



Minute of Decision

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New Zealand Commitments in Afghanistan: Withdrawal Strategy and Mandate Renewal

Portfolios: Foreign Affairs / Defence

On 3 September 2012, Cabinet

- 1 **noted** that in May 2012, Cabinet:
 - 1.1 **agreed** to bring forward the closure of the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) and New Zealand's planned withdrawal from Bamyan province to some time in 2013;
 - 1.2 **invited** the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Defence, in consultation with the Prime Minister, to report on the actual timing for withdrawal in 2013, for Cabinet approval;

[CAB Min (12) 16/15]
- 2 **noted** that since May 2012, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) transition timetable has further accelerated, and that the Bamyan airstrip will not be available to facilitate the PRT's withdrawal from May 2013;
- 3 **agreed** that, for those reasons, the PRT withdraw from Bamyan in April 2013;
- 4 **noted** that the PRT will close its two bases and cease routine patrolling in north-east Bamyan by 30 September 2012;
- 5 **noted** that, from 30 September 2012, the PRT will focus on:
 - 5.1 **implementing** its withdrawal from Kiwi Base;
 - 5.2 **training** local security forces (the Afghan National Police, National Directorate of Security, and the Afghan Local Police);
 - 5.3 **progressing** the PRT's development projects;
- 6 **agreed** that the PRT continue to provide in-extremis support to local security forces in north-east Bamyan until PRT patrols withdraw from the region by 30 September 2012;

- 7 **agreed** that after 30 September 2012, the PRT continue to be mandated and equipped to provide in-extremis support to local security forces, but that the parameters under which this is provided will be reviewed;
- 8 8.1 **directed** the New Zealand Defence Force and the Ministry of Defence, in consultation with the Officials Committee for Domestic and External Security Co-ordination, to report to the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Minister of Defence (the group of Ministers) on the parameters under which the PRT will provide in-extremis support;
- 8.2 **authorised** the group of Ministers to have Power to Act to take decisions on the parameters;
- 9 **noted** that New Zealand's agriculture and renewable energy development projects in Bamyán are due for completion in late 2013, that there are risks associated with an April withdrawal, and that officials are working to mitigate those risks;
- 10 **agreed** to the deployment of a New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) Theatre Extraction Team (TET) to Bamyán, Bagram, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) of 24 specialist logistics, movement, maintenance, and engineering personnel from September 2012;
- 11 **agreed** to a surge of up to 32 additional specialist TET personnel to Bamyán, Bagram, and the UAE (complemented by up to 28 aircrew) to complete the withdrawal of the PRT, with Ministers to be advised of the timings and costs once withdrawal planning has been completed;
- 12 **noted** that elements of the TET will be required to remain in Bagram after 30 April 2013 to facilitate the complete withdrawal of equipment, and that the number of personnel and duration of this will be referred to Cabinet once planning is complete;
- 13 **noted** that on 27 August 2012, Cabinet agreed to the deployment of a NZDF logistics officer to ISAF Headquarters and eight NZDF personnel to provide additional force protection capabilities to the PRT [CAB Min (12) 30/24];
- 14 **agreed** to the extension and configuration of the mandates for the PRT and the NZDF in Afghanistan to 30 April 2013 as follows:
- 14.1 up to 183 NZDF PRT personnel based mainly in Bamyán, with associate support staff at Bagram air base and in Kabul (including the additional 24 TET personnel proposed above);
- 14.2 up to 32 surged NZDF logistics, movements, and engineering TET personnel (complemented by up to 28 aircrew) to facilitate the withdrawal of the PRT;

Out of scope



15 **agreed** that the New Zealand Police team's deployment in Afghanistan be extended from 1 October 2012 to 31 December 2012, at which time the New Zealand Police would withdraw from the Police Reconstruction Team;

16 **noted** that it is intended that the civilian PRT Director and Development Manager will withdraw from Bamyán close to the timing of the PRT's final withdrawal;

17 **noted** that:

17.1 the NZDF assesses the threat to be HIGH (casualties are likely) for the north east of Bamyán, but MEDIUM (casualties are possible) for the rest of the province;

Out of scope

18 **noted** that the cost of the NZDF deployments in Afghanistan to 30 April 2013 (excluding the proposed surges of supplementary TET personnel) and the cost of the redeployment of personnel and equipment will be \$33.121 million, which can be met from within existing Vote Defence Force appropriations that are available for committed operational deployments during 2012/13;

Out of scope

20 **agreed** that the changes to appropriations for 2012/13 above be included in the 2012/13 Estimates and that, in the interim, the increase be met from imprest supply;

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

- 22 **noted** that advice will be sought from Cabinet prior to the agreed withdrawal date on the size and shape of New Zealand's post-PRT commitment to Afghanistan.

Secretary to the Cabinet

Reference: CAB (12) 480

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