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Mark Burton

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## NZDF deployment to Iraq farewelled

Prime Minister Helen Clark and Defence Minister Mark Burton today farewelled 53 New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) personnel deploying to Southeast Iraq. The group, which included 35 engineers, will undertake humanitarian and reconstruction work alongside a United Kingdom engineering unit.

The detachment has been deployed under the auspices of UN Resolution 1483, and their work will include the repair and refurbishment of hospitals, health clinics, schools, police stations, law courts, and municipal and government buildings. In addition, they will work to restore electricity and rebuild bridges and water pipelines.

Helen Clark stressed the importance of New Zealand's contribution to the rebuilding of Iraq's key infrastructure.

"New Zealand Defence force personnel are known internationally as excellent and innovative servicemen and women. The skills and presence of this Light Engineering group are urgently needed to assist the Iraqi people in their efforts to rebuild their infrastructure and restore stability and security to Iraq.

Mark Burton stressed that while the deployment carries risks, he is confident that the contingent will perform well.

"The NZDF has demonstrated time and again that they are able to carry out difficult tasks in difficult circumstances. We will continue to monitor the security situation closely, to ensure that our personnel are able to undertake their assigned tasks.

"New Zealand's servicemen and women are well-trained military professionals who will take all practical precautions. This NZDF group has excellent leaders, and will be appropriately supported by the forces with responsibility for area security."

An advance team of nine NZDF personnel deployed earlier this month, and are already stationed at Basrah. The detachment has been initially deployed for six months, with option of a second six-month rotation.

SHARE

Mark Burton

Defence