



NZDF Defence Capability Plan 2019 launched by Hon. Ron Mark

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Campbell Garrett, Council for International Development (attended the official launch at the Beehive on behalf of CID members)

Summary:

This week the government launched its [Defence Capability Plan](#), with \$20 billion of upgrades planned by 2030.

The sharper focus on the effects of climate change, and the need to increase New Zealand's ability to respond to disasters, particularly in the Pacific region, is welcome, as is the increased emphasis on New Zealand's Defence forces as humanitarian and peacekeeping responders here and across the globe.

It is important however, that our joint humanitarian responses are coordinated, and that our Defence forces are aware of the work of CID members - New Zealand's international NGO sector.

New Zealand's aid and development charities are guided by established and globally recognized humanitarian principles. The sector already works closely with our Defence forces to prepare personnel for deployment into humanitarian contexts overseas. With extra funding it is even more important that opportunities to share learnings and best practice are increased.

There is also an increased focus globally, on devolving leadership and decision-making in emergency responses to local partners in order to have a more sustainable and enduring humanitarian impact. That means ensuring that funding is also increased to build the resilience of Pacific communities in particular, to manage climate-change events, and to close the gap between immediate humanitarian responses and the continuation of long-term development. Local control of an emergency response must be prioritized for the best results. MFAT, NZDF and CID members need to make sure they coordinate their efforts towards localization.

The plan in a nutshell

The Defence Capability Plan is a \$20 billion upgrade, partially focused on how new equipment will help the South Pacific region deal with climate change and its effects. The upgrades are to be carried out between now and 2030.

Top of the list is the new [Super Hercules](#) to replace the old Hercules at a cost of \$1.1 billion. The Hercules do a bit of everything from paratrooper and humanitarian aid drops to ferrying scientists to Antarctica.

The upgrade also includes a second ship, similar to HMNZS Canterbury, to assist in humanitarian disasters.



According to the Minister of Defence Ron Mark, this vessel “will be able to move more vital stores and personnel with greater availability to operate in adverse conditions than is currently available to HMNZS Canterbury. And I emphasise that climate change will require that.”

There are also plans for a polar-ready Southern Ocean Patrol Vessel and new maritime helicopters in mid-to-late 2020s, and increasing the number of soldiers to 6000 by 2035.

The investments are balanced across the three services: Army, Navy and Air Force.

The Launch

Minister of Defence Ron Mark launched the NZDF Defence Capability Plan 2019 at the Beehive this week. The Plan contains details of the planned investment of the Defence Force until 2030. Together with last year’s [Strategic Defence Policy Statement 2018](#), the Plan recalibrates New Zealand’s \$20 billion capital investment in Defence to better match the priorities of the Coalition Government and the values of the Defence Force.

\$5.8 billion of the total investment has already been spent, with the remaining \$14.2 billion to be spread from now to 2030.

The main investments of the Plan over the next decade are the replacement of the P3 Orion and C130H Hercules fleets, the eventual replacement HMNZS *Otago* and HMNZS *Wellington*, and a new vessel to complement HMNZS *Canterbury*.

These investments will cover Defence’s increased role in the Pacific and Southern Oceans – including significant investments in an Enhanced Maritime Awareness Capability, maritime surveillance, and unmanned aerial vehicles.

Along with future-proofing the Defence Force with modernised priorities and systems, the Plan sets out two major focuses for Defence to 2030 and beyond – supporting the Pacific Reset and responding to the climate crisis.

"We have accepted responsibility to support smaller Pacific Island nations, who do not have the capacity to respond to these sort of disasters which befall them and to do that we need to have some flexibility," Minister Ron Mark said.

"Over time there will be an increased requirement for our defence and other security forces to respond with humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. More search and rescue missions and potentially stability operations."



