



NZDF **ORGANISATIONAL** **STRATEGY** **2026**

TE RAUTAKI MO TE OPE
KATUA O AOTEAROA



TE OPE KÁTUA O AOTEAROA
DEFENCE FORCE

CONTENTS

CHIEF OF DEFENCE FORCE FOREWORD	3
INTRODUCTION	6
THE NZDF ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGY	8
DELIVERING THE STRATEGY	11
APPENDICES	16



CHIEF OF DEFENCE FORCE FOREWORD

By building a stronger, resilient, and more combat capable NZDF, we are delivering on our part in protecting New Zealand from threats and advancing our national interests. Given the destabilisation of the global strategic environment, the time for action is now and we must move together as one – unified in our purpose.

Following the release of the *2025 Defence Capability Plan* (DCP25) and the *2025 Strategic Defence Policy* (SDP25), it was clear that new approaches are required to transform the NZDF to better prepare for the reality we face. This *NZDF Organisational Strategy*, along with a new *Military Strategy*, is foundational in shaping a change in focus. We must not shy away from this new reality – it is our core purpose and what we are trained to deliver on.

This document sets out how we are achieving military preparedness over the near term and beyond, always with an emphasis on core military tasks. This means a clear-eyed focus on the readiness of combat capabilities, unlocking a warfighting ethos, implementing the DCP25, and strengthening key partnerships. We will have the capability and the resolve to respond to actions against our interests in a manner appropriate to the threat—up to and including combat.

I expect all commanders, leaders, and members of the NZDF to build a common understanding of the outcomes sought in this strategy and what we need to do to deliver against it. You should use this lens when considering how to deter adversaries today, prepare the NZDF for increasing competition and conflict tomorrow, and steward the force to meet whatever lies ahead independently or alongside our trusted partners.



A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading 'Tony Davies'.

Tony Davies

Air Marshal
Chief of Defence Force

March 2026



NZDF ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGY

VISION	Ready to fight tonight, tomorrow and together
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PURPOSE	We defend New Zealand and protect its interests
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STRATEGIC OUTCOMES



REQUIRED STATE	The NZDF is prepared for conflict in the near term
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VALUES	Courage Tū Kaha Commitment Tū Tika Comradeship Tū Tira Integrity Tū Māia
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INTRODUCTION

The Government has set clear goals for the NZDF. The NZDF is expected to ensure the security of the immediate region and contribute to achieving New Zealand's global interests, working with a network of international partners to maintain collective security. New Zealand does not intend to be involved in armed conflict, but the NZDF must be prepared for that eventuality and demonstrate that it is capable of protecting New Zealand.

The NZDF has identified three major shifts that influence the approach to pursuing and protecting defence interests. The NZDF is transforming with these shifts in mind.

From a benign environment to persistent competition

Nations are becoming more competitive, bringing the threshold of armed conflict closer. Grey zone activity is moving into our region and becoming sharper. The NZDF must be prepared to respond to events more frequently, for longer and with greater intensity.

