



Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

National Security Intelligence Priorities 2023

The National Security Intelligence Priorities - *Whakaarotau Marumaru Aotearoa* - define where intelligence should support government to make informed decisions about national security.

Prioritising New Zealand’s intelligence efforts to best support decision-making and action-taking on national security has never been more critical.

The breadth and complexity of the national security challenges we face is growing. Intelligence helps our national security community make sense of global and domestic changes and conditions. It supports decision-makers to act early to prevent and prepare for national security threats, and capitalise on opportunities when they arise.

“Intelligence” includes information collected from a wide range of sources – from classified to publicly available information – as well as assessment and other reporting that helps us understand more about national security issues. Ten government agencies¹ are expected to use the National Security Intelligence Priorities to guide decision-making about where they focus their intelligence and/or assessment effort, and what reporting they provide on national security. These agencies provide intelligence on issues that align with their unique capabilities, resources, mandates, and legislative responsibilities.

The 2023 National Security Intelligence Priorities were approved by Cabinet in June 2023. They help us to understand and take action on the national security issues, threats, and drivers of instability set out in *Secure Together, Tō Tātou Korowai Manaaki: New Zealand’s National Security Strategy 2023 – 2028*.

A more detailed classified version has also been produced to support coordination and integration across the national security community.

The National Security Intelligence Priorities are listed alphabetically.

¹ Agencies on the National Intelligence Coordination Committee: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Government Communications Security Bureau, Ministry for Primary Industries, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand Customs Service, New Zealand Defence Force, New Zealand Police, and the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service.

Economic security

This intelligence priority focuses on understanding domestic, regional and global economic changes, challenges and opportunities that impact New Zealand's national security interests.

Changes and challenges include the impact of external economic disrupters, economic espionage and coercion, protectionism, foreign investment in New Zealand for strategic reasons, and threats to trading routes, supply chains and overseas investment policies.

This includes understanding domestic, regional and global economic opportunities for New Zealand, positive and negative consequences of economic interdependence and immersion in global markets, and providing national advantage for New Zealand.

Our key areas of focus are:

- External economic disrupters;
- Natural environment economic disrupters;
- International norms;
- Overseas investment and trading policies;
- Online platforms and the digital economy;
- Free trade agreements;
- Access to critical goods and services (and the logistics networks that support this);
- Threats to significant entities;
- Threats to the sustained operation of critical infrastructure;
- Theft or acquisition of intellectual property and technologies from New Zealand; and
- Debt burdens and economic inequity that impacts the stability of other countries and the national security interests of New Zealand.

Emerging, critical and sensitive technology

This intelligence priority focuses on understanding harms, benefits, opportunities, and other current and future impacts for New Zealand of new technologies with potential national security concerns, old technologies used in new ways, and sensitive (including dual-use and military) technologies that could impact New Zealand's national security interests.

This includes understanding intentions, capabilities, use, and methods of procurement and dissemination of technologies, and the potential implications for our international relationships from the use or development of technologies.

Our key areas of focus are:

- Emerging developments impacting New Zealand;
- Development and use of critical or sensitive technology;
- Technology competition;
- Dissemination of critical or sensitive technology;
- Technology-related vulnerabilities of critical infrastructure; and
- Research and development that has national security implications (including biosecurity and human health developments).

Foreign interference and espionage

This intelligence priority focuses on understanding foreign activities used to exercise malign influence, interference, and espionage in or involving New Zealand, and intentions, capabilities, drivers, and the extent and impact of these activities.

This includes understanding the range of vectors (including cyber) through which interference and espionage may occur and New Zealand's vulnerability, to enable effective response.

Our key areas of focus are:

- Coercive statecraft of foreign actors against New Zealand;
- Economic espionage and coercion;
- Bribery and corruption threats from foreign actors;
- Foreign interference targeting communities;
- Harm and the impact of foreign interference and espionage;
- Interference with our democracy;
- Espionage against New Zealand government entities;
- Manipulation of our information environment, including disinformation;
- Education sector interference;
- Critical infrastructure; and
- Covert direct actions against New Zealand-based organisations or individuals.

Malicious cyber activity

This intelligence priority focuses on understanding and identifying cyber security threats to New Zealand from state-sponsored and non-state actors.

It contributes to New Zealand's ability to defend against and reduce harm from cyber threats and proactively and collaboratively prevent, investigate, disrupt, deter and respond to cyber incidents.

This includes understanding the national security implications of the development and use of offensive cyber capabilities, trends, strategies and characteristics of threat actors, and the use of the cyber domain as a vector for other threats.

