



Information Sheet 4:

New Zealand's National Security System

What is national security?

National security is the condition which permits the citizens of a state to go about their daily business confidently free from fear and able to make the most of opportunities to advance their way of life. It encompasses the preparedness, protection and preservation of people, and of property and information, both tangible and intangible.

New Zealand takes an "all hazards - all risks" approach to national security to ensure the safety and security of New Zealanders.

Our approach acknowledges New Zealand's exposure to a variety of hazards as well as traditional security threats, any of which could significantly disrupt the conditions required for a secure and prosperous nation.

National security considerations for New Zealand include state and armed conflict, transnational organised crime, cyber security incidents, natural hazards, biosecurity events and pandemics.

National Security objectives

The seven objectives that underpin New Zealand's approach to National Security:

1. **Ensuring public safety** — providing for, and mitigating risks to, the safety of citizens and communities (all hazards and threats, whether natural or man-made)
2. **Preserving sovereignty and territorial integrity** — protecting the physical security of citizens, and exercising control over territory consistent with national sovereignty
3. **Protecting lines of communication** — these are both physical and virtual and allow New Zealand to communicate, trade and engage globally
4. **Strengthening international order to promote security** — contributing to the development of a rules-based international system, and engaging in targeted interventions offshore to protect New Zealand's interests
5. **Sustaining economic prosperity** — maintaining and advancing the economic wellbeing of individuals, families, businesses and communities
6. **Maintaining democratic institutions and national values** — preventing activities aimed at undermining or overturning government institutions, principles and values that underpin New Zealand society
7. **Protecting the natural environment** — contributing to the preservation and stewardship of New Zealand's natural and physical environment

National security principles

The New Zealand Government's responsibility for national security involves balancing many competing interests, including short-term and long-term, domestic and external, public and private, and financial and non-financial.

To help the Government strike an appropriate balance between these various interests, the following principles are observed:

- the National Security System should address all significant risks to New Zealanders and the nation, so that people can live confidently and have opportunities to advance their way of life.
- national security goals should be pursued in an accountable way, which meets the Government's responsibility to protect New Zealand, its people, and its interests, while respecting civil liberties and the rule of law.
- New Zealand should strive to maintain independent control of its own security, while acknowledging that it also benefits from norms of international law and state behaviour which are consistent with our values, global and regional stability, and the support and goodwill of our partners and friends.
- decisions should be taken at the lowest appropriate level, with coordination at the highest necessary level. Ordinarily those closest to the risk are best able to manage it.

Coordination across government

New Zealand's National Security System provides for a coordinated government response so that:

- risks are identified and managed
- the response is timely and appropriate
- national resources are applied effectively
- adverse outcomes are minimised
- multiple objectives are dealt with together
- agencies' activities are coordinated.

Managing national security risk and supporting the country's resilience is complex and involves a wide range of government agencies.

New Zealand's recent history is filled with examples of complex national security events that required all-of-government responses. Examples include Covid-19, Whakaari/White Island eruption, Christchurch mosque terror attack, Kaikoura and Canterbury earthquakes, the disruption to the Auckland fuel supply, the blackmail threat to poison infant formula and the Rena grounding.

New Zealand's National Security System provides a mechanism for dealing with major crises or other situations requiring an all-of-government response.

Across New Zealand more generally, the system is able to facilitate the coordination of all sectoral, regional, and government capabilities where national planning or a national response is required. This approach helps to ensure that risks receive appropriate attention, the right capabilities are developed, and lessons are identified and learned from.

Local government, non-government agencies and the private sector also have increasingly important roles within national security. Effective high-level coordination of effort, particularly of our strategic direction and communication activity, is very important.