



Peace Movement Aotearoa

PO Box 9314, Wellington 6141. Tel 04 382 8129, email pma@xtra.co.nz
~ www.converge.org.nz/pma ~ www.facebook.com/PeaceMovementAotearoa ~

Public consultation: Defence White Paper 2015

June 2015

Last month, the Minister of Defence announced a public consultation around the 2015 Defence White Paper, which will “focus on the contribution of the Defence Force and Ministry of Defence towards New Zealand’s security, resilience and prosperity”. The deadline for submissions is 22 June 2015.

There are two key concerns about the consultation: firstly, that it does not address the fundamental question of whether New Zealand needs armed forces or the extent to which military activities and costs may be detrimental to real security, resilience and prosperity; and secondly, around the question in the consultation document about the armed forces’ role “in the development of New Zealand’s youth”.

This resource provides information about the consultation, and an overview of some issues that you may like to include in your submission. There are six sections below: an introduction with some points about the role and use of the armed forces, perceived threats and foreign policy; economic and social costs; human rights and disarmament legislation considerations; environmental, biodiversity and climate change issues; militarisation of children, young persons, and their education; and links to the public consultation and related documents. This information is available on Facebook at www.facebook.com/PeaceMovementAotearoa/notes and formatted for printing at www.converge.org.nz/pma/afrev15.pdf

1) Introduction

As with the 2009 ‘Defence Review’, the public consultation document does not ask the fundamental question of whether New Zealand needs armed forces, nor does it raise issues around the economic, social, environmental and other costs of maintaining combat ready armed forces.

The primary purpose of the armed forces is supposed to be to defend New Zealand from attack, as the name ‘New Zealand Defence Force’ (NZDF) suggests, but for many years successive governments have said there is no immediate military threat to this country, and - most recently - that “New Zealand and its associated states are highly unlikely to face a direct military threat over the next 25 years.”¹

Despite this, since the 2009 'Defence Review' and the publication of the 2010 Defence White Paper, the government's focus has been on increasing the combat capability of the armed forces, "growing its combat, combat support and combat service capabilities"².

Even a brief glance at New Zealand's military history illustrates that the primary use of the armed forces has been on overseas deployments determined by the political priorities of the government of the day. This is reinforced by the increasingly explicit references in recent years to the armed forces as an expeditionary force, for example, the current Defence Capability Plan refers to its expeditionary nature six times, including "... it must be able to project and sustain forces for considerable periods over vast distances, a force that is in all respects expeditionary"³, and "The NZDF will remain an expeditionary force able to project and operate on its own or as part of a coalition"⁴ - rather a contradiction to its stated primary purpose being the defence of this country.

According to the public consultation and related documents, two threats the government is currently particularly concerned about are "a rapid evolution of the cyber threat to New Zealand's significant information structures" and "an increased risk of terrorism as a result of the radicalising effect of the Iraq/Syria conflict", although how the armed forces might provide a solution to either is not explained. It is difficult to see how cyber threats could be addressed by military action; and military operations are a contributing factor to an increased risk of terrorism wherever it occurs - the solution to the latter is demilitarisation, and a focus on addressing the root causes of terrorism, human insecurity and armed conflict, including the various forms of oppression and injustice from which they arise.

Recent governments have increasingly emphasised the role of the armed forces in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations, without questioning whether that is appropriate given the "core task of the NZDF is to conduct military operations"⁵. With the exception of combat, all of the activities of the armed forces can be done by civilian agencies, and at a far lower cost because civilian agencies do not require expensive military equipment - for example, fisheries and resource protection could be undertaken by a lightly armed coastguard with coastal and offshore capability, with humanitarian assistance and disaster relief carried out by unarmed civilian agencies.

