



Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

*United Nations Consultative status with ECOSOC, UNESCO and UNCTAD
Special relations with the ILO, FAO, UNICEF, and other organisations and
agencies*

WILPF Aotearoa Section, PO Box 2054, Wellington 6140. Email: wilpfaotearoa@gmail.com

22 June 2015

To the Ministry of Defence on the Defence White Paper 2015

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) Aotearoa is part of an international women's organisation established in 1915.

WILPF works on issues of peace, human rights and disarmament at the local, national and international levels, participating in ongoing debates on peace and security issues, conflict prevention and resolution, on the elimination of all forms of discrimination, and the promotion and protection of human rights.

We welcome this opportunity to make a submission on the Defence White Paper 2015.

We have not answered all suggested questions.

1. What are the major threats or challenges to New Zealand's security now and in the future?

According to the New Zealand Defence Force's own assessment, 'New Zealand does not presently face a direct threat of physical invasion and occupation of New Zealand territory.' (Defence Assessment 2014, p. 29, 2.1.1, paragraph 66)

In 2009, when the then Chief of Navy, Rear Admiral David Ledson was asked, 'What is the most significant maritime security threat facing your nation?', his reply included: 'In the near waters, the most significant security threat relates to the ocean itself' (presumably a reference to the effects of climate change on the level of the oceans) and, 'Looking further afield, the most significant threat is actually the lack of a tangible - to many of our sailors and the majority of our citizens - significant threat. Without a threat that has definition and "realness", there are significant challenges in developing and maintaining credible - but expensive - military capabilities, equipment, and personnel.' (U.S. Naval Institute media release, 18 March 2009)

The Defence Assessment also notes that there are many factors moderating the possibility of major international conflict, such as, economic interconnectedness, 'there is a strong, documented memory of past conflicts and their catastrophic impacts; public opinion to varying degrees in both democratic and non-democratic states, and their ubiquitous access to immediate information from across the globe, places limits on decision-makers' ability to use force; and global norms and international diplomatic mechanisms encouraging the prevention or de-escalation of conflict have strengthened since the end of the Cold War.' (Defence Assessment 2014, p. 14, 1.3.2, paragraph 16)

The Assessment raises the issue of cyber threats (Defence Assessment 2014, p. 30, 2.1.2, paragraph 67), but New Zealand does not need a military force to counter these. In fact, expertise for this is more likely to be found in the civilian population.

No threats means that there is no reason to have an extremely expensive military force.

WILPF argues that New Zealand does not need a military and it would seem that the NZDF's and Ministry of Defence's own assessment would support that argument – how can a country need a military if there is no threat?

3. What are the roles that the Defence Force should perform to keep New Zealand secure and advance our interests abroad?

WILPF argues that New Zealand does not need a military, and that all the roles currently performed by the NZDF could be performed by civil agencies.

6. How should the Defence Force operate as part of the all-of-government effort to protect and advance the nation's interests?

The Defence Assessment lists areas in which the NZDF is involved as part of the all-government effort to protect and advance the nation's interests. These include:

Fisheries management

Oil pollution

Search and rescue

Domestic disaster response

(Defence Assessment 2014, pp. 31-2, 2.1.4, paragraphs 72-76; 2.1.5, paragraph 79)

In New Zealand we already have a Ministry of Primary Industries which deals with fisheries management, a Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency, the Fire Service, Maritime New Zealand and Antarctic New Zealand.

WILPF argues that all the activities currently undertaken by the NZDF in these areas would be better undertaken by civil agencies, many of which are already in existence, such as those mentioned above, and including the development of a coast guard which could protect New Zealand's economic zone.

7. What is the Defence Force's role in contributing to New Zealand's national resilience to unforeseen events and natural disasters?

It need have no role (see Question 6).

8. What should be the Defence Force's role in the development of New Zealand's youth?

It should have no role.

The militarisation of children, young persons, and their education is contrary to New Zealand's obligations as a state party to both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict.

The increasing involvement of the NZDF in schools, education and youth development programmes raises concerns in relation to New Zealand's compliance with Articles 28 and 29 of the Convention

(especially 29d: 'The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;') and with the intent of the Optional Protocol.

WILPF supports the inclusion of a comprehensive peace and human rights education programmes in the New Zealand education curriculum.

9. What capabilities does the Defence Force need to carry out its roles effectively, now and in the future?

Maintaining militaries continues to maintain existing structures that foster conflict. Instead, states should shift from a national security focus, that is, one dominated by militarism, to focusing on human security, human rights concerns, and the overall goal of peace.

A genuinely independent and positive foreign policy would focus on diplomatic initiatives, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief and other areas that are aimed at preventing armed conflict.

Why not take the opportunity to work to strengthen the multilateral system and work for the prevention of violent conflict, rather than attempt to deal with the management of it once it occurs. New Zealand should be working in the international arena to enhance humanitarian assistance and diplomatic support for peace and reconciliation processes during, and after, situations of armed conflict.

WILPF strives to challenge militarism, and encourages states to invest in peace and strengthen multilateralism. Our vision is a world free from violence and armed conflict, in which human rights are protected, and women and men are equally empowered and involved in positions of leadership at the local, national, and international levels.

With their entrenched masculine norms and patriarchal attitudes (Defence White Paper 2015, Public Consultation Document, p. 26: 84% male; 16% female), militaries do not enhance security or gender equality. They promote a culture of violence and maintain existing structures that foster conflict.

We do not need the NZDF.

We would also draw your attention to the effect of military activities on the environment, and quote from a briefing prepared by Peace Movement Aotearoa:

There seems to be little consideration given to the impact of military activities on the environment, biodiversity and climate change - both here and overseas - as the following examples illustrate.

The main training area for the army is in the Rangipo region of the central North Island, an area that includes the Tongariro National Park and World Heritage Area. While there has been much publicity about the impact of the Kaimanawa wild horses on the fragile environment of the region, there has been little public discussion about the far more destructive impact of military activities such as live firing of a range of weapons and weapons systems (including mortars, missiles and artillery), detonation of explosives, and the operation of heavy and / or tracked vehicles.

The air force bombing range in Kaipara harbour - where the air force drops 500lb Mark 82

high explosive bombs, practices helicopter gunnery, surface-to-air missile firing, and carries out explosive ordnance disposal - borders the Department of Conservation Papakanui Spit Wildlife Refuge, a nesting site for the most critically endangered native bird, the New Zealand fairy tern, and home to the endangered northern New Zealand dotterel population. Both of the live firing ranges around the navy training base on the Whangaparaoa peninsula, adjacent to the Shakespear Regional Park, are in the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park, and one of the ranges faces the Tiritiri Matangi wildlife sanctuary.

The Talisman Sabre military exercise, the largest run by the Australian armed forces, which also involves training for land, air and maritime warfare, including amphibious operations, “with all four services of the United States armed forces”, and which the New Zealand armed forces will be fully involved in next month.

Most of Talisman Sabre takes place in Shoalwater Bay, the biggest and one of the most environmentally significant parts of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, an area that has a high degree of biogeographic significance and is home to a number of significant, endangered and vulnerable flora and fauna species.

Globally, armed forces are a major contributor to climate change: in part because armed forces are a massive consumer of non-renewable resources - including fossil fuels used by military vehicles, vessels and aircraft - and a major source of greenhouse gas emissions; and partly because the excessive amount of global military expenditure - \$1,776 billion (USD) last year - and military research and development, diverts resources away from the development of sustainable energy sources and other initiatives to slow the pace, and reduce the impact, of climate change.

Celine Kearney
President, WILPF Aotearoa