

Response to the findings of the 2025 Maritime Security Assessment

Context

Every two years, the Maritime Intelligence Coordination Assessments Working Group assesses the main threats that New Zealand's maritime security is likely to face over the following five years. The 2025 assessment is available [here](#).

This document outlines the maritime sector's response to the 2025 assessment's findings.

Findings

The situation has deteriorated but the sector's management of it has improved

- 1 The sector's ability to manage and respond to maritime security threats has improved because of two government investments and a number of activities focused on implementing the Maritime Security Strategy, available [here](#).

Funding through Budget 2023 has improved staff capability

- 2 A Budget 2023 investment provided staff for a Secretariat and the the National Maritime Coordination Centre (NMCC) to implement the Maritime Security Strategy, with positive impacts on the majority of issues/threats identified in the assessment.
- 3 The Secretariat leads Strategy implementation, supports the maritime security sector's governance and leads on maritime security policy for New Zealand. The NMCC support the tracking of Vessels of Interest and activity of concern in New Zealand's Maritime Area of Interest and provides all of Government maritime security effects coordination. The Secretariat is hosted by the Ministry for Cities, Environment, Regions, and Transport (MCERT) and the NMCC by the New Zealand Customs Service. They work to priorities set by the 11 agencies of the Maritime Security Oversight Committee.

Maritime Security Strategy's System investments have funded implementation of a data fusion system

- 4 A Budget 2024 "System investment" of \$4.5 million per year to 2049 funded:
 - Starboard Maritime Intelligence to deliver an All of Government picture of maritime activity in our maritime area. This world-leading technology means that agencies now have a much clearer idea of what is occurring in our area so they can now tailor their harm prevention and response activities. Full exploitation of the System investment will occur when follow-on surveillance investments are agreed.
 - Starboard's technology is in demand globally and New Zealand has funded access for:
 - i. The Global Centre for Maritime Sanctions Enforcement or "Spinola Centre": This initiative exposes vessels evading [United Nations maritime sanctions](#). New Zealand's provision of Starboard accounts is clear support for global United Nations sanctions regimes.
 - ii. Pacific Transnational Organised Crime: New Zealand has provided training and accounts for the Pacific Transnational Organised Crime Coordination Centre (PTCCC) and regional countries to support their

efforts to identify Transnational Organised Crime activity at sea in the waters to our north.

- Terrestrial Automatic Identification System Antennas: the existing 14 terrestrial antennas¹ that receive AIS signals from vessels in New Zealand's waters, were refreshed and upgraded from receive-only to receive and transmit. This improved the distance over which New Zealand can detect vessels and will enable, in the future, the transmission of messages to mariners to improve mariner decision making (for example, via highly localised weather and sea condition reports).
- 5 Indo-Pacific Regional Information Sharing (IORIS) platform: in 2023 the sector signed a Partnership Agreement with the European Union's Critical Maritime Routes Indian Ocean (CRIMARIO) programme. The sector now uses IORIS to communicate securely with 55 maritime countries. In addition, the European Union (EU) funds attendance at twice-yearly meetings at which the sector has the opportunity to meet with maritime security professionals from those 55 countries to work cooperatively to counter growing maritime security threats.

Supporting the Maritime Security Strategy's Tools investment

- 6 To support the development of the Strategy's Tools investments the sector has:
- worked with vendors and international partners to ensure we are aware of the latest capabilities.
 - worked with the Ministry of Defence and New Zealand Defence Force to ensure a coordinated approach between the Defence Capability Plan (DCP) investment and the Tools investments.

Aerial surveillance has improved

- 7 Two major improvements in the last two years have increased the number and reliability of surveillance flights monitoring our extensive maritime area: The arrival of the New Zealand Defence Force's new maritime patrol aircraft (the P8-A) and the repurposing of the KC-350 aircraft.

