



Headquarters  
New Zealand Defence Force  
Defence House  
Private Bag 39997  
Wellington Mail Centre  
Lower Hutt 5045  
New Zealand

OIA-2021-4021

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Valerie Morse  
[fyi-request-14792-399bcf9b@requests.fyi.org.nz](mailto:fyi-request-14792-399bcf9b@requests.fyi.org.nz)

Dear Valerie Morse

I refer to your request of 1 March 2021, under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), for the following:

1. *The number of soldiers, and number of & type of equipment NZ has committed to participation in Exercise Talisman Sabre in 2021, if any.*

The global impact of COVID-19 remains dynamic and any final decision on participation in international activities will include an assessment of prevailing COVID-19 risks. A commitment to Exercise Talisman Sabre has yet to be confirmed but, at this stage, the New Zealand Defence Force intends to send 16 personnel: 10 from the New Zealand Army and six from the Royal New Zealand Air Force.

2. *The estimated costs of NZDF participation.*

The estimated cost for the 16 personnel (excluding salaries) is approximately \$136,000 (\$8500 per person). This is to cover allowances, overseas travel and accommodation, associated quarantine costs and sundry expenses.

3. *What Covid-19 planning/risk assessment in relation to this exercise is being done.*

COVID-19 health measures are subject to change both in New Zealand and in the host country (Australia). Current planning, however, includes the following measures for all participating personnel:

- Standard pre-deployment health criteria are to be met.
- Personnel will be fully vaccinated with the Pfizer vaccine prior to deployment.
- Pre-deployment training will include preventative COVID-19 health measures to reinforce New Zealand and Australian Government requirements.

- Prior to deployment, COVID-19 PCR testing with a negative result is to be returned no earlier than 72 hours before departing New Zealand, and all personnel must travel with a New Zealand Government-issued COVID-19-free assessment letter.
- Sufficient Personal Protective Equipment will be issued to all personnel.
- Pre-deployment inspections in New Zealand will be conducted by the Australian Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment and again, in Australia, prior to returning to New Zealand.
- Daily health self-screening and reporting.
- Use of contact tracing (electronic or paper-based) will occur throughout the exercise.
- Movement restrictions will be in place with no local leave or unnecessary movement while in Australia.
- All personnel returning from Australia will isolate in a Managed Isolation and Quarantine Facility for 14 days and undergo standard COVID-19 nasal swab assessments as required by New Zealand's Ministry of Health.

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

Yours sincerely



**AJ WOODS**  
Air Commodore  
Chief of Staff HQNZDF