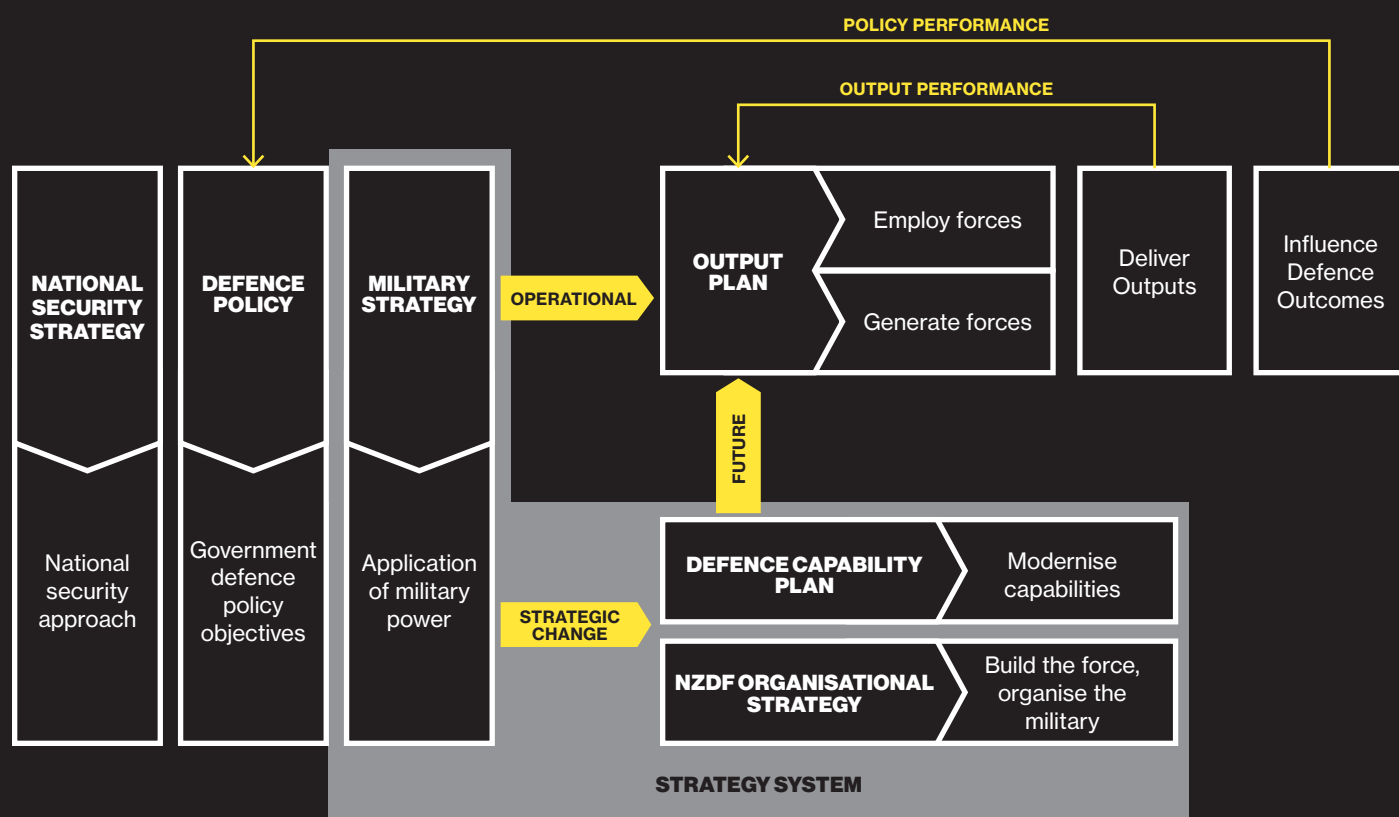
From a broad utility to emphasis on core military functions

The NZDF has provided and will continue to provide support for the Government and New Zealand communities. The NZDF is focussing on its core military role and emphasising preparation for medium-intensity warfighting to defend New Zealand and its interests.

From just enough to just in case

The NZDF is moving from an economically efficient and lean force to becoming a force that has scale, agility, contingencies and reserves needed for endurance and to absorb shocks.

THE NZDF STRATEGY SYSTEM



The NZDF Organisational Strategy is the blueprint for enterprise change to meet the Government's military needs. Together with the Military Strategy and DCP25, it sets the agenda for comprehensive long-term change and it connects the Government's defence policy objectives with the operations and missions of the NZDF.

THE NZDF ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGY



VISION

Ready to fight tonight, tomorrow and together

The NZDF is a resilient, persistent, innovative, and agile fighting force that will respond to security threats, immediately and decisively when required. Its core values underpin the profession of arms and are sustained by powerful bonds of comradeship tying them together with a shared purpose: defending New Zealand. NZDF personnel have unwavering determination, courage, and commitment to the military.

Moving to conflict could happen quickly. The NZDF must embed a warfighting culture across every level of the entire NZDF (Regular Force, Reserves, civilians, and contractors), to make decisions based on the need to defend New Zealand's security and be prepared for conflict.

PURPOSE

We defend New Zealand and protect its interests

The NZDF is first and foremost a military force. It makes a wide range of contributions to New Zealand's security and community through broad means, but its primary role is as the military arm of the New Zealand Government. It secures the country against external threats and protects its sovereign interests, acting at the Government's direction to meet likely contingencies. The reality of conducting military operations to respond to crises and to protect national interests is that this may involve the spectrum of operations, initiatives and activities up to the threat and use of lethal force.