Our key areas of focus are:

- Malicious actors, their intentions and capabilities;
- Threats to and vulnerability of significant entities, critical service providers and infrastructure, and supply chains;
- Harms from malicious cyber activity;
- Impact of cyber crime; and
- International norms.

Maritime and border security

This intelligence priority focuses on understanding threats to New Zealand's borders and maritime domain and understanding international activity relating to Antarctica and the Southern Ocean, particularly the Ross Dependency, which could impact our national security.

This includes the prevention, detection and mitigation of risks introduced by malicious, unregulated, negligent or harmful activities within or approaching New Zealand's maritime domain. It includes evolving trends and capability gaps that may improve or impact our ability to protect sea lines of communication and trade, fisheries and other natural resources within our exclusive economic zone (EEZ), uphold international law, and fulfil New Zealand's search and rescue obligations.

Other aspects of this priority include threats from or involving cargo, mail systems and international aviation in New Zealand, efforts to preserve and activities that threaten the Antarctic Treaty System and New Zealand's interests in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean. It also includes biosecurity and human health threats that could arrive in New Zealand.

Our key areas of focus are:

- New Zealand's maritime domain awareness;
- Border security;
- Critical infrastructure;
- Antarctica;
- Early warning and trends related to biosecurity and human health threats; and
- Threats to our natural resources and interests.

National security implications of climate change

This intelligence priority focuses on understanding the national security implications for New Zealand arising from climate change.

This includes understanding the impact of climate change on the stability and security of the Pacific region, including the responses from other nations and the implications of these responses for regional security.

Our key areas of focus are:

- The impact of climate change on stability, economic security and public health;
- International and national responses (including diplomatic, defence and humanitarian) and the impact of international climate policies on New Zealand's interests; and
- Research and development.

National security implications of disinformation

This intelligence priority does not cover any potential monitoring of political discourse or public debate online unless there are indications that a foreign state-sponsored actor may be involved in generating and amplifying disinformation, or if it is intended to mobilise groups or individuals to violence.

This intelligence priority focuses on understanding how disinformation² affects New Zealand's national security interests. This includes using intelligence to understand how disinformation intersects with significant national security threats such as terrorism and violent extremism, foreign interference and espionage, malicious cyber activity, and the risks associated with emerging, critical and sensitive technology.

It includes understanding the risks posed by the intentions, capabilities, and methods of disinformation actors, the technologies that enable the spread of disinformation, and foreign influences on New Zealand's disinformation landscape.

Our key areas of focus are:

- State-sponsored disinformation campaigns and influence operations;
- The relationship between state-sponsored disinformation, geopolitical competition and challenges to the rules-based international system, including in the Pacific region;
- The intentions, capabilities and methods of disinformation state actors;
- The impact of disinformation in the incitement of criminal or violent extremist activity and the radicalisation of at-risk individuals, including as part of the recruitment and radicalisation strategies of violent extremist groups in New Zealand;
- The impact of disinformation on our open society, democratic processes and institutions; and
- Disinformation vectors (including cyber) and technologies, including understanding algorithmic amplification, social media dynamics, internet architecture and implications for disinformation.

² Disinformation is false or modified information knowingly and deliberately shared to cause harm or achieve a broader aim.

New Zealand's strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific region

This intelligence priority includes understanding how New Zealand's national security is affected by trends, changes and developments in the Indo-Pacific region (an area which broadly encompasses countries and regions across East Asia, the Pacific, the Indian subcontinent and the Pacific rim).

This includes understanding domestic and regional security issues in the region, strategic competition and international interactions in and with the region, decisions and approaches that may affect New Zealand (for instance trade and foreign policy decisions and defence activities), and the implications for our national security.

Our key areas of focus are:

- Key states' ambitions, actions and behaviours that challenge New Zealand's national security interests;
- Strategic competition, geopolitical developments and regional stability;
- Political resilience, human rights and governance; and
- Transboundary threats.

Pacific resilience and security

This intelligence priority focuses on understanding domestic and regional security issues in Pacific countries (those located in the New Zealand Realm, Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia).

This includes understanding the range of current and emerging threats to the stability, security, resilience and governance of the Pacific region, for instance geostrategic competition across the Pacific region, foreign interference and espionage in Pacific countries, economic stability and vulnerabilities within Pacific countries, and transboundary issues such as climate change, resource exploitation, transnational organised crime, maritime issues, information sharing, disinformation, and people smuggling.

This priority will also support planning, preparation and conduct of New Zealand's response to humanitarian and disaster events and other support to Pacific countries in times of instability.

Our key areas of focus are:

- Strategic competition in the Pacific region, including intentions and vulnerabilities;
- The security and stability of Pacific countries (including economic resilience, inequity, debt burdens, civil unrest, and public health issues);
- Transnational organised crime in the Pacific region;
- Irregular migration, people smuggling and exploitation;
- Impact of climate change and associated security implications for the Pacific region; and
- Resilience of Pacific infrastructure.