In 2009, when the then Chief of Navy was asked "What is the most significant maritime security threat facing your nation", Rear Admiral David Ledson's reply included: "In the near waters, the most significant security threat relates to the ocean itself" and "Looking further afield, the most significant threat is actually the lack of a tangible - to many of our sailors and the majority of our citizens - significant threat. Without a threat that has definition and "realness", there are significant challenges in developing and maintaining credible - but expensive - military capabilities, equipment, and personnel."⁶

The question of why New Zealand maintains expensive military capabilities in the stated absence of any military threat, is surely one of the questions that should be addressed through informed public discussion about what our real security (in the widest sense) needs are, before a public consultation that appears to be an exercise in rubber-stamping the government's already decided "defence" policy.

As outlined briefly below, the financial cost is only one of the issues that should be considered when thinking about whether New Zealand needs armed forces, and whether we could instead be making a more peaceful and positive contribution to global peace and security. New Zealand governments place great emphasis on their “independent” stance and making “a positive impact on international peace and security”⁷, but how independent or positive is a foreign policy based on military alliances and allegiances (the price of membership of “the club”), and apparently endless preparation for war as part of the global cycle of violence?

A genuinely independent and positive foreign policy would focus on diplomatic initiatives, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief and so on that are aimed at preventing armed conflict, rather than militarised responses; as well as humanitarian assistance and diplomatic support for peace and reconciliation processes during, and after, situations of armed conflict.

2) Economic and social costs

Military spending in the current financial year is a minimum of \$3,454,706,000 (the 2015 Budget appropriations in Vote Defence, Vote Defence Force, and \$981,000 in Vote Education for “military-focused programmes for disengaged or disengaging senior students in secondary schools”) - that averages out to \$66,436,653 every week.

It is useful to assess the level of military expenditure in relation to other spending choices the government could make. In the 2014 Budget, for example, there was a lot of publicity about "the centrepiece of the Budget" being a \$493 million package aimed at families, but there was little mention of the combat capability upgrade for the navy's two frigates at a cost of \$446 million⁸, or the funding for a new battle training facility for the SAS.

In April this year, it was revealed that the cost of two replacement airplanes for the air force's Hercules C-130s is likely to be at least \$600 million⁹ - that is around half of the amount it would cost to refurbish all of Housing New Zealand's properties to ensure safe and healthy homes for social housing tenants.

The new “operating funding of \$264 million over four years” allocated to the armed forces in this year's budget¹⁰ could have funded Relationships Aotearoa - the largest national counselling and family therapy provider, shut down in early June when the government stopped its funding because it was “financially unsustainable” - for 33 years.

The total cost of all of the settlements for historic Treaty breaches is less than half of the amount of military spending budgeted for this year. These are just some examples of the areas where public money could more usefully be invested.

Furthermore, in addition to annual military spending of \$3+ billion, plus the cost of any new deployments each year, a forecast \$16 billion will be spent over the next 15 years on “capital expenditure” to replace the Hercules C-130s (as mentioned above), the P-3K2 Orion fleet, and the two navy frigates¹¹ - an ideal opportunity for informed discussion about replacing military capability with a coastguard capability for fisheries and resource

protection, as well as maritime search and rescue, although the chances of the government considering such a positive, and less expensive, option seem low at present.

As well as the spending choices the government makes for New Zealanders - military expenditure versus increased spending on social welfare, affordable housing, education and health care, or a living wage for all workers - there is also the matter of spending allocated to overseas development assistance: this year it is just 17.5% of the level of military spending, an interesting reflection of priorities when it comes to how the government chooses to relate to communities in other parts of the world.

3) Human rights and disarmament legislation considerations

There appears to be little, if any, consideration given to the human rights or disarmament legislation implications of combat deployments overseas, or military training and exercises conducted here or elsewhere.

Both Labour and National governments deployed the SAS to Afghanistan between 2001 and 2012 where they were involved in joint operations under US military command, and provided training and mentoring to the Afghan Crisis Response Unit (CRU) in Kabul. As well as the persistent reports of human rights violations by the US armed forces and Afghan security forces, which the SAS may have been involved or implicated in, it is unknown how many civilians were killed or injured when the SAS was involved in laser targeting for US and British missile strikes and bombing runs, and in other combat operations. During the later deployment with the CRU, the evidence suggests that the SAS was involved in civilian deaths, for example, the NZDF paid \$10,000 compensation to the families of two Afghan civilians who were killed in a raid on a logistics supply company in Kabul¹².