VALUES

Courage Tū Kaha Commitment Tū Tika Comradeship Tū Tira Integrity Tū Māia

The people of the NZDF share a strong sense of what it means to be New Zealanders. The NZDF culture is based on the shared values of Courage (Tū Kaha), Commitment (Tū Tika), Comradeship (Tū Tira) and Integrity (Tū Māia). The NZDF draws on a unique blend of Māori and British warrior cultures. It respects and honours the past, its veterans and their service. They have created a legacy which the NZDF honours through its service.

REQUIRED STATE

The NZDF is prepared for conflict in the near term

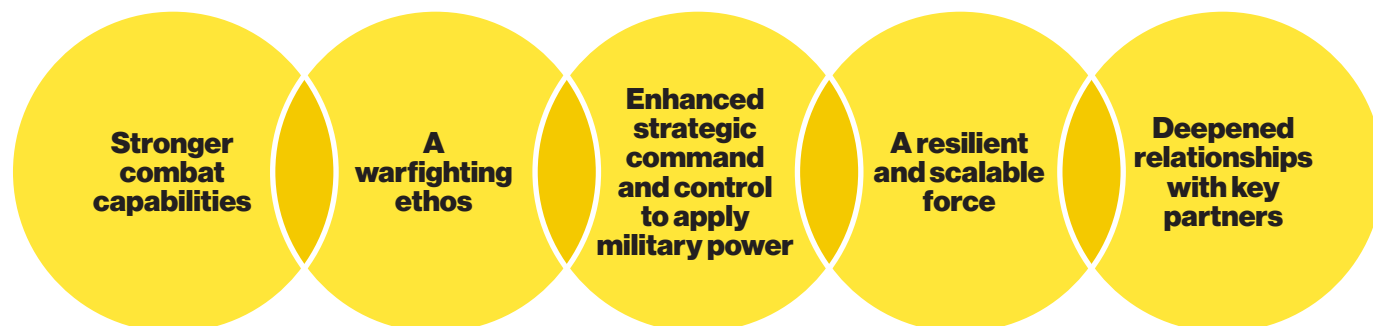
The required state is the strategy's core message and central idea. It emphasises heightened urgency driven by threats in the security environment. The NZDF must rapidly increase the readiness of its military capabilities and its ability to sustain operations from peaceful cooperation to persistent competition and armed conflict.

Competition can occur across all dimensions of national power, across all domains and at the same time.



STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

The five Strategic Outcomes are high-level results that are needed to meet the vision and purpose and to achieve the required state. The Outcomes are interrelated and mutually supporting. Each is divided into three sub-outcomes that describe the Outcomes in more specific terms (see table below). The timeframe for the Outcomes is to 2030 in detail and looking out to 2040.