The Plan acknowledges that the Pacific is under increased geopolitical pressure as a main arena for international politics. One of the flagship policies of the Coalition Government is the Pacific Reset – increasing investment in the Pacific through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and New Zealand’s aid budget. This Plan aims to complement the efforts of the Pacific Reset by increasing our capability in the area, the minister said.

Following the 2018 Defence Assessment – [The Climate Crisis: Defence Readiness and Responsibilities](#), the Plan adds to the focus of the Defence Force on the long-term impacts of climate change.

A warming world, with acidifying and rising seas, [may see low-lying Pacific Island countries disappear](#) and contribute to resource scarcity, the minister acknowledged.

Minister Ron Mark noted that New Zealand’s men and women in uniform are in a good position to understand the impacts of climate change, as they are at the forefront of responding to the challenges posed by rising sea levels and increased natural disasters. The Plan notes three main implications for Defence as a consequence of climate change:

- Increased humanitarian and disaster relief operations
- Increased stability operations
- Increased search and rescue missions in the Pacific.

For the international NGO network working in the Pacific, this will also mean increased demand for services over the coming decades.

The Defence Minister was keen to emphasise that “at its heart, it is a humanitarian plan” and that the role of Defence is to contribute to the security of not only New Zealanders, but also the security of our friends in the Pacific.

The increased focus of the Ministry and of the Defence Force on climate change and the Pacific are welcome news to our sector. The Defence Force has resources and capacity that the private sector and international NGOs simply do not have access to, and recognition of New Zealand’s role as a Pacific humanitarian leader is important across government agencies.

Work more closely with New Zealand’s international NGOs and local partners

While there is much to welcome with this renewed focus on climate change and humanitarian work, it is regrettable that there is no real reference in the Plan to working with international NGOs, other non-state actors, or local partners.

In order for our sector to successfully deliver humanitarian responses, more efforts at collaboration across sectors will be needed, including with Defence forces, other public sector organisations, and New Zealand businesses active in the Pacific, who are often in an ideal position to offer support for first responders in an emergency.



While significant focus in both the Minister’s speech and the Plan is given to humanitarian efforts, insufficient information is provided on how this focus will be integrated with existing humanitarian networks. At last year’s CID Conference, panelists suggested working with District Health Boards and the Ministry of Health, for example as well as businesses on the ground. There was no reference in the minister’s comments to this kind of alignment.

Our sector has the opportunity to increase involvement with the Ministry of Defence in humanitarian disaster responses – but this needs to be part of a dialogue. The lack of reference to NGOs in the document shows that our sector needs to be proactive through initiating contact with the Ministry of Defence, and Defence forces need to be open to working more closely with New Zealand’s INGOs.

There was also a lack of detail around how Defence forces will work as partners with local communities in Pacific countries. This has been identified as a key factor in the success of any humanitarian response, and is embedded in core humanitarian standards and principles globally. Any emergency response must be locally led and affected communities supported to build their own resilience before a disaster hits. Resourcing resilience can’t just be led by MFAT, but must be a priority for New Zealand’s funding to the Pacific across all government departments. That means funding and support to ensure buildings are safe, food supplies are built up and locally led, resources to respond to emergencies are locally sourced wherever possible, community systems are set up ahead of time, and development programmes are designed to be sustainable and endure critical events.

Key points:

- Explore further ways to work with New Zealand’s international NGOs (INGOs) to better co-ordinate in an emergency response, particularly in the Pacific.
- Work with CID members to understand and embed humanitarian principles to guide effective responses, both in the Pacific and in complex situations globally where INGOs are often the only face of New Zealand.
- Work with local Pacific community groups and partners to support initiatives to build resilience before an emergency, and to establish effective systems to allow locals to lead prioritization and decision-making in any response.
- Ensure funding and support for building the resilience of Pacific communities is coordinated across New Zealand’s government departments.

The full Capability Plan, a summary of Minister Mark’s speech, and a summary of the Plan can be found here: <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/defence-capability-plan-2019-released>

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