

Intelligence

What is it, and why do we need it?



DEPARTMENT of the
PRIME MINISTER and CABINET
Te Tari o Te Pirimia me Te Komiti Matua

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FACT SHEET NO. 2

What is intelligence?

Simply put, intelligence is information which is collected, brought together, assessed and then used to make decisions.

The phrase “intelligence”, is commonly used to refer to the work of intelligence and security agencies.

Why do we need it?

Like all countries, New Zealand needs its decision-makers (ministers and the public service) to be well informed, to effectively advance our national security and wellbeing. Those decision-makers need information that is relevant to the choices they face, to ensure they make the best decisions for New Zealand.

Technological change has unleashed vast flows of openly available information. Sophisticated assessment is needed to determine what information is relevant to New Zealand’s national security and international interests.

At the same time, other relevant information is not publicly available.

The New Zealand government needs the specialised capability of our intelligence and security agencies to collect relevant but hidden information, to bring it together with publicly available information, diplomatic and military reporting, and to assess the results in light of national interests. Intelligence is also needed to protect and secure this sensitive information.

Who collects and assesses intelligence?

This process is the responsibility of three core government organisations: the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service (NZSIS), the Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB) and the National Assessments Bureau (NAB) which is part of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

NZSIS and GCSB collect information necessary to New Zealand’s national security that is not in the public domain. This information is brought together with publicly available information and independently assessed by NAB.

While the intelligence produced by GCSB, NZSIS and NAB may support law enforcement operations, they do not have a law enforcement role.

Who uses intelligence?

- The Prime Minister, ministers and other senior decision-makers.
- Other government agencies, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Ministry of Defence, the New Zealand Defence Force, the New Zealand Police, the New Zealand Customs Service and Immigration New Zealand.