



# Cabinet

CAB Min (12) 16/15

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## Minute of Decision

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### **New Zealand Commitments in Afghanistan: Withdrawal of the PRT and Additional Commitments**

Portfolios Defence / Foreign Affairs / Police

On 14 May 2012, Cabinet:

#### **Background**

- 1 noted that in April 2011, Cabinet agreed to an in-principle extension of the Cabinet mandate for the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Bamyan Province, Afghanistan, to September 2014 [CAB Min (11) 15/19];
- 2 noted that, since the April 2011 decision, the NATO/International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) leadership has taken a more aggressive, time-based approach to transition and the drawdown and closure of PRTs across Afghanistan and, as a consequence, the strategic context of New Zealand's in-principle commitment to 2014 has changed;

#### **Change to transition date**

- 3 noted that NATO/ISAF would now like to see transition complete in Bamyan by the end of 2012 and has invited New Zealand to identify an appropriate timeframe, before the end of the wider NATO/ISAF mission, within which to close the PRT to help demonstrate the full transition narrative, providing a model for other provinces to follow;
- 4 agreed to bring forward the closure of the PRT and New Zealand's planned withdrawal from Bamyan province to some time in 2013, rather than in 2014, with further details on the drawdown and withdrawal process to follow;
- 5 invited the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Defence, in consultation with the Prime Minister, to report to Cabinet on the actual timing of the closure of the PRT and New Zealand's withdrawal from Bamyan Province in 2013, for Cabinet approval;
- 6 noted that the proposal in paragraph 4 has been fully consulted with NATO/ISAF and key ISAF members, none of whom expressed any objections;
- 7 agreed that the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) deploy a joint reconnaissance team (JRT) of 11 personnel to Afghanistan in late May 2012 for three weeks to assess the logistic requirements and considerations for the withdrawal of the NZDF elements of the PRT;

s6(a) and s(9)(2)(g)(i)

**Ongoing assistance**

- 9 noted that Afghanistan will continue to face significant security, political, development and financial challenges and the completion of the NATO/ISAF mission, and that there is an expectation on all NATO/ISAF members and others to continue to support Afghanistan beyond 2014;
- 10 noted that New Zealand will provide a US\$2.0 million per annum contribution from the Overseas Development Assistance fund to the Afghan National Security Forces, specifically for rule of law activities in Bamyan, from 2015, for an initial period of three years;
- 11 agreed in principle that New Zealand contribute at least four trainers to the United Kingdom-led Afghan National Army Officer Academy from 2013 for an initial period of three years, with total personnel numbers to be agreed, and subject to a specific formal Cabinet mandate at a later date;
- 12 noted that officials will investigate further the proposal that New Zealand contribute NZSAS personnel to "behind the wire" training of Afghan Special Forces from January 2014 at the earliest, with any deployment remaining subject to a specific formal Cabinet mandate at a later date;
- 13 noted that all expenses will be met from within existing baselines and, as there will be no financial implications, this will not breach the Budget moratorium;
- 14 noted that following earlier Cabinet decisions, New Zealand will continue to provide development assistance to Afghanistan, particularly to Bamyan Province, after the withdrawal of the PRT;

**Announcement**

- 15 noted that the Minister of Foreign Affairs intends to make an announcement affirming the above decisions at the NATO/ISAF Summit in Chicago on 21 May 2012.

Secretary of the Cabinet

Reference: CAB (12) 210

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