

MEDIA RELEASE

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Inspector-General of Defence releases work programme

The Inspector-General of Defence (IGD) has released his work programme for the 2026/2027 year.

The Hon Tim Brewer ONZM, ED was appointed IGD in December 2025 and provides the Minister of Defence with dedicated, independent oversight of the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF).

Mr Brewer said under the IGD Act 2023 he is required to prepare an annual work programme. His work programme, published on the IGD website today, includes five “topics for examination” which will be undertaken over the next year.

Assessment of NZDF’s internal complaints process

“An effective military complaints system builds trust and confidence, reflects and reinforces expected standards of behaviour and military values, and supports operational effectiveness.

“My assessment will consider NZDF’s policies and procedures for handling complaints of bullying, harassment, discrimination, harmful sexual behaviour, and historic complaints.

“It will consider NZDF’s recent efforts to improve these policies and procedures, as well as the lessons learned from OP Respect and other relevant reviews.”

“The Terms of Reference for this assessment will be finalised shortly. I estimate that the assessment will be completed in the 2026/2027 year.”

Implementation of the recommendations from the Manawanui sinking

“I decided to formally investigate the NZDF’s response to the loss of HMNZS Manawanui, its response to the recommendations of the Court of Inquiry, and to consider any other policy or procedure improvements that may be appropriate.

The Terms of Reference were finalised on 13 April 2026 and the investigation has commenced. I estimate it will be completed by 31 December 2026.”

The role of the military justice system and the interface with civilian prosecutions

“Given the breadth of the subject, I decided to adopt a phased approach to my work. I will first undertake an assessment of NZDF’s approach to military justice data collection, management, and retention.

“The Terms of Reference for this assessment have been provided to the NZDF and Ministry of Defence and their feedback is currently under consideration.”

Operation RURU

“In 2024, New Zealand announced that it would deploy a six-member Defence Force team to the Middle East region to uphold maritime security in the Red Sea. New Zealand personnel were to be based at operational headquarters in the wider Middle East region and elsewhere, but would not enter Yemen. Most details of the operation remain classified.

“In late 2025, my predecessor commenced a preliminary examination of this operation. Having completed that examination, which included engagement with the NZDF, I decided to undertake a formal assessment. The assessment will consider NZDF’s compliance with the mandate set by Cabinet and with applicable domestic and international law.

“The Terms of Reference will be finalised shortly. I expect that the assessment will be completed within the 2026/2027 year.”

Defence Force Reserves

“The Defence Capability Plan 2025, which contains the Strategic Defence Policy 2025, states that New Zealand is facing its most challenging and dangerous strategic environment for decades.

“I decided to make a formal assessment of:

- a. the current contribution of Reserve Forces to relevant government outputs and Defence Policy Objectives; and
- b. any identified potential improvements or additions to Defence Force policies and procedures governing Reserve Forces.

“The Terms of Reference were finalised on 13 April 2026. The assessment has commenced. I estimate it will be completed by 30 November 2026.”

Mr Brewer said as part of his induction he and the Deputy Inspector-General of Defence, Natalie Pierce, had visited every significant military base and camp in New Zealand.

“The NZDF has been fully co-operative with these visits and they have been valuable. I intend to make visits to military facilities a regular part of my annual work programme.”

The Work Programme is available on the IGD website: www.igd.govt.nz

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