

## AIDE MEMOIRE: PROPOSED NEW ZEALAND DEFENCE FORCE CONTRIBUTION TO MILITARY ACTION AGAINST HOUTHİ TARGETS

**Decision sought:** Approval to deploy a small New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) contribution to the United States (US) led coalition conducting military action against the Yemen-based Houthi.

### Key messages:

1. **Houthi's illegal hijacking and targeting of commercial ships and crews** in the Red Sea has resulted in an increasing number of shipping companies diverting around southern Africa. This **situation is likely to negatively affect New Zealand's imports and exports.**

s9(2)(g)(i)

2. New Zealand has received a **request from the US** to militarily contribute to a coalition conducting **precision strikes on Houthi targets**. Contributing a small NZDF team to support future military action against the Houthi is **in New Zealand's interests**, supporting freedom of navigation and the international rules based order through directly countering threats to commercial vessels that are impacting international shipping.

3. **Contributing to this coalition and its targeting operations is not without risk**, including the possibility of:

s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i)

### *The Options for a NZDF Contribution*

- Alongside our political support for coalition statements, a military contribution would serve to

s9(2)(g)(i)

- There are **two options proposed for a NZDF contribution** to the US-led coalition. Both proposed options for a NZDF contribution are for up to six months until 31 July 2024 and can be met within existing baseline for Vote Defence Force.

*Option 1: Deploy an NZDF targeting team of up to six personnel (Recommended)*

- Option 1 is a targeting team of up to six NZDF personnel**, including intelligence analysts, mission planners and a Legal Advisor, who will work alongside partners to enable the coalition to carry out strikes on Houthi targets. This is the recommended option as it would allow the NZDF to provide a contribution of notable operational value.

*Option 2: Deploy a minimum contribution of up to two NZDF personnel in planning and targeting roles*

- Option 2 is for a contribution of two NZDF personnel**, in planning and targeting roles. This option is considered a minimal contribution to meet the US request and demonstrate our support for this coalition.

s6(a)

- [redacted] s6(a)
- [redacted]
- [redacted]

s9(2)(f)(iv)

- [redacted]
- [redacted]
- [redacted]

### Questions and answers

*Will NZDF personnel be involved in targeting?*

- Both options proposed would almost certainly see NZDF personnel tasked to engage in planning and targeting for strike operations to degrade or destroy Houthi military capability [redacted] s9(2)(g)(i)

*Is this legal / what is the legal basis?*

- Officials assess that there is a legitimate and reasonable interpretation of the United Nations Charter Article 51 as a basis to use force in collective self-defence.
- [redacted] s6(a), s6(b)(i)
- The recommended option of up to six personnel also includes a legal advisor, which will provide additional support to the deployed personnel and assurance that our contribution will operate within New Zealand's Rules of Engagement.

*Will there be civilian casualties?*

- The consideration of collateral damage, such as civilian casualties, is a critical step in the targeting process.
- [redacted] s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i)
- [redacted] s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i)

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