As well as the general human implications of New Zealand combat troops being deployed alongside military and security forces of states that are known to engage in human rights violations, there are specific concerns about New Zealand's obligations under the Convention Against Torture and the Geneva Conventions with regard to the treatment of prisoners. There have been persistent reports that from 2002, the SAS transferred at least 55 prisoners to the US-run Kandahar detention centre in southern Afghanistan where prisoners are known to have been tortured; 50 were subsequently released and of the five that were not, SAS sources were "pretty sure" at least three were subsequently transferred to the US detention facility at Guantanamo Bay.¹³

There have also been reports that during the SAS deployment providing training and mentoring to the CRU in Kabul, captured prisoners were handed over to the Afghan National Directorate of Security¹⁴, at the time the subject of a damning report by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan documenting cases of torture and ill-treatment¹⁵.

There are similar concerns about the current military deployment in Iraq - when the UN Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights released a report earlier this year referring to members of the Iraqi Security Forces and affiliated militia having carried out extrajudicial killings, torture, abductions, the forcible displacement of a large number of people, often with impunity, and the possibility that they may have committed war crimes¹⁶, the Prime Minister said that the deployment would go ahead regardless.¹⁷

In addition to combat deployments, the armed forces are involved in military training and exercises with the armed forces of states implicated in a range of human rights violations - as well as the states mentioned above, there are others including Indonesia, particularly in relation to the ongoing occupation of West Papua, and China.

Combat deployments, military training, mentoring or exercises with the armed forces or security forces of states known to violate human rights, along with the possibility that New Zealand military personnel may be implicated or involved, is at odds with successive governments' frequent description of New Zealand as a principled defender of human rights. It also highlights a curious anomaly around the government's approach to violence - on the one hand having a policy of zero tolerance of family violence here in Aotearoa, while at the same time deploying combat troops overseas where they are involved in military operations that inflict extreme forms of violence on families elsewhere.

With regard to issues around disarmament legislation, there are questions around whether military activities and cooperation with the armed forces of nuclear weapons states are a breach of the aiding and abetting provisions of Section 5 of the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone, Disarmament, and Arms Control Act 1987¹⁸, which states it is an offence to "aid, abet, or procure any person to manufacture, acquire, possess, or have control over any nuclear explosive device", either within or beyond the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone.

Despite this, the armed forces are routinely deployed or take part in military training and exercises with nuclear armed states, including the US, Britain, France, China and India. In connection with this, the Commander of the frigate Te Kaha described the navy's involvement in the 2012 Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) military exercise as "great" because "it's the only operation where we get to operate with nuclear submarines"¹⁹, although whether they were nuclear-armed or nuclear-powered was not specified.

There are similar provisions in Section 10 of the Cluster Munitions Prohibition Act 2009²⁰, it is an offence to "in any way assist" any person to use, develop, produce, or otherwise acquire, possess, retain, stockpile, or transfer - directly or indirectly - a cluster munition, yet the armed forces are routinely deployed or take part in military training and exercises with states that are not a party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions such as the US, China and India.

4) Environmental, biodiversity and climate change issues

As with the issues around human rights and disarmament legislation, there seems to be little consideration given to the impact of military activities on the environment, biodiversity and climate change - both here and overseas - as the following examples illustrate.

The main training area for the army is in the Rangipo region of the central North Island, an area that includes the Tongariro National Park and World Heritage Area²¹. While there has been much publicity about the impact of the Kaimanawa wild horses on the fragile environment of the region, there has been little public discussion about the far more destructive impact of military activities such as live firing of a range of weapons and weapons systems (including mortars, missiles and artillery), detonation of explosives, and the operation of heavy and / or tracked vehicles.

