

New Zealand Entangled into U.S. Sphere of Influence: “The Five Eyes” Spy Club

Pro-imperial thrust governed by decades-long membership in the Five Eyes, an electronic spying agreement between the U.S., UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

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It has become apparent that New Zealand is getting more entangled in the U.S. Empire than ever before. Don’t be fooled that New Zealand and America’s longest war—Afghanistan—is over and ended in abject withdrawal and defeat by the Taliban in August 2021.

Or that New Zealand was not invited to join the new AUKUS pact between the U.S., UK and Australia, to provide the latter with nuclear-powered (but not nuclear-armed) submarines. New Zealand’s nuclear-free policy might rule out any such subs using our waters but New Zealand, under this Labour government, has expressed keenness to be involved with other aspects of AUKUS.

The Waihopai spy base has been New Zealand’s most important service for the U.S. Empire for decades. In 2021 the Government announced that it will be dismantling and decommissioning Waihopai’s two most unmissable features, namely the giant white domes that cover the satellite-interception dishes within.

Both dishes and domes have been declared obsolete 20th century relics that are no longer fit for 21st century spying. They will be removed in 2022. But the Government has no intention of dismantling the spy base itself; instead, it will be modernized to use more efficient (and less glaringly conspicuous) methods of spying.



Source: stuff.co.nz

All of this, from New Zealand's involvement in Afghanistan to operating Waihopai on behalf of the U.S. National Security Agency, is governed by New Zealand's decades-long membership in Five Eyes, the electronic spying agreement between the U.S., UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (originally it was referred to by its formal title, the UKUSA Agreement; Five Eyes is a more recent name). But it is much more than that—Five Eyes is a de facto geopolitical bloc.

"The Price of the Club"

John Key explicitly cited the Five Eyes as the justification for New Zealand's involvement in the the Iraq War: The *New Zealand Herald* reported: "Prime Minister John Key says New Zealand's likely military contribution to the fight against Islamic State 'is the price of the club' that New Zealand belongs to with the likes of the United States, Australia, Britain and Canada in the intelligence alliance known as Five Eyes."^[1]

More recently, New Zealand's Five Eyes partners have tried to make it an actual geopolitical bloc, issuing statements about China's various misdeeds, e.g., in Hong Kong, and pressured New Zealand to sign on. In some cases, the Government has done so; in others it has asserted the increasingly threadbare claim that New Zealand has an independent foreign policy.

"'We are uncomfortable with expanding the remit of the Five Eyes,' [Foreign Affairs Minister] Nanaia Mahuta said to reporters. 'New Zealand has been very clear, certainly in this term and since we've held the portfolio, not to invoke the Five Eyes as the first point of contact of messaging out on a range of issues that really exist out of the remit of the Five Eyes.'"^[2]

But that sort of thing is merely a skirmish, a question of emphasis. New Zealand is in Five Eyes, boots and all.

And the U.S., under Joe Biden, is keen to use blocs like Five Eyes as part of his "Indo-Pacific" strategy, the central policy plank of which is to contain China (whilst simultaneously

confronting Russia on the other side of the world). When he took office Biden said “America’s back!” Yes, it is—back to saber-rattling and warmongering. And it wants its traditional allies (or satellites, as the West used to disparagingly call the Soviet Union’s allies during the Cold War) all on board and on message.

U.S. Grants Perks to New Zealand Capitalists Because of Five Eyes

To sweeten the deal, the U.S. is prepared to make Five Eyes membership an attractive proposition. So, Five Eyes has been expanded from intelligence and political ties to also now being explicitly about money and access to markets. The message from Washington is clear: Be in our “club” and we’ll make it worth your while.

This was spelled out in a fascinating article entitled “New Zealand Investors Won Carve-Out From U.S. Foreign Financing Rules.”^[3]

“New Zealanders will now jump through fewer hoops to invest in American businesses and real estate, after the Government secured a temporary exemption to the country’s foreign investment screening rules. The U.S. decision represents another step towards more tightly binding together Five Eyes nations, with New Zealand’s intelligence-sharing relationship and defence cooperation cited as key factors for the decision...”

“The Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States, an interagency organisation which scrutinises the national security implications of investments into the country, announced earlier this month (January) that New Zealand had been added to its list of ‘excepted foreign states.’”

