# New Zealand's Syos Aerospace secures NZ$66.8 million UK defence drone contract



In Tauranga’s industrial zone, amid a cluster of nondescript warehouses, stands an unmarked large shed housing Syos Aerospace, a pioneering drone manufacturer at the forefront of cutting-edge transport technology. The company has recently secured contracts valued at NZ$66.8 million with the United Kingdom’s Ministry of Defence, signalling a significant milestone for the New Zealand-based robotics firm.

Samuel Vye, CEO and founder of Syos Aerospace, spoke to 1News’ current affairs programme Q+A just before departing for the UK, where the defence agreement was officially announced. While Vye refrained from disclosing the specific terms of the contract, he provided insight into the company’s operations and innovations. The Tauranga facility serves as Syos Aerospace’s development and research centre, where prototypes are rigorously tested before being manufactured in a factory located southeast of London.

Syos Aerospace specialises primarily in unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), with additional research and development efforts directed towards long-range uncrewed vessels, helicopters, and ground vehicles. Within the headquarters, prototypes and components are displayed along long workbenches, while engineers work meticulously on drone rotors and other systems. One notable prototype, described by Vye as resembling a missile with retro ‘Thunderbirds’ aesthetics, is designed to intercept and destroy other drones in flight.

The company has built a reputation for swiftly developing advanced drone systems tailored to client needs, which likely contributed to their success in securing contracts against some of the world’s largest aerospace manufacturers. Vye explained to Q+A, “It’s not about the specific drone. It’s about the capability that Syos Aerospace has in rapidly developing the next drone that’s needed by the customer... we’re always horizon scanning what the future looks like so at the drop of a hat we can spend six weeks and rapidly develop the next drone systems that a customer might currently need.”

This agility appeals to clients such as the UK Ministry of Defence, especially in the context of emerging defence technologies. The agreement was highlighted during a recent visit by UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer and New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon to a military base in the west of England, where they viewed Syos drones displayed amidst troops training to support Ukraine. Sir Keir Starmer, while announcing a new UK-New Zealand defence co-operation agreement, made special mention of Syos Aerospace and confirmed that the drone deal is intended to bolster Ukraine’s defence capabilities.

Addressing the use of drones in warfare, Vye emphasised that Syos Aerospace does not equip its drone systems with weaponry. “We don’t stick weapons on any of our drone systems,” he told Q+A. He added, “So we stay away from that controversial subject so all our systems are set up as surveillance, cargo systems to be multi role, multi use by our customers.” When questioned about the potential for their drones to serve as platforms for armament, Vye remarked, “I guess a Toyota Hilux provides a platform to be armed,” highlighting a deliberate stance on the unarmed nature of their products.

Looking ahead, Syos Aerospace is keen to participate in future tenders issued by the New Zealand Ministry of Defence, which has earmarked between NZ$200 million and NZ$450 million for drone acquisitions focused on maritime and security surveillance as well as combat roles, according to the recently released Defence Capability Plan.

Beyond military applications, Vye highlighted the wide-ranging potential of drone technologies. Syos is actively developing long-range aerial drones and unmanned surface vessels (USVs) to patrol and surveil New Zealand’s extensive exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Their multifunctional systems also have significant utility in conservation, fire fighting, and search and rescue operations. Reflecting on the evolving landscape of drone usage, Vye said, “Imagine numerous swarming drone systems in the sky, on the ground, in the sea. The low cost, high volume, mass application of drones is really the future.”

Syos Aerospace’s work represents a notable intersection of advanced robotics technology and international defence collaboration, demonstrating the innovative capabilities emerging from New Zealand’s technology sector. The contracts with the UK Ministry of Defence underscore the growing global demand for agile and adaptable drone systems, while the company’s continued development suggests an expanding role for unmanned vehicles in both military and civilian applications.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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2. <https://www.1news.co.nz/2025/04/27/inside-the-tauranga-drone-company-with-a-66m-uk-defence-contract/> - This article confirms the UK Ministry of Defence contract with Syos Aerospace, worth NZ$66.8 million, and describes the Tauranga facility as a development and research hub. It also highlights the company's diverse unmanned vehicle products.
3. <https://syos-aerospace.com/about-us/> - This webpage explains that Syos Aerospace is a rapidly expanding robotics company, specializing in utilitarian-uncrewed vehicles across various domains, which aligns with the description of their innovative products.
4. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2025/04/24/7509051/> - This article reports on the UK’s purchase of SYOS Aerospace drones for Ukraine, highlighting the international cooperation aspect of Syos’ operations and impact on defence collaborations.
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7. <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMiogFBVV95cUxNNVlQeGRSOUVCcEFvS0c1amZXRGJPSUVtMUFLTUF6R3Q3QjEyaEgxNS1zZHdhamFiS2U3cmJtc3VRUjRuaGplbUlESVNDR0RjM1NKNmtOZGVxTzZmTHZtUjZuRnpIWE1LdHQ0T1VObUZLdFltOXdmWnVkMTRXUy1ZOFloM2RHam9iTWk1S3RfMURHSjB3TnFQUnZVcjhZWkp5M0E?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data