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**MANATŪ KAUPAPA
WAONGA**
NEW ZEALAND
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

2 August 2024

Matthew
fyi-request-27563-b905ae6a@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Matthew

RESPONSE TO YOUR OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT REQUEST

Thank you for your email of 10 July 2024, in which you requested, pursuant to the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

All information or advice dated since 2020 regarding the exploration of the reestablishment of any fighter wing squadrons that were deestablished in 2001. Additionally, I am requesting any information or advice dated since 2020 regarding the acquisition of drones for the NZDF.

In response to the first part of your request, the Ministry of Defence has not received or produced any advice regarding the reestablishment of the RNZAF Air Combat Squadron since 2020. This part of your request is therefore declined under section 18(e) of the Act, as the requested information does not exist.

With regard to the second part of your request, the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) has utilised Uncrewed Aerial Systems (UAS), or drones, for a number of years, primarily for training and trial purposes. In some instances the procurement process will be managed by Integrated Project Teams (joint NZDF and Ministry of Defence projects), or through the NZDF Procurement Assurance Board, utilising existing operational budgets.

In the instance, whereby the Ministry of Defence takes the lead in the procurement process it will undertake research into the range of procurement options available, prepare whole of life costings, purchase options, and work with the NZDF to determine the best way to integrate a major defence capability into its operations. Purchasing of capability is done following the Government Procurement Rules and Treasury Better Business Case Processes. Further information can be found in the links below:

- Government Procurement Rules: <https://procurement.govt.nz/procurement/principles-charter-and-rules/government-procurement-rules/>
- Treasury Better Business Case Processes: <https://treasury.govt.nz/information-and-services/state-sector-leadership/investment-management/better-business-cases>

Since 2020, the Ministry has been in the process of managing projects which relate in part to the acquisition of UAS:

- The Network Enabled Army (NEA) Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance project has been in the process of delivering new UAS capabilities to the New Zealand Army for operational use.
- The Maritime Helicopter Replacement (MHR) Project, which is exploring options for medium naval helicopters and UAS.

Both projects have generated a large amount of information and correspondence since inception, which would require considerable time and resources to collate. As a result the information that you have requested regarding the acquisition of drones for the NZDF is declined in accordance with section 18(f) of the Act, as the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation and research.

Some information regarding the acquisition and use of UAS in the NZDF is publicly available on the Ministry of Defence website. This includes:

- The 2019 Defence Capability Plan, which identifies UAS as a means of supplementing and enhancing NZDF's existing air surveillance capabilities: <https://defence.govt.nz/publications/defence-capability-plan-2019>
- The 2022 Major Projects Report, which provides details on the approval of the NEA Intelligence, Reconnaissance and Surveillance business case, and the requirements the new capability is expected to fulfil: <https://defence.govt.nz/publications/major-projects-report-2022>
- The NEA Intelligence, Reconnaissance and Surveillance project page, which includes updates on the current status of the programme, and related links: <https://defence.govt.nz/our-work/equip/capability-projects/network-enabled-army-nea-isr-reconnaissance-and-surveillance>
- Maritime Helicopter Replacement Request for Information: <https://gets.govt.nz/MD/ExternalTenderDetails.htm?id=27289912>

Further information on the use of UAS can be found on the NZDF website: <https://nzdf.mil.nz>.

Finally, work is underway on the development of a new Defence Capability Plan which, once finalised, will outline the Government's future investment intentions for Defence to 2040. Once approved by Cabinet, planned investment will be staged and individual business cases will need to be developed.

Under section 28(3) of the Act you have the right to request the Ombudsman to investigate and review this response.

Yours sincerely



Jon Finderup, A/Dep Sec CD, for

Sarah Minson
Deputy Secretary, Capability Delivery