



MEDIA RELEASE

Ruapehu District Council

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Date: Thursday 17 February 2011.

DEFENCE MINISTER COMMITS TO FURTHER CONSULTATION PRIOR TO ANY CHANGES AT WAIOURU

Ruapehu District Council (RDC) Chief Executive, David Hammond, has been given a reassuring signal from Ruapehu's Member of Parliament, Hon Simon Power, and the Minister of Defence, Hon Wayne Mapp, that there will be a period of consultation between Defence officials and RDC before any rationalisation options for the Waiouru Military base are set in concrete.

Mr Hammond said that he had written to Simon Power before Christmas outlining council's concerns regarding the potential downsizing of the Waiouru Military Training facility and what the impact of any downsizing may mean for Ruapehu.

"Although Ruapehu is making good economic progress in some areas such as tourism, economic growth in rural areas is fragile and the district has just recently lost around 80 jobs at the Tangiwai Mill," he said.

"Any announcement on downsizing of the Waiouru Base has the ability to impact directly on business and investor confidence in Ruapehu and as such council wants to ensure that any announcements are properly balanced and that the decision process used by the Defence Force is understood."

"Mr Mapp has stated that before any final decisions are made on any consolidation options that a comprehensive business case will be prepared which will address the potential economic impact on the Ruapehu community."

"An encouraging point made by the Minister in his letter of reply is that *"even though there will be clear benefits for the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) in rationalising its assets, the NZDF must retain its major land training and exercise areas."*

Mr Hammond said the commitment by government to further consultation, and the development of a comprehensive business case on the potential impacts on Ruapehu communities, should allow council and Ruapehu communities to be well prepared for whatever changes are finally implemented.

DAVID HAMMOND
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

CJH : PRW