“In 2020, the Committee’s remit expanded beyond ‘control’ transactions, where a foreign investor would take controlling interest in a U.S. business, to cover investments in more sensitive companies, as well as the purchase of real estate near sensitive U.S. government facilities...While Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom secured exceptions from those expanded controls at the time, as well as a new requirement for mandatory filing, New Zealand did not, placing an extra burden on Kiwi investors....”

“In a fact sheet outlining the rationale for the change of heart, the U.S. Treasury Department cited New Zealand’s ‘intelligence-sharing relationship with the United States and its collective defense arrangement and cooperation with the United States’ as among the factors which earned it an exemption.... While the addition of New Zealand showed some willingness to expand the benefits of the carve-outs to new investors, the fact the group remained restricted to Five Eyes members did not provide any clear sense of whether it would offer an exemption to countries outside of the intelligence pact.”

So, there you have it. If fighting American wars in other people’s countries is the price of belonging to the Five Eyes club, then the U.S. is prepared to extend exclusive economic benefits to its junior Five Eyes allies to make it more palatable. Older New Zealanders will remember the infamous “guns for butter” phrase of Sir Keith Holyoake, Prime Minister during New Zealand’s involvement in the Vietnam War in the 1960s and 1970s. It means sending our soldiers to fight in U.S. wars in order to, theoretically, gain trade access.

New Zealand never has succeeded in getting a free trade agreement with the U.S.—Donald Trump scuppered the former Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) as soon as he took

office and that was the closest New Zealand has ever got to the “holy grail.” The Biden administration is prepared to offer an economic sweetener to New Zealand as reward for being the most loyal, albeit most junior, of the Five Eyes.

Rocket Lab and Five Eyes

Of course, the newest U.S. base in New Zealand is that of Rocket Lab (which operates out of both Auckland and the Mahia Peninsula). I have written several *Watchdog* articles in recent years about Rocket Lab (most recently in issue 157, August 2021, “Rocket Lab. Campaign Against It Blasts Off,” see [this](#)).

We (both CAFCA and the Anti-Bases Campaign) have consistently made the point that it is a U.S. facility for a privately owned American company, operating for the U.S. military and spies on New Zealand soil.



Illustration of Rocket Lab’s launch complex. [Source: [spacenews.com](#)]

Despite the best (worst?) efforts by Rocket Lab’s New Zealand political and media apologists to polish this turd, Rocket Lab itself makes no secret about what it is, what it does and who it serves. Nor is it shy to play the Five Eyes card. “In a 2008 profile published in *Metro* magazine, [Chief Executive Officer and founder] Peter Beck ruled out military work when discussing if there were payloads Rocket Lab wouldn’t carry.”

Beck is quoted as saying:

‘Of course, ... we said right from the beginning if it’s involved in the military, we don’t want anything to do with it. The military can be quite a tempting cherry because a lot of money gets poured into it, but we’re about science, we’re not about killing people...’

His views have evolved, and he now believes military intelligence helps keep Kiwis safe.

“Beck had a very different reply from 2008 when asked if he had any qualms about sending U.S. spy satellites into space, given the intelligence they collect can be used in military operations. ‘You also have to remember that intelligence keeps us safe. Unfortunately,

there's a lot of bad actors in the world. I am a New Zealander, but you also have to understand that national security is a global thing."

"It's not a singular country's responsibility. New Zealand is part of the Five Eyes... it's all very well to criticise national security until the very day that you need it.'"[4]

Rocket Lab and "Classified Defense and Intelligence Business"

Since I last wrote about Rocket Lab (August 2021), there has been no shortage of new developments. That same month it debuted on the Nasdaq stock exchange in New York, valued at US\$ 5.2 billion. In September 2021 it was reported that "Rocket Lab shares jumped nearly 9% to US\$ 15.29 (for a \$US 6.5 billion market cap) in early trading on the Nasdaq after the company finally confirmed a major tranche of funding from the U.S. military and entry into an inner-circle of companies approved for security and defence missions...The Kiwi-American firm secured US\$ 24.35 million (NZ\$ 34m) from the U.S. Air Force's new Space Force division to develop the upper stage of its Neutron rocket."

