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Minister of Defence
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6 December 2004

Infrastructure Ministers

Briefing on Defence aspects of the current and future use of RNZAF Base Auckland

1. On 8 December, the POL Committee is scheduled to consider papers on the Ohakea Consolidation Project, and the process for the disposal of Whenuapai.
2. The attached note prepared by the Ministry of Defence and the New Zealand Defence Force comments on aspects of the current and future use of RNZAF Base Auckland (i.e. Whenuapai and Hobsonville). There is particular emphasis on the prospects for joint use at the base.

Hon Mark Burton
Minister of Defence



Secretary of Defence
Ministry
of
Defence

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVES

Defence House, Wellington, New Zealand



Chief of Defence Force
New Zealand
Defence
Force

Minister of Defence
Infrastructure Ministers

Defence aspects of the current and future use of RNZAF Base Auckland

Purpose and key points

1. This note provides the Defence perspective on aspects of the current and future use of the Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) Base Auckland (i.e. Whenuapai and Hobsonville), in particular the prospects for joint use and the timing of the RNZAF's consolidation at Ohakea.
2. The key points of this note are as follows:
 - a. RNZAF consolidation at Ohakea may be complete within six and half to nine and half years;
 - b. agreed principles for the joint use of military airfields require, inter alia, that RNZAF buildings, operational areas and support facilities must be maintained in a clearly delineated separate secure environment from joint users' facilities; and
 - c. depending on the base's future use, the RNZAF may wish to retain some units at Whenuapai after the consolidation at Ohakea. These units would have little impact on the operation of a commercial airfield.
3. This note should be read in conjunction with the Ministry of Economic Development (MED) paper on the future use of Whenuapai, and the Defence paper on the progress of the Ohakea consolidation project, both due to be considered at the 8 December meeting of the POL Committee.

Possible timings for the consolidation of RNZAF operational capability at Ohakea

4. The original plan for consolidation, presented to Cabinet in September 2003, assumed a four-year construction period following approval in mid-2003. This resulted in an expectation that the RNZAF would have vacated Base Auckland by 2007. But, with the Deloitte study now completed, it has become clear that even if a minimalist approach was taken to the redevelopment of Ohakea, at least six

years from approval of the project would be needed before the RNZAF could move from Base Auckland.

5. Deloitte has developed four conceptual options for consolidation at Ohakea. Cabinet will be asked to consider the options in March 2005 with a view to selecting one (or a variation thereof) for implementation. The estimated completion times for the construction programme required by each option are described in the table below.

Table 1: time to complete construction programme for each option

Option	Years to implement	Construction completion date if approved in 2005
A	6	2010-2011
B	7	2011-2012
C	8	2012-2013
D	9	2013-2014

6. The estimated timings assume a traditional design-build model. Defence is investigating the potential to apply a Collaborative Working Arrangement model that could shorten the construction period. More detail will be available for the scheduled March 2005 Cabinet paper, but realistic construction times will only be known following discussions with industry after March 2005.
7. It is most effective and efficient for the RNZAF to move to Ohakea once the bulk of the required construction is complete. The transition to Ohakea involves the movement of around 1,100 RNZAF staff (and their families and possessions); packing and unpacking the contents of offices, workshops, hangars, and warehouses; disassembling and reassembling equipment; while continuing RNZAF operations.
8. The move to Ohakea is, therefore, expected to take up to 14 months, and is likely to be complete six months after the construction completion dates in the table above.

Prospects for joint military/civilian use of RNZAF Base Auckland

Principles for joint use

9. Much discussion has focussed on the prospect of joint use of Defence facilities at Whenuapai with commercial operators. In January 2003, the Minister of Defence agreed to a set of principles, listed below, to guide the joint use of military airfields and to safeguard military operations:
 - a. any joint use proposal must recognise the primacy of military operations;

- b. the RNZAF must have first call on runways, taxiways and airspace;
 - c. the level of civil aircraft movements must not unduly impede military operations; and
 - d. RNZAF areas must be maintained in a clearly delineated secure environment which means that joint users are to be separated from military buildings, operational areas and support facilities.
10. In addition to those principles, the Minister was advised of a number of provisos that potential joint users need to consider:
- a. all joint use proposals will be treated on an equal basis (no special treatment entitlements will be considered);
 - b. "Defence Purpose" designations do not cover civilian operations (all Resource Management Act, local body and any other necessary consents will be the responsibility of the joint user);
 - c. access to supply authority services such as water, electricity, telecommunications and waste water is the responsibility of the joint user and must not compromise the current capacity of the RNZAF systems; and
 - d. any joint user would be liable for lease, landing and airfield use charges at standard commercial rates.

Implications

- 11. The above principles mean that joint use prior to the consolidation would allow the shared use of the runways and airspace, with sufficient land being made available, separate from RNZAF operations, for the establishment of commercial facilities.
- 12. The principles for joint use preclude the shared use of existing infrastructure, such as roading, buildings, services, and flightline (the area on which aircraft are parked in preparation for flying) prior to the consolidation being completed. In any case, Whenuapai's infrastructure is currently fully utilised; there is no spare capacity for a civilian operation.
- 13. Of significant concern is the condition of the runway. It is at the end of its useful life and is being kept in an operational condition with an intensive programme of preventative and repair maintenance. Any joint user would be liable for runway maintenance costs in proportion to the number of additional air movements (and the weight of the aircraft) as part of the commercial arrangements. The additional maintenance that is required is likely to cause increased runway "down-time."

Compliance with airport security regulations

- 14. If a commercial operator was to obtain the right to share existing defence infrastructure, in particular buildings and the flightline, the operator would need to comply with civilian airport security regulations. It is Defence's view that this would be impracticable. Even if the significant issues surrounding different requirements for military and civilian airport security regulations were to be met, the area of the

flightline, adjacent buildings and other military building areas is simply too small to accommodate the volumes of civilian traffic.

Joint use post-consolidation

15. As the draft MED Cabinet paper notes, the NZDF may wish to retain some units at Whenuapai after the consolidation at Ohakea, providing it remains an airfield. Studies are underway to determine the possible and preferred locations for these units, namely the Naval Support Flight, the Northern Area Cadet Force, and an air movements capability. These units would have little impact on the operation of a commercial airfield.

Naval Support Flight (NSF)

16. The NSF (five naval helicopters and about 68 personnel) is based at Whenuapai. Whenuapai is currently the preferred operational location because of its proximity to the Devonport Naval base, and the helicopter capable ships, and because Whenuapai (as an RNZAF base) provides appropriate support facilities.
17. Basing arrangements for the NSF post-RNZAF consolidation at Ohakea remain under consideration. Remaining at Whenuapai – assuming it remains an airfield – is one of the options being assessed. The other options are elsewhere in Auckland or at Ohakea.
18. The results of the study into basing arrangements will be included in the March 2005 Cabinet paper. The requirement for a facility for the NSF, and any preference for it to remain at Whenuapai, is not sufficient to warrant influencing decision making on the future use for Whenuapai.

Northern Area Cadet Force

19. The Northern Area Cadet Force currently relies on facilities at Hobsonville for headquarters, accommodation, meals, and other services supporting Cadet Force training. Meeting these requirements after the disposal of Hobsonville is under review. The outcome of this review will not affect the availability of Base Auckland for non-military use post-consolidation.

Air movements capability in Auckland

20. A very small air movements capability will be required in the Auckland area to facilitate passenger and cargo movement following RNZAF consolidation. This capability could be readily located at Auckland International Airport, or remain at Whenuapai if it is retained as a civilian airport.

Current uses of RNZAF Bases Auckland and Ohakea

21. Base Auckland is home for the six Orion maritime patrol aircraft, the five Hercules and the two Boeing 757 transport aircraft, the NSF, and the Operational Support Squadron. Other major units at Base Auckland include 485 Wing (commanding the deployable squadrons), logistics and maintenance units, the air standards and safety directorate, operational software support, aviation medicine, and parachute

training. Base Auckland has a personnel strength of around 1,100. All of these units are based at Whenuapai. Hobsonville, which is still used in part, is under disposal action.

22. Located near Bulls, Ohakea is home for the 14 Iroquois utility and 4 Sioux training helicopters, flying training (5 King Airs & 13 Airtrainers), and logistics and maintenance units. Ohakea has a personnel strength of around 630. All units listed in paragraph 21 above, except possibly the NSF, will move to Ohakea.
23. The Special Air Service (SAS), formerly based at Hobsonville, is currently based at Papakura Military Camp in purpose-built facilities. The SAS's deployability and ability to undertake counter-terrorism tasks will not be affected by the RNZAF's consolidation at Ohakea, or the possible future uses of Whenuapai.



G C Fortune
Secretary of Defence

30 November 04



lar B R Ferguson
Air Marshal
Chief of Defence Force

30 November 04