The air force bombing range in Kaipara harbour - where the air force drops 500lb Mark 82 high explosive bombs, practices helicopter gunnery, surface-to-air missile firing, and carries out explosive ordnance disposal - borders the Department of Conservation Papakanui Spit Wildlife Refuge, a nesting site for the most critically endangered native bird, the New Zealand fairy tern, and home to the endangered northern New Zealand dotterel population²².

Both of the live firing ranges around the navy training base on the Whangaparaoa peninsula, adjacent to the Shakespear Regional Park, are in the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park, and one of the ranges faces the Tiritiri Matangi wildlife sanctuary²³. The navy and air force have also conducted live missile firing near Great Barrier Island²⁴.

Overseas, the world's largest maritime military exercise - RIMPAC - is held every two years in and around Hawai'i, and comprises training for land, air and maritime warfare, including amphibious operations. The 24th RIMPAC was held in 2014, and involved armed forces from 22 states (including New Zealand), 49 warships, 6 submarines, more than 200 war planes and 25,000 military personnel²⁵ engaged in live firing the full range of land, sea, under-sea and air-based weapons and weapons systems, including sinking derelict ships with torpedoes, bombing runs and missile strikes²⁶.

A simple online image search on 'RIMPAC' will reveal the highly destructive extent of this all-out military assault on the environment and ecosystems of coastal and inland areas of Hawai'i (with little respect for sacred sites either) and the surrounding ocean, and the obvious reasons it is opposed by Native Hawaiians. Ironically, given the extent of the damage, the US navy advises military personnel on RIMPAC rest and relaxation not to approach highly endangered species on beaches or near the shore, nor to damage coral while snorkelling or diving! And points out that "Many Hawaii residents believe in the concept of "aloha aina" - love of the land, which is marked by stewardship and reverence for the environment, attributing spiritual power to the Earth and its features as well as wildlife"²⁷ ...

Closer to home is the Talisman Sabre military exercise, the largest run by the Australian armed forces, which also involves training for land, air and maritime warfare, including amphibious operations, "with all four services of the United States armed forces", and which the New Zealand armed forces will be fully involved in next month²⁸.

Most of Talisman Sabre takes place in Shoalwater Bay, the biggest and one of the most environmentally significant parts of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, an area that has a high degree of biogeographic significance and is home to a number of significant, endangered and vulnerable flora and fauna species²⁹.

Globally, armed forces are a major contributor to climate change: in part because armed forces are a massive consumer of non-renewable resources - including fossil fuels used by military vehicles, vessels and aircraft - and a major source of greenhouse gas emissions; and partly because the excessive amount of global military expenditure - \$1,776 billion (USD) last year - and military research and development, diverts resources away from the development of sustainable energy sources and other initiatives to slow the pace, and reduce the impact, of climate change.

It is not clear if the government is concerned about the contribution of the New Zealand armed forces to climate change - the only documentation publicly available is the 2008 Carbon Neutral Public Service Programme Reduction Plan for the Ministry of Defence, which does not refer to military exercises or overseas deployments, although it states: “Future actions may require consideration as to whether the Ministry should assess the extent to which carbon neutral policies can be incorporated into the New Zealand Defence Force.”³⁰

5) Militarisation of children, young persons, and their education

As mentioned above, one of the questions in the public consultation document asks ‘What should be the Defence Force’s role in the development of New Zealand’s youth?’, which is a particular area of concern.

In addition to the long-running activities of the New Zealand Cadet Forces (which provide a form of military training for children aged 13 to 18 years), since 2009 there has been an increased level of militarisation of children, young persons, and their education with funding diverted from civilian youth programmes to the armed forces Youth Development Units (YDU). The YDU are based throughout the country and are involved in three youth development programmes:

- Youth Life Skills - provides military support to the 20 Service Academies in secondary schools around the country that are funded by the Ministry of Education³¹;
- Military-Style Activity Camps - a nine week programme for young offenders (from 12 years old) as part of the Fresh Start youth justice initiatives³²; and
- Limited Service Volunteer courses - an intensive 6 week residential course providing “life skills” to unemployed young people aged between 18 and 25³³.