Space security

This intelligence priority focuses on understanding the space domain and the development and deployment of space-related technologies that impact New Zealand's national security interests.

This includes understanding other countries' intentions in relation to space, the international use of space for strategic and other security purposes, and the weaponisation and militarisation of the space domain. It also includes understanding external and domestic interests in using New Zealand for space-related activity, such as launches, ground-based space infrastructure, commercial and scientific space activity, developments to space-based services, and informing New Zealand's involvement in the development of international space-related rules and norms.

Our key areas of focus are:

- Intentions, capabilities and activities of other countries in relation to space;
- The development and deployment of space-related technology and services impacting New Zealand's national security interests; and
- Space-related international rules and norms.

Strategic competition and the rules-based international system

This intelligence priority focuses on understanding emerging global trends, changes and developments in global governance and strategic positioning by states that could impact New Zealand's national security interests. It includes understanding efforts to degrade and disrupt areas of the international order, as well as the dynamics and drivers for changes in domestic and regional leadership and governance in areas that affect our national interest.

This priority helps support New Zealand to articulate a view on international strategic issues and take foreign policy positions in response to domestic and global developments in our interests, and understand the accuracy of information presented by other nations.

The provision of intelligence in this area also helps ensure principles of international law and international treaty regimes and norms that are a priority for New Zealand are protected, and helps support our international counter-proliferation commitments.

Our key areas of focus are:

- International norms and governance;
- Human rights abuses, threats to democracy and territory;
- Strategic competition objectives, influence and approaches;
- Armed conflict;
- Disarmament and weapons proliferation;
- Emerging players, their intentions and the impact for New Zealand;
- The impact of instability in other countries (including from conflict, economic inequity, debt, corruption and civil unrest) for New Zealand; and
- Natural resource exploitation, international responses and implications for New Zealand.

Terrorism and violent extremism

This intelligence priority focuses on the detection and understanding of terrorism and violent extremism threats (referred to as *violent extremism* threats for the purpose of this priority) that could affect New Zealand, New Zealanders, and our interests overseas.

This includes the identification of likely sources of violent extremism threats and their potential terrorist methods, including radicalisation, facilitation, planning, financing and other forms of support. This also includes understanding the trends and characteristics of the violent extremism strategic environment (both physical and cyber domains) and how they relate to New Zealand.

Our key areas of focus are:

- Domestic threats including intentions and capabilities, aspirations and activity of individuals and groups;
- International threats to New Zealanders or New Zealand's interests overseas;
- Travellers and goods leaving or returning to New Zealand, and goods used to commit acts of terrorism and violent extremism;
- Financing or facilitating; and
- Detection and discovery of emerging threats (including malicious biosecurity threats and the deliberate spread of pathogens and diseases).

Threats to New Zealanders overseas

This intelligence priority focuses on understanding threats to the physical safety and security of; mandated missions (conflict or peacekeeping), deployments/operations and major exercises, including New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) deployed personnel; New Zealand diplomatic posts and their staff; major events organised or endorsed by the New Zealand government that New Zealanders will attend or participate in; and other New Zealanders, on a reactive and case-by-case basis, whose safety is threatened overseas.

This priority also supports the conduct of safe and successful military operations, and strategic understanding of developments overseas that could adversely affect the safety of New Zealanders overseas.

Our key areas of focus are:

- Threats to mandated missions or operations;
- Threats and risks impacting major events overseas;
- Threats to diplomatic missions;
- The safety of New Zealanders overseas, including in high-risk locations;
- Arbitrary detention of New Zealanders overseas;
- Changing dynamics overseas; and
- Success of NZDF operations.

Transnational serious and organised crime

This intelligence priority focuses on understanding threats to New Zealand from transnational serious and organised crime that impacts New Zealand's national security interests.

It includes criminal activities associated with transnational crime that may impact New Zealand, including the movement of money, goods and people.

This priority also includes detecting the serious crime trends and enablers that make transnational crime more efficient, effective, undetectable or disguisable and providing intelligence to help ensure that international criminals do not use New Zealand to support their activities.

Our key areas of focus are:

- Transnational serious and organised crime threats to New Zealand and Pacific countries;
- Methods, including technologies, used to facilitate transnational serious and organised crime;
- Financial and legal structures and New Zealand's vulnerabilities;
- Irregular migration and people smuggling;
- Trafficking in persons;
- Illicit and high-value goods and commodities susceptible to illegal trade or traffic; and
- Bribery and corruption.