirements in terms of maritime patrol, land forces, air combat, and sea lift capability. It meets New Zealand's strategic needs, and allows us to contribute usefully to international operations where we decide to engage.

"As in the past, it is likely that any overseas deployment of elements of the New Zealand Defence Force will be as part of an international force," Helen Clark said.

Defence Minister Mark Burton said that on the evidence of the past, the section of the defence force most likely to be deployed overseas is the Army.

"That is why the government has committed to ensuring that our Army is the best equipped it can be, with the most modern capability, suited to a potential future theatre of war in which there will be a high reliance on technology," Mr Burton said.

"It is with sadness that the government has decided to disband the air combat arm. While the professionalism and skill of the pilots and support crew has been second to none, their equipment is outdated and has never been used in a combat role. The simple fact is that New Zealand cannot afford modern combat aircraft and the weaponry needed to equip them, and also maintain adequate army and navy capabilities.

"The Air Force, therefore, will be refocused. Its key roles will be in maritime patrol and air transport.

"The Navy will have both a 'blue' and 'brown water' capacity. The two Anzac frigates will continue in service and there will be new patrol craft. The HMNZS *Charles Upham*, bought by the previous government and now transporting citrus fruit in the Mediterranean, will be sold.

"The last government cut defence operational and personnel spending by 17.7 per cent in real terms between 1991 and 1997. We have put a halt to those cuts. Spending will actually increase to make up for past neglect."

Helen Clark and Mark Burton said the government is building a sustainable and affordable defence force.

"We are reversing the legacy of problems and under-funding which we inherited. The plan is sustainable. It gives us a modern, efficient and high quality defence force for the twenty-first century," Helen Clark and Mark Burton said.

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