The sector has remained engaged

- 8 As well as the extensive engagement efforts conducted by the agencies that make up the sector, the sector as a whole has continued with multiple engagement efforts including:
- The triennial Maritime Security Symposium last held in 2024. A recording of the symposium is available [here](#). The Lead Minister for Maritime Security delivered the symposium's keynote address highlighting the economic, cultural and environmental importance of maritime security to New Zealand and New Zealanders, and the increased threat landscape that the refreshed Maritime Security Strategy seeks to address.
 - New Zealand continues to be used by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) as a global exemplar of an effective all of government approach to delivering maritime security. This means that the sector is in demand globally to support other countries develop their own approaches. Delivering this

¹ NZ government has access to Kordia's terrestrial AIS antennas, which allows detection of vessels broadcasting on AIS within the radiofrequency horizon.

support helps global maritime security to improve as maritime security issues cross borders. Providing that support is therefore in New Zealand's interests as the New Zealand economy has near total dependence on global maritime security. This effort also supports New Zealand's wider external relations.

Fiji-New Zealand partnership

- 9 One example of New Zealand supporting other countries has been working with Fiji to share New Zealand's experience of the creation and implementation of a Maritime Security Strategy. This is not a one-way relationship; it is a genuine partnership in which both countries draw on each others' strengths. Fiji has benefitted from New Zealand's expertise in strategy development, while New Zealand has been able to lean on Fiji's developing system associated with the Vuvale Maritime Essential Services Centre and interagency arrangements. This mutual exchange has saved valuable time and effort, and delivered practical insights into each others' operational approaches.

All of the Maritime Security Strategy's issues are now covered by a National Risk

- 10 The Strategy covers 18 threats and issues related to New Zealand's Maritime Security (summarised [here](#), and covered in detail by the [Guide to New Zealand's Maritime Security Arrangements](#)).
- 11 In 2023, five of the Strategy's eighteen issues were not covered by the [National Risk Framework](#). Cabinet's approval of the new National Risk and Resilience Framework in September 2025 means that all issues are now covered with the *Major Maritime Security Incident*² risk filling the gap. This means there is now formal accountability and oversight for these issues within the National Security System.

Operationalisation of the Maritime Powers Act

- 12 With a gap in New Zealand's domestic arrangements filled, in the previous two-year period, with the passing of the Maritime Powers Act 2022, the sector focused on operationalising the Act. This included the development of decision support tools for agencies.

Guide to the use of Small Autonomous Surface Vessels in New Zealand's Maritime Area

- 13 Feedback from maritime partners indicated that New Zealand's framework over the use of autonomous surface vessels was unclear. The sector came together and created the world's first comprehensive [Guide to the Use of Autonomous Surface Vessels](#). This was shared with all diplomatic missions in New Zealand to ensure that any overseas operators of these vessels in our waters have access to our framework.

Defence Capability Plan (DCP)

- 14 Cabinet's approval of the DCP signalled a major investment in maritime security related capabilities which should mean that from the 2030s onwards, New Zealand will be better placed to defend its maritime interests. The Maritime Fleet Renewal programme (which sits within DCP) will consider options for an uplift in maritime patrol capabilities. The sector has supported Defence throughout the period to make the case for investment and is now supporting Defence's detailed design and delivery efforts especially where investment focuses on capabilities required by the sector.

² This refers to illegal or unwelcome behaviour in New Zealand's maritime area-of-interest by a state or non-state actor that threatens New Zealand's maritime interests. This includes deliberate territorial incursions and other non-approved activities, such as resource exploitation.

Foreign Vessels

- 15 Agencies have improved the way they coordinate themselves so that all relevant information is used to manage the presence of foreign vessels in New Zealand's waters.

Critical Underwater Infrastructure

- 16 The sector completed New Zealand's first Critical Underwater Infrastructure (CUI) Threat Assessment, looking at threats to New Zealand's CUI based on global observations and the New Zealand threat environment.
- 17 A review of the resilience and security of New Zealand's CUI was then completed by the sector in 2025 and the Lead Minister for Maritime Security approved 10 workstreams which are now complete or have been started. A snapshot of this progress is available [here](#). From July 2026 this work has been handed to the agency that leads the protection of New Zealand's CUI (the Ministry for Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport).

Next Steps

- 18 Following the successful implementation of the Budget 2023 and Budget 2024 investments the next investment phase under the Maritime Security Strategy is surveillance and response tools. The Strategy calls for persistent surveillance so that all vessels can be risk-assessed as far away as possible before they reach our Contiguous Zone where specific maritime powers come into effect.³ The sector is developing options for this investment.

³ Customs, fiscal, immigration and sanitary jurisdiction.