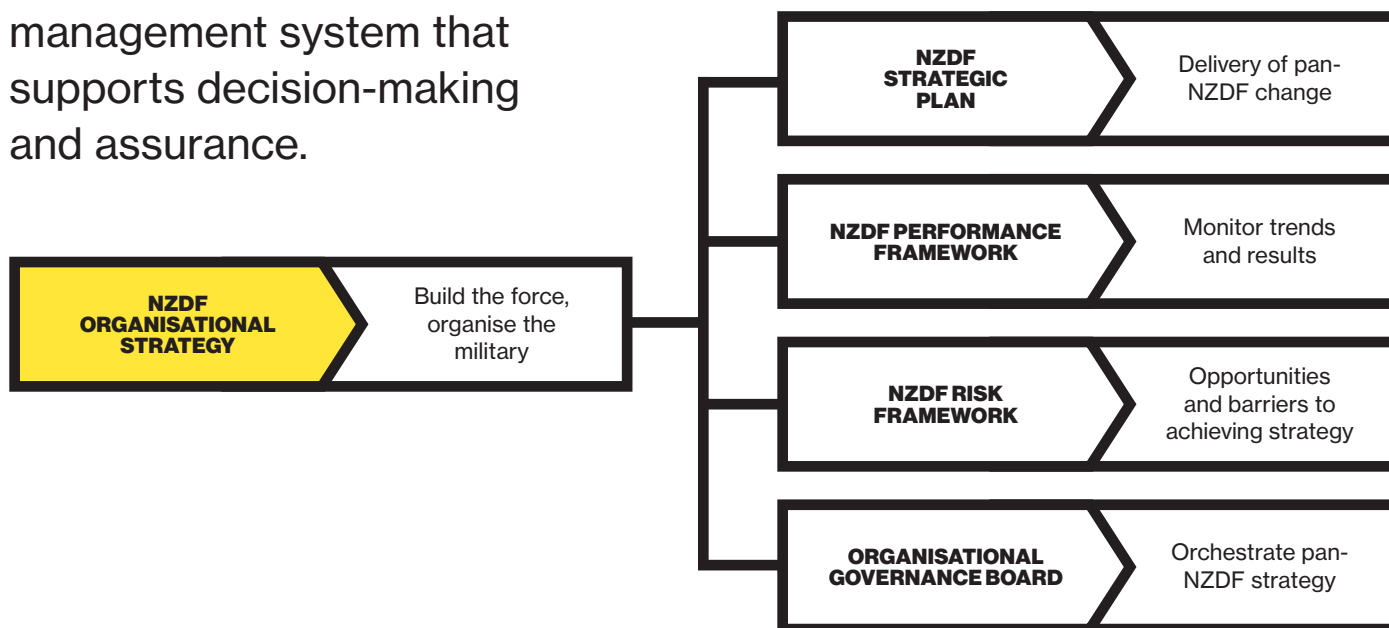
Strategic Outcomes	Description	Sub-Outcomes
Stronger combat capabilities	The NZDF capability contribution to national security deters those who would act in ways adverse to New Zealand's interests.	• The NZDF has an enhanced ability to deter and defeat. • Enhanced capabilities are delivered to warfighters quicker. • Combat capabilities are in service with the essential elements to enable enduring effect.
A warfighting ethos	NZDF people, both uniformed and civilian, work and act in ways that are focussed on operations in a warfighting environment.	• NZDF people have the mindset, skills and capability to win in conflict environments. • The profession of arms is strengthened. • NZDF ways of working are effective in a conflict environment.
Enhanced strategic command and control to apply military power	The NZDF's strategic-level command and control system decisively and incisively applies military effects.	• The NZDF command and control (C2) system can plan and direct military campaigns and operations to deliver warfighting objectives. • The NZDF has an improved C2 system to enable delivery of strategic warfighting effects. • The NZDF has the legal and regulatory settings to operate effectively in conflict.
A resilient and scalable force	The NZDF can conduct operations and actions over extended periods and through protracted strategic and operational situations.	• The NZDF can withstand shocks, absorb attrition, and preserve essential functions. • The NZDF can grow rapidly. • The NZDF has the suitably qualified and experienced personnel it needs to operate and regenerate.
Deepened relationships with key partners	The NZDF is a valuable security partner and has close ties with nations and organisations aligned to securing national interests.	• NZDF contributions are valued by our ally and international military partners. • The NZDF has increased support from the New Zealand industrial, logistical and technology innovation base. • New Zealand's other levers of national power are synchronised with the military lever.

DELIVERING THE STRATEGY



IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY

The *NZDF Organisational Strategy* will be implemented through an integrated management system that supports decision-making and assurance.



Strategic Plan – delivery of pan-NZDF change

The *NZDF Strategic Plan* (Strategic Plan) turns strategy into action. It describes the key results and initiatives required for the period to 2030. The Strategic Plan considers prioritisation, sequencing and trade-offs that are required to balance available people and financial resources, within the NZDF's capacity to absorb and adapt to rapid change.

The overall approach of the Strategic Plan is an emphasis on improving military preparedness as much and as rapidly as possible, balanced with long-term stewardship of the NZDF.

Key considerations in the Strategic Plan are:

- What can be achieved with what the NZDF currently has?
- What foundational changes are required now?
- What can be achieved through organisational change and investment now?
- What can be achieved through partnership, either with Australia or with industry?

The Strategic Plan is divided into three horizons that provide a time-based perspective of change. The horizons thematically describe the nature of the strategic change occurring in each period.

The NZDF's Service and portfolio plans cascade from the NZDF Organisational Strategy and the Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan is also supported by subordinate plans that span across the Services and portfolios.

H1: 2026-2027

The NZDF is capable of generating credible multidomain combat operations with our ally Australia.

Near-term DCP investments are delivered.

The NZDF has improved resilience and is able to grow rapidly when needed.

The skills and abilities of the workforce have increased.

H2: 2028-2030

The NZDF is capable of generating sustained integrated operations with partners or on a sovereign basis.

The workforce has sufficient depth and experience.

Infrastructure and foundational organisational abilities are improved.

H3: PAST 2030

The NZDF is completing long-term investments in major combat and organisational platforms.