The purpose of the militarised youth development programmes are generally described as being to expose children and young persons to physical and team building activities and to teach them self-discipline, respect and responsibility. While there is no denying that some youngsters need assistance to develop self-discipline and a sense of responsibility, it is surely neither appropriate nor desirable for the armed forces - an institution with military operations and the use of armed force as its primary role - to be involved in youth development work.

Furthermore, the militarisation of children, young persons, and their education is contrary to New Zealand’s obligations as a state party to both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict.³⁴

6) Links to the public consultation and related documents

Defence White Paper 2015: Public Consultation and Making a Submission - information, links to documents and how to make a submission, are available at <http://www.defence.govt.nz/defence-white-paper-2015.html>

Related documents:

- Defence Capability Plan, June 2014, is at <http://www.defence.govt.nz/pdfs/reports-publications/defence-capability-plan-2014.pdf>
- Defence Assessment 2014, May 2015, is at <http://www.defence.govt.nz/pdfs/dwp2015/defence-assessment-2014-public.pdf>
- Briefing for the Incoming Minister, New Zealand Defence Force / Ministry of Defence, October 2014, is at <http://www.defence.govt.nz/pdfs/reports-publications/election-brief-october-2014.pdf>
- Briefing for the Incoming Minister: Background Document, October 2014, is at <http://www.defence.govt.nz/pdfs/reports-publications/election-brief-background-information-october-2014.pdf>

References

¹ See, for example, Defence Capability Plan, New Zealand Government, June 2014, p 15, and Defence Assessment 2014, May 2015, p 25

² Defence Capability Plan, p 4

³ Defence Capability Plan, p 6

⁴ Defence Capability Plan, p 14

⁵ Briefing for the Incoming Minister, New Zealand Defence Force / Ministry of Defence, October 2014

⁶ 'Most Significant Maritime Security Threat', U.S. Naval Institute Media Release, 18 March 2009

⁷ See, for example, the NZ UN Security Council site, <http://www.nzunsc.govt.nz>

⁸ Frigate Systems Upgrade, Royal New Zealand Navy, 20 April 2015

⁹ 'Two new Boeing C-17s to cost NZDF \$600m', NZ Herald, 15 April 2015

¹⁰ 'Government continues to back NZ armed forces', Gerry Brownlee, 21 May 2015

¹¹ Briefing for the Incoming Minister of Defence, October 2014, p 17

¹² 'Afghan families paid after men shot', Neil Reid, 23 February 2014, at

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/9753645/Afghan-families-paid-after-men-shot>

¹³ 'Eyes Wide Shut: The Government's Guilty Secrets in Afghanistan', Jon Stephenson, May 2011, at <http://www.metromag.co.nz/metro-archive/eyes-wide-shut>

¹⁴ See, for example, 'Eyes Wide Shut: The Government's Guilty Secrets in Afghanistan' as above, and 'No guarantee SAS captives not tortured', Otago Daily Times, 13 October 2011, at <http://www.odt.co.nz/news/national/181988/no-guarantee-sas-captives-not-tortured>

¹⁵ 'Treatment of Conflict-Related Detainees in Afghan Custody', United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, October 2011, at http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/Documents/October10_%202011_UNAMA_Detention_Full-Report_ENG.pdf

¹⁶ 'Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the human rights situation in Iraq in the light of abuses committed by the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and associated groups', 13 March 2015, A/HRC/28/18, at http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session28/Documents/A_HRC_28_18_AUV.doc

