



OIA-2019-3506

// July 2019

s. 9(2)(a)
s. 9(2)(a) @rnz.co.nz

Dear s. 9(2)(a)

I refer to your further email of 7 May 2019, requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), the following:

...any documents or reports produced since 2001 about training people with regard to other cultures and religions. If there is specific training regarding culture or religion, including but not limited to tolerance and acceptance of those cultures or religions, RNZ requests all information about the training.

The scope of your request has been limited to a definition of “other” to mean those cultures or religions not commonly associated with New Zealand.

Cultural and language training is provided to personnel deploying internationally. The provision of this training is outsourced to Victoria University of Wellington and the Manukau Institute of Technology. This training focuses on the important cultural considerations for deployed personnel and some basic language. The objectives of these courses are: to understand key cultural aspects of the country or area; gain confidence to interact with the local populace; learning to pronounce basic words and say basic greetings in the host language.

Information relating to these courses from Victoria University and the Manukau Institute of Technology has been provided in confidence to the NZDF, and is therefore withheld in full in accordance with section 9(2)(ba)(i) of the OIA. The public interest in receiving this information does not outweigh the reasons to withhold it in this instance.

Appraisal documentation related to the training is withheld in full in order to ensure the continued provision of free and frank opinions on the courses. These opinions and observations are invaluable in helping to ensure the delivery of high quality and relevant training. This is in accordance with section 9(2)(g)(i) of the OIA.

A Headquarters Joint Forces New Zealand Minute titled *Cultural Lessons on Training the Iraqi Army* is withheld in full in accordance with section 6(a) of the OIA as it contains specific information relating to the Iraqi Army. The following is a summary of the contents:

Training Iraqi armed forces is a rewarding experience. Whilst the information above is a guidance, it is impossible to cover all eventualities and situations. We have to understand and respect that their culture is so very different to our own. Most importantly, as potential guests of their country this can often be forgotten at our peril. Solid friendships can be made amongst the Iraqi officers, soldiers and local Sheikhs whose depth of warmth is rarely experienced in NZ. Cultural understanding, humility and above all patience are essential attributes for all members and underlying respect for their rules and customs will help forgiveness of occasional transgressions.

Some other documentation regarding training on culture or religion is enclosed. Information relating to a particular case study is withheld as its release would likely prejudice the international relations of the Government of New Zealand. This is in accordance with section 6(a) of the OIA.

You also requested the following regarding psychological screening:

...information about [psychological] reports conducted on staff. How many psychological reports were conducted prior to people joining the army, and how many were conducted prior to sending someone overseas on duty, between 2017 and today. RNZ would like that compared with the number of people joining the army, and the number of people sent overseas over that time period.

Pre-Enlistment Psychological Screening

During the recruitment process, medical screening is undertaken prior to an individual joining the NZDF. Psychological reports (from a general practitioner, clinical psychologist or if necessary a psychiatrist) are requested for approximately 15% of enlistment candidates.

From 1 January 2017 to 31 May 2019, 1108¹ candidates joined the NZ Army.

Pre-Deployment Psychological Screening

For the purposes of your request, “*sending someone overseas on duty*” has been defined as deploying personnel on international operations.

Psychological screening for the selection of personnel to deploy on international operations is not universally conducted. There are only two operations for which it is currently a prerequisite: Operation ANTARCTICA and Operation SUDDEN (in South Sudan).

In 2017, of a total 919 NZDF personnel deployed to all missions, the required screening for these two operations accounted for 124 psychological reports. In 2018, of a total 1,139 NZDF personnel deployed to all missions, the required screening for these two operations accounted for 139 psychological reports.

¹ This figure does not include lateral enlistments, those who may have joined the Reserve Forces, or personnel transferred from another Service.

Outside of Operations ANTARCTICA and SUDDEN, if a medical officer identified any issue with regard to the mental stability of an individual during the pre-deployment medical check, they would contact the Directorate of Psychology for referral. Pre-deployment psychological screening for these individuals is not conducted without the approval of the Director, Directorate of Psychology

Because of the personal and confidential nature of this information, however, detail on individual pre-deployment psychological screening is only held on that person's medical files. Providing the number of additional NZDF personnel whose overseas deployment was subject to psychological screening, for the period specified and across all operations, would therefore require a detailed search of nearly 1,800 individual medical files. Accordingly, this aspect of your request is declined in accordance with section 18(f) of the OIA.

You have the right, under section 28(3) of the OIA, to ask an Ombudsman to review my response to your request.

Yours sincerely



A.J. WOODS
Air Commodore
Chief of Staff HQNZDF

Enclosures:

1. Religions in the South Pacific training script
2. Religions in the South Pacific PowerPoint presentation
3. Front Line Report – Cultural Awareness

FRONT LINE REPORT

SER 3.0 : CULTURAL AWARENESS

PROBLEM: CULTURAL AWARENESS

We are often asked to respond to situations that are not of our making and often we do not have all the background details. We need to know how to shape the will and intentions of local people, partners and allies, as well as local religious, economic and political institutions. We need to be sensitive to how our words and actions may be perceived by others.

ANALYSIS

Although Kiwis respect other cultures in a way that is arguably unique, there are times when attitudes toward other national, religious and tribal cultures can be misunderstood and misinterpreted. Gestures and actions need to be appropriate to the culture of the country we operate in to facilitate successful interactions. If we get these wrong then it can destabilise any attempt to gain support from a local populace and could discredit previous activities that might have been successful.

CONCLUSION

Cultural understanding will help you engage with locals in a manner which will facilitate trusted working relationships and elicit hints, tips, information and intelligence. Cultural understanding is a force multiplier in operational engagements and a proven support mechanism to all aspects of counter insurgency.

RELATIONSHIPS ARE KEY

Taking the time to develop an understanding of the culture will assist in establishing good working relationships and is critical in our ability to conduct operations. NZDF operates in an increasingly complex environment where the line between friend and adversary can be blurred. A good understanding of the culture of the local population will enable us to recognise when behaviour changes indicating a potential change in threat.

CASE STUDY: s. 6(a)

s. 6(a)



KEY LESSONS

- Don't take the culture for granted – learn what you can before you deploy
- Talk to other personnel about what worked for them when they deployed
- Be observant of what constitutes normal behaviour and when changes in behaviour can indicate that something is amiss
- Pass on your insights to other personnel. Write these up as a Lesson Learned
- Try not to speak too quickly or use slang – sometimes this confuses even our allies
- Try not to criticise local people in public. Discuss concerns privately
- Names of people and places can often be spelt differently by different people – two apparently different people with similar names may be the same person
- Be aware that locals may perceive you as an occupying force
- Visual messages are powerful. Actions speak louder than words
- You cannot earn respect without showing respect
- Don't judge another culture in the context of your own. Be observant about what constitutes normal behaviour in the culture and when changes in behaviour occur it can indicate that something is amiss