



31 March 2023

Adam Irish  
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Dear Adam

## RESPONSE TO YOUR OFFICIAL INFORMATION REQUEST

Thank you for your email of 13 February to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) in which you requested, pursuant to the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), information relating to security threats. On 3 March the Ministry of Defence received DPMC's transfer of the first four questions from your request. Responses are provided below. I note that a number of these points reiterate my response of 13 March regarding your separate request to the Ministry about New Zealand's military capability.

- 1. What steps are being taken to enhance the country's defense capabilities in light of the current global security threats?*

Defence (both the Ministry of Defence and the New Zealand Defence Force), in consultation with other New Zealand Government agencies, undertakes a range of analytical activities to understand New Zealand's changing strategic environment and prepare for a range of possible scenarios that would engage New Zealand's national security and defence interests. These analytical activities are used to inform our advice to Ministers on New Zealand's defence policy settings, including in relation to military capabilities.

In 2022, the Government commissioned a Defence Policy Review to ensure that New Zealand's defence policy, strategy and planned capability investments remain fit for purpose. The Review is currently underway and will inform future capability decisions, ensuring that the NZDF remains a modern, viable force that provides security for New Zealand and the Pacific.

- 2. How does the government plan to address the potential threat of conflict with the People's Republic of China and maintain regional stability?*

New Zealand's prosperity and security depends on peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. The New Zealand Government strives to shape the regional environment. The increasingly challenging environment compels us to be a committed and agile participant in our work to support greater regional security and prosperity.

Dialogue and diplomacy are more important than ever. The international rules-based system remains an important element of the global and regional strategic environment. It will

continue to provide the foundation for international law and norms shaping states' behaviour, even as it increasingly sits alongside other mechanisms by which states interact.

In December 2021, the Secretary of Defence publicly released *Defence Assessment 2021: he moana pukepuke e ekengia e te waka*. This Assessment presented the Ministry of Defence's perspective on New Zealand's strategic environment, including the key challenges facing New Zealand's defence and security interests, and recommends a more proactive strategic defence policy approach in response.

The Assessment outlines how the Indo-Pacific is a key region for New Zealand's broader interests, noting that the security and stability of the region is important for New Zealand's security and wellbeing. Section 3.4.1 of the Assessment states that the most significant conflict risks in the Indo-Pacific include increasing cross-Strait tensions. You can access a copy of the *Defence Assessment 2021* from the Ministry of Defence's website <https://defence.govt.nz/publications/publication/defence-assessment-2021>.

3. *What is the current defense budget as a percentage of GDP and how does this compare to the recommended 2% for NATO partners?*

There is no official figure for New Zealand defence spending as a percentage of GDP. The New Zealand Defence Force calculates Defence spending as 0.9% of GDP in 2021/22.

4. *What measures are being taken to modernise and update the country's military equipment and technology?*

Defence is delivering a range of projects to modernise our military capability in accordance with *Defence Capability Plan 2019*. For example, two P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircrafts have already arrived, and we will take delivery of the first of the new C-130J Hercules next year. The Defence Policy Review will also inform future decisions to ensure New Zealand's capability is modern and fit-for-purpose.

Under section 28(3) of the Act you have the right to request the Ombudsman to investigate and review this response.

Yours sincerely



PP

Richard Schmidt  
**Deputy Secretary Policy and Planning**