"Rocket Lab said in a statement:

'The agreement signifies Rocket Lab's commitment to becoming a launch provider for the National Security Space Launch programme, which launches the United States' most critical missions'... Founder and CEO Peter Beck said: 'We're dedicated to building a next-generation rocket that will transform space access for constellations through to the most critical missions in support of national security, and it's an honour to be partnering with the U.S. Space Force to develop Neutron.'"

"Rocket Lab, which won a key R&D [research and development] contract with U.S. Department of Defense agency DARPA [Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency] at a key time in its young life, has long had close ties to the U.S. military which, along with NASA, has been one of its two biggest customers. And in an investor presentation before its Nasdaq listing, Rocket Lab said Department of Defense space systems spending represented a '[US]\$968 million opportunity over ten years.'"

"In a reference to Rocket Lab's new Launch Complex II within NASA's Wallops Island facility in Virginia, it said 'a secure facility will be completed this year (2021) to support classified Department of Defense and Intelligence Community business.'"[5]



NASA Wallops Island facility in Virginia. [Source: [nasa.gov](https://www.nasa.gov)]

And the fact that Rocket Lab is an American company becomes more and more apparent. “Rocket Lab’s centre of gravity has shifted further away from New Zealand and towards North America after it announced it would buy United States space solar tech company SolAero for \$US80 million (\$NZ118 million). Rocket Lab will take on 425 staff as a result of the acquisition, which is expected to be complete by the end of March [2022].”

“That will take Rocket Lab’s total number of staff to more than 1100, of whom spokeswoman Morgan Bailey confirmed 525 were currently based in New Zealand. Rocket Lab, which is already headquartered in the U.S. and listed on the Nasdaq stock exchange, will manufacture and launch its next line of larger Neutron rockets in the U.S.”^[6]

In February 2022 Rocket Lab announced that it will build a giant production and mission control complex in Colorado. This will be its fourth major facility in the U.S.—the others are in California, New Mexico and Virginia (from where it will exclusively launch its larger Neutron rockets). It has also expanded its facilities in both Auckland and Mahia.

New Zealand Government and Rocket Lab Join U.S. Drive to Mine Moon

The Government’s infatuation with Rocket Lab is taking New Zealand into some literally unearthly and legally dubious places. In mid-2021, New Zealand signed the Artemis Accords, which promotes the exploitation of the Moon and other space resources. “The legal status of space resources is contested. The world’s main space agreement, the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, prohibits the ‘national appropriation’ of the Moon and other celestial bodies by any means. Some academics argue this rules out Moon mining for private profit. Others say it only precludes claims to land, not its resources.”

“This uncertainty aside, in 2015 the U.S. Congress passed a law allowing American companies to own and sell natural resources mined from space. In April 2020, the Trump administration declared that the U.S. doesn’t view space as a ‘global commons,’ denouncing the 1979 Moon Agreement, which sought to protect the moon’s resources as ‘the common

heritage’ of mankind (although few states have signed up to it).”

“Announced shortly after Trump’s declaration, the Artemis Accords—which are advanced directly with ‘like-minded’ nations, rather than through the UN—seek to shape international law in line with this worldview, asserting that the extraction of space resources is not ‘inherently’ national appropriation under the Outer Space Treaty.”^[7]

Bypassing the UN

“The New Zealand Space Agency believes its participation in the Artemis Accords—an international agreement to send people back to the Moon—will significantly boost the space sector. The Government signed up to the NASA accords in 2021, and New Zealand will play an important role in the project when Rocket Lab launches the CAPSTONE satellite to lunar orbit from Mahia Peninsula, likely in March [2022].”

“NASA’s CAPSTONE, or Cislunar Autonomous Positioning System Technology Operations and Navigation Experiment satellite, will test the orbit planned to be used by a small space station that would act as a lunar gateway. The Space Agency noted that signing the Accords presented some risk to international relationships.”

“‘The Accords may be viewed by some nations as an attempt to bypass the UN Committee on the Peaceful Use of Outer Space process and the UN treaty-making process,’” the Agency said.”^[8]



Source: [nasa.gov](https://www.nasa.gov)

The reference to “some countries” is telling—neither Russia nor China has signed the Artemis Accords. But little old New Zealand has, jumping on board a Trumpian U.S. outer space resource grab (one which has not been reversed by the Biden administration), with a U.S. company standing to financially benefit from its involvement using its NZ launch site.

