

The following is summarised information from a briefing paper from the GCSB to the Minister Responsible for the GCSB, titled *“Planned GCSB Divestment in Communications Satellite Interception Capabilities”*. Where possible, excerpts of the original document have been used.

Summary of “Planned GCSB Divestment in Communications Satellite Interception Capabilities”

Report Date: 21 April 2021

Purpose

- The purpose of this briefing paper is to advise the Minister Responsible for the GCSB of GCSB’s consideration of divestment in communication satellite interception capabilities.

Background

- In keeping with best practice for both intelligence collection and public expenditure, GCSB continuously reviews its access posture and capabilities. A review of the GCSB’s satellite collection dishes and radomes at Waihopai has identified they are at a point where significant investment is required to maintain the capability, and the corresponding value of intelligence collected through the capability is consistently low.
- Investment would also be required to ensure that an appropriate level of assurance exists regarding the physical integrity of the radomes that protect the antennae used for collection activities.
- Irrespective of such investment, the intelligence value of the capability will remain low. We do not assess that removal of the capability will have a material impact on GCSB’s overall intelligence output.
- Noting these factors, GCSB does not consider the value provided by the communication satellite interception capability to be sufficient to justify investment. GCSB also considers that a do-nothing option carries unjustifiable risk from a health and safety perspective.

Impact on GCSB baselines

- The divestment under consideration would not result in the closure of the GCSB Waihopai facility.
- We do not anticipate that the proposed change would result in any substantial savings.

Public interest

- The proposed divestment in communication satellite interception capabilities will inevitably become public knowledge if implemented, through the removal of the iconic domes. A proactive public announcement will be prepared to manage this. GCSB will inform staff prior to issuing such a public statement in the event that the divestment is progressed.

- A public announcement can provide information on the radomes and antennae, New Zealand's communication satellite interception capabilities, and the role of the GCSB in protecting and enhancing New Zealand's national security and prosperity.
- Given their iconic nature, opportunities to use a decommissioning of the domes for engagement with the Marlborough Community and news media will also be considered. This will need to be balanced against health and safety considerations and the need to maintain the security of the site.