Long term infrastructure needs are being addressed.

Performance – monitor trends and results

Strategic Performance is one of three streams of the *NZDF Performance Framework*, along with Organisational Performance and Delivering Outputs. Together, these streams provide a combined overview of NZDF performance and health. Performance measures and reporting approaches will be reviewed and refined to ensure they effectively enable data-driven decision-making practices across the organisation. Performance measures will be reported regularly to track progress; ensure that strategy, capability, and resources are aligned; and adjust the strategic plan to meet evolving needs.

Risk – opportunities and barriers to achieving strategy

Significant inherent risks to achieving the strategy must be understood and managed. An increased appetite for risk is required for successful delivery of the strategy. The NZDF will address risks by:

- Embracing opportunities, identifying where calculated risk-taking can accelerate progress towards our strategic outcomes.
- Accepting appropriate risk-taking, underpinned by clear guidance to ensure timely, informed decisions that contribute to the strategic direction.
- Prioritising effort, ensuring resources are focussed on the most critical activities required to achieve our strategic outcomes.
- Understanding the consequences of decisions and actions, and escalating risks where appropriate.

Governance – orchestrate pan-NZDF strategy

Strategic performance and progress on strategic initiatives and activities will be monitored regularly by the Organisational Governance Board. The Strategic Plan will be reviewed annually through the NZDF's business planning process.

OUR PEOPLE

Our people are at the heart of the strategy. The attributes of our people that are emphasised in the Strategic Outcomes include:

Their professionalism, expertise and mastery.

Their warfighting skills.

Their resilience and adaptability.

Their commitment to service.

Their cultural competence and ability to build relationships.

Their essential part in operating advanced military capabilities in complex, high-risk environments.



PATH TO SUCCESS

The *NZDF Organisational Strategy* is ambitious in its intent, scope and timeframe; a slow steady approach cannot achieve the Government's expectations of the NZDF. The goals described through this strategy will generate competing demands across force modernisation, force generation, preparedness, and executing roles and missions.



The critical success factor for the strategy is generating momentum across the programme of projects and activities. Work is already in progress to increase the NZDF's preparedness. Other ways to support momentum include prioritising a focus on core military effects, reducing bureaucracy, encouraging novel approaches, and delivering minimum viable capabilities and products. The organisational strategy is underpinned by two tenets that enable sustained effort and guide how the NZDF works:

Operate and rehearse as if in conflict

This strategy requires a step change in urgency and intensity. The assumption must be that the NZDF is in a state of conflict, and that all operational capabilities and work processes are suitable for the NZDF to be able to respond. Working with conflict in mind enables the NZDF to be better prepared across the continuum of military response.

A learning organisation is one in which people collectively enhance their capacities; as a result, organisations can become more agile and flexible. All NZDF people will have to practice and innovate together at a wartime tempo so that they learn how to work at their best when the situation is critical. This applies as much to corporate and business functions as it does to military activities.

Work together with a focus on the purpose

NZDF people are unified by a shared purpose. They are driven and committed to operating together, with other levers of national power and with New Zealand's ally and partners.

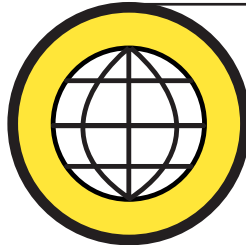
Working together requires an understanding that the NZDF is a system, not a collection of disparate parts. There are significant relationships amongst the Services, organisational functions, and partners that enable the NZDF to operate in an integrated way. Common goals and a shared purpose are the foundation that aligns the NZDF system and NZDF people.

APPENDIX 1: STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

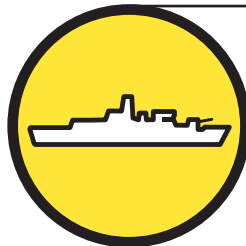


NEW ZEALAND'S STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

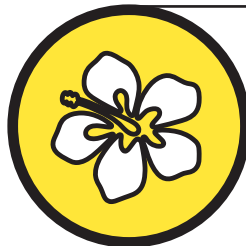
New Zealand is facing its most challenging and dangerous strategic environment for decades.



Actors are deliberately seeking to undermine international rules and norms and reshape them in ways counter to New Zealand's values and interests.