- ¹⁷ See, for example, 'PM defends deployment amid war crime allegations', Radio New Zealand, 17 March 2015, at <http://www.radionz.co.nz/news/political/268864/pm-defends-deployment-amid-war-crime-allegations>
- ¹⁸ <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1987/0086/latest/096be8ed80b88e6a.pdf>
- ¹⁹ 'NZDF Off To RIMPAC In Force', NZDF, June 2012, at <http://www.nzdf.mil.nz/news/feature-stories/2012/20120620-nzdfotruf.htm>
- ²⁰ <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2009/0068/latest/096be8ed80d982e1.pdf>
- ²¹ See, for example, <http://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/places-to-go/central-north-island/places/tongariro-national-park/>
- ²² See, for example, 'Bombing ruffles feathers at spit', Norwest News, 11 June 2008, at <http://www.stuff.co.nz/auckland/484145> and a video of a 2014 bombing run at http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11281713
- ²³ See, for example, 'Channel flags warn boaties of live ammo', Rodney Times, 15 October 2013, at <http://www.stuff.co.nz/auckland/local-news/rodney-times/9281058/Red-flags-up-to-alert-boaties>
- ²⁴ See, for example, 'Navy and Air Force Successfully Test-Fire Missile', Air Force News, at <http://www.airforce.mil.nz/about-us/news/airforce-news/archive/97/test-fire-missile.htm>
- ²⁵ The RIMPAC web site is at <http://www.cpf.navy.mil/rimpac/2014/>
- ²⁶ See, for example, the video at <http://www.kitv.com/news/environmental-group-rimpac-ship-sinkings-harm-ecosystem/26921054> and 'U.S. government vows to defend environment - except when military is around', Hawaii Independent, 16 July 2014, at <http://hawaiiindependent.net/story/u.s.-government-vows-to-defend-environmentexcept-when-military-is-around> For an overview of the issues around the militarisation of Hawai'i, see 'The true cost of Hawai'i's militarization', Hawaiian Independent, 11 September 2014, at <http://hawaiiindependent.net/story/the-true-cost-of-hawaiis-militarization>
- ²⁷ See, for example, 'Take care of Hawaii's environment during RIMPAC', Rebecca Hommon, Navy Region Hawaii Environmental Counsel, 27 June 2014, at <http://www.cnic.navy.mil/regions/cnrh/news/2014/take-care-of-hawaii-s-environment-during-rimpac.html>
- ²⁸ See, for example, 'NZDF Takes Part in Australia's Largest Warfighting Exercise', NZDF, 11 June 2015, at <http://www.nzdf.mil.nz/news/feature-stories/2015/20150611-ntpialwe.htm> and 'FAQ: NZDF's Participation in Talisman Sabre 15', at <http://www.nzdf.mil.nz/downloads/pdf/public-docs/talisman-sabre-factsheet.pdf>
- ²⁹ See, for example, 'US Bases in Australia: the social and environmental risks', Friends of the Earth Australia / Independent and Peaceful Australia Network, July 2013, pp 4 - 12, at http://www.brisbane.foe.org.au/uploads/1/4/1/7/14174316/us_bases_in_australia_word_doc_edit_copy.pdf
- ³⁰ 2008 Carbon Neutral Public Service Programme Reduction Plan for the Ministry of Defence, <http://www.defence.govt.nz/reports-publications/carbon-neutral-reduction.html>
- ³¹ Further information is available at <http://reserves.mil.nz/youth-development/yls.htm>
- ³² Further information is available at <http://reserves.mil.nz/youth-development/mac.htm>
- ³³ Further information is available at <http://reserves.mil.nz/youth-development/lsv.htm>
- ³⁴ More detailed information about the militarisation of children and young persons and their education in relation to the Convention and the Optional Protocol is available in 'NGO information to the Committee on the Rights of the Child: Third and Fourth Periodic Reports of New Zealand under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict', Peace Movement Aotearoa, August 2010, at <http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/pma-crc0810.pdf> and 'NGO update to the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the Third and Fourth Periodic Reports of New Zealand', Peace Movement Aotearoa, January 2011, at <http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/pma-crc0111.pdf>