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OIA-2023-4688

21 June 2023

M Williams

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Dear M Williams

I refer to your email of 6 April 2023 requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), the following over the last three years:

How many personnel have had their security status lapse.

How many personnel have lost their security clearance

How many personnel have had their security clearance downgraded.

How many personnel currently serving have not had a security clearance for more than 12 months

Of those personnel who have either lost their security clearance or have had it lapse how many still have access to restricted information

Can you please provide the information in a table format showing firstly nominal numbers then as a percentage of total service. Please also break this down by service ie Army, Navy and Airforce with a total for NZDF.

The number of personnel in the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF), and their associated National Security Clearances (NSC), fluctuates on a daily basis as new personnel and staff are enlisted or employed respectively, and others are released from the organisation.

Information on the government's Protective Security Requirements are publically available on <https://protectivesecurity.govt.nz>.

In accordance with Defence Force Instruction (DFI) 20.5 Personnel Security, a NSC is granted to NZDF personnel and staff following a favourable vetting assessment and recommendation provided by the New Zealand Security and Intelligence Service. As of 11 May 2023, 29 individuals (or 0.2% of the total number of Regular Force personnel and civilian staff) had time-expired NSC for the following reasons:

- Four NSC suspended pending outcomes of disciplinary or criminal investigation. Three of these suspensions were for more than 12 months;
- Three seeking release from the NZDF and not renewing NSC. Two of these were for more than 12 months;
- 10 renewals of NSC awaiting outcomes. Five of these were for more than 12 months;
- 12 renewals not submitted. Seven of these were for more than 12 months

In the last three years, five individuals had their NSC cancelled. Given the low number of individuals concerned, a breakdown of the data by Service will not be provided in accordance with sections 6(a) and 9(2)(a) of the OIA.

As per DFI 20.5, decisions regarding access to NZDF information, assets, or Defence Areas are based on the 'need-to-know', 'need-to-share' and 'need-to-hold' principles. As a result, the NZDF must be

satisfied that the person has a legitimate need for access to carry out their duties and that each person holds the required NSC. Where a NSC has time-expired, personnel and staff may access up to RESTRICTED-level information on the basis of their NZ Police Vetting Report. Access to information classified higher than the RESTRICTED-level is not authorised until their NSC has been renewed. Those who had their NSCs cancelled had no access to information at any level, and those who had their NSC suspended were not authorised to access RESTRICTED-level (or higher) NZDF information for the duration of the suspensions.

You have the right, under section 28(3) of the OIA, to ask an Ombudsman to review this response to your request. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that responses to official information requests are proactively released where possible. This response to your request will be published shortly on the NZDF website, with your personal information removed.

Yours sincerely

AJ WOODS

Air Commodore
Chief of Staff HQNZDF