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A16645071

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Cole Lions

fyi-request-16900-815fb915@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Cole Lions

Official information request

I refer to your Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) request dated 26 September 2021 in which you asked:

Does any New Zealand government authority currently employ, either directly or outsource Internet trolls or fake social media account farms in order to manipulate public opinion through social media comment sections? I.E, groups of individuals or companies whose purpose is to make social media posts and their content appear either popular or unpopular by spamming social media comments and reply's with positive or negative posts.

If any authority directly employs people to do this:

Which authority does?

How many accounts does it use?

How many employees does it have?

What is their budget?

If this is outsourced:

Who is it outsourced to?

What does this cost?

Please note that as explained in our email to you of 27 September 2021, the GCSB can only respond in relation to our information, we cannot provide a response on behalf of other departments.

Response to your request

In response to your request, I can advise you that the GCSB does not employ "internet trolls or fake social media account farms in order to manipulate public opinion through social media comment sections". Therefore the remainder of your request is refused under section 18(e) of the OIA, as the information requested does not exist.

The work of the GCSB

I thought it might be useful to explain the work of the GCSB.

The GCSB operates under the Intelligence and Security Act 2017 (ISA). The GCSB's objectives and functions are set out in the ISA. Our two primary functions are:

- To collect, analyse and report intelligence, primarily foreign intelligence, in accordance with the priorities set by the Government; and
- To provide information assurance and cyber security services to New Zealand's organisations of national significance.

The priorities set by the Government are the National Security and Intelligence Priorities (NSIPs). The NSIPs outline key areas of national security interest to the New Zealand government. A list of the current NSIPs can be found online on the dpmc.govt.nz website, and include risks to: the environment, foreign interference, global economy, emerging technology, malicious cyber activity, regional stability, space, and organised crime.

The ISA imposes stringent requirements for GCSB to obtain intelligence warrants and other authorisations. A Type 1 warrant is issued for the purpose of collecting information about or to do anything directly in relation to New Zealanders. A Type 2 is for activities done for other purposes. GCSB puts a significant amount of resources into ensuring proposed warrants meet the high standards required by law, the Minister, and the Commissioners of Intelligence Warrants. The significant effort required and the high standards imposed mean that GCSB only seeks intelligence warrants for compelling reasons.

Our work is further guided by Ministerial Policy Statements (MPSs), which set out principles that the GCSB must have regard to when making any decision or taking any action. The current MPSs can be found online at www.nzic.govt.nz/legislation.

The GCSB is also subject to robust external oversight to help ensure New Zealanders have confidence in the work we do. The Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security (IGIS) is a statutory officer that provides assurance to the New Zealand public that the activities of the GCSB are lawful and proper. The IGIS's work involves conducting inquiries into GCSB activities. The Inspector-General has challenged GCSB's views of some aspects of the ISA. More information about the IGIS can be found online at IGIS.govt.nz.

I trust that this information is of use to you.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact information@gcsb.govt.nz.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely



Andrew Hampton

Te Tumu Whakarae mō Te Tira Tiaki

Director-General, Government Communications Security Bureau