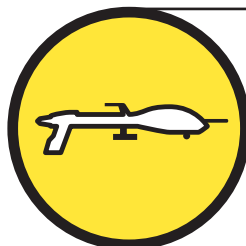
States are adopting stronger security postures and increasing investment in military capabilities; deepening and broadening their bilateral and multinational security partnerships.



Pacific Island states are responding to increasing great power strategic competition and activity in the Pacific. As a result, domestic and international tensions are growing.



Climate change is compounding other regional security challenges and putting increasing pressure on Pacific governments as they respond to effects on human security, economy, infrastructure and resources. Climate change also complicates military operations, logistics, equipment and infrastructure.



The return of high intensity state-on-state warfare in Europe and grey zone activities around the world has seen major shifts in the speed of innovation and in the application of commercial technology to warfare.



New Zealand's geographic remoteness does not shelter it from threats. There are increasing threats to the maritime area of interest, particularly the long lines of communication and supply chains. Cyber intrusions, which are not subject to the restrictions of geography, are ongoing and persistent.

APPENDIX 2: **TURNING STRATEGY INTO ACTION**



NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

The NZDF strategy system depicted on page 7 connects the NZDF's actions and activities to Government policy. This appendix provides additional information about the components of the system.

New Zealand's first ever *National Security Strategy* was released in 2023. It promotes a focussed, integrated and inclusive approach, working together both domestically and with a strong network of international partners. The NZDF contributes to the three outcomes and priorities for the security sector:

OUTCOME 1: New Zealand is protected from threats.

Priority: Acting early to prevent national security threats and build New Zealand's resilience.

OUTCOME 2: A resilient society, informed and engaged on national security threats.

Priority: Working together to foster collective understanding and approaches.

OUTCOME 3: An effective national security system.

Priority: Leading an integrated approach.

DEFENCE POLICY

The ongoing deterioration of the strategic environment has reinforced the need for a proactive strategy-based policy approach. Defence will act early and deliberately in promoting and protecting key defence interests. The Government's *Strategic Defence Policy* (SDP25) centres on three policy objectives:

1

Protect and promote the security of New Zealand and our immediate region.

Defence will safeguard New Zealand's sovereignty and territorial integrity; promote and protect the security of its immediate region; and sustain regional conditions favourable to our security interests.

2

Enhance our ANZUS alliance with Australia and our most important security partnerships.

Defence will make material contributions to New Zealand's security partnerships, particularly to its alliance with Australia, the wider Five Eyes partnership, and bilateral and regional Pacific partnership.

3

Contribute to achieving New Zealand's global interests.

Defence will contribute to global security through ongoing defence engagement, operations, and activities.

The SDP25 is based on foundations of an equipped and supported force and a regenerated, fit-for-purpose workforce. The policy influences the NZDF's decisions about training, development, and use of military force. It also influences how the NZDF modernises its operations and the capabilities and assets it uses.

NZDF MILITARY STRATEGY

The *Military Strategy* is the NZDF's high-level approach to using military power to achieve Defence policy objectives. It is the critical connection between Defence policy and operational planning. The *Military Strategy* is the capstone document for the NZDF's military plans and scenarios. It also guides Defence approaches for international engagement, industry engagement and capability investment.

DEFENCE CAPABILITY PLAN

The DCP25 outlines investments in new capabilities for enhancing combat capability as well as replacing critical assets, equipment, and other support that NZDF personnel need to succeed. It focusses on the next four years but looks out to 2040 so that the plan can be adapted as the world changes. The DCP25 includes significant new investments in lethality, uncrewed systems, and digital systems.

The *Future Force Design Principles* inform the Government's decisions for the development of DCP25. The principles also guide and shape choices about force structure and the NZDF's operating model.

NZDF OUTPUT PLAN

The *NZDF Output Plan* details the delivery of military capability and other services to ensure the NZDF provides effective military contributions when required by the Government. It establishes the readiness for contingent military operations and other key capabilities involved in preparing and deploying joint forces for operations and other tasks.

The output categories focus on the preparation of Navy, Army and Air Force capabilities; protection of New Zealand's sovereignty and services for New Zealanders; operations contributing to New Zealand's security, stability and interests; advice to the Government; and support for veterans.

R E A D Y T O

FIGHT

TONIGHT, TOMORROW
& TOGETHER

COURAGE TŪ KAHA

COMMITMENT TŪ TIKA



COMRADESHIP TŪ TIRA

INTEGRITY TŪ MĀIA