“There are some obvious reasons that New Zealand might want to side with the United States in this debate. Our relationship with the superpower is critical for our space sector, particularly Rocket Lab, which has numerous U.S. government contracts.”^[9] So, there you have it. And the answer to the question posed in the subtitle of that *North & South* article is: “Yes.”

ABC Webinar on Rocket Lab and Five Eyes

As I detailed in my August 2021 *Watchdog* article on Rocket Lab, there is now a campaign against it. As part of the January 2021 Waihopai spy base protest, Anti-Bases Campaign (ABC) hosted a well-attended Blenheim public meeting. The three speakers were Ollie Neas, the journalist who has been writing critical analyses on Rocket Lab for years, Nicky Hager on Five Eyes and Green MP Teanau Tuiono.



About 30 protesters gathered in January 2020, 20 km outside Blenheim, in the annual demonstration to close down Waihopai spy base. [Source: [stuff.co.nz](https://www.stuff.co.nz)]

This meeting was so successful and so well received by the good number of people present that ABC decided to host a Christchurch public meeting in September 2021 featuring those same three speakers, plus Sonya Smith from Rocket Lab Monitor in Mahia.^[10]

Alas, the ever-changing Covid situation ruled out a physical meeting but ABC replaced it with a webinar, featuring all four speakers, plus me, which drew many more attendees—including from overseas—than we would have had at an in-person Christchurch public meeting. Sadly, it is not available online, as the speakers felt that they could speak more freely if it was not recorded.

ABC looked to take that further with Sonya Smith and Teanau Tuiono among the speakers at the Blenheim public meeting, which was part of the scheduled January 2022 Waihopai spy base protest. But Covid buggered things up again, and the whole event had to be cancelled, for the first time since 1988, with just a few days' notice.

NSO Spyware and Five Eyes

There is more to Five Eyes than Waihopai and Rocket Lab. Its tentacles reach into all sorts of areas: for example, the notorious Israeli Pegasus spyware sold to governments by the company NSO. It has been used by some of the worst abusers of human rights to spy on journalists, dissidents and political opponents, with all sorts of dire consequences, including murder. NSO is such an outrageous outfit (most recently, it has been caught spying on its own Jewish citizens within Israel) that the Biden administration put it on a blacklist in 2022—a very rare U.S. move against any Israeli entity. Moves were announced to sell it to a U.S. venture capital firm.

The plan outlines cancelling or restricting most of the company's former clients, effectively bringing the company's revenues to zero. Instead of the current 37 clients, the company will reduce its sales to only five clients: the Five Eyes Anglosphere intelligence alliance of New Zealand, the United States, Australia, Great Britain and Canada.

"The company would initially focus on defensive cyber products as part of its rebranding effort."^[11]

New Zealand Has to Get Out of Five Eyes If It Is to Have an Independent Foreign Policy

Five Eyes will only continue to get more important in the geopolitical game playing—indeed, there is talk of it being expanded to include Japan and Israel. What is New Zealand doing in it?

If you are judged by the company you keep, then it does not reflect well on us. More and more, New Zealand is being sucked into the vortex that is the U.S. Empire, an empire that is increasingly using Five Eyes as yet another weapon in its quest to retain global domination. It is well beyond time for New Zealand to get out of it. There is no possibility of us having an "independent foreign policy" until that happens.

What's More, Five Eyes Doesn't Even Do What It's Supposed to Do

Helen Clark was the Labour Prime Minister who ordered the New Zealand military into Afghanistan. Her reaction to the Taliban victory in 2021 was to call it "a catastrophic failure of intelligence in Western foreign policy."



Prime Minister Helen Clark during a visit to New Zealand Defence Force's Provincial Reconstruction Team in Bamyán province, west of Kabul in 2003. [Source: stuff.co.nz]

Yet, New Zealand is in the Western world's self-proclaimed elite intelligence club, namely Five Eyes. Which proved to be absolutely useless in seeing what was going on in Afghanistan, a country which had been an adventure playground for Western spies for twenty years. So, why is New Zealand in Five Eyes, what use is it to us (or anyone else, for that matter)? Time for New Zealand to get out, time for Five Eyes to become four eyes. Or less if the other countries follow suit.

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