



AIRWAYS

12 March 2026

Stan Smith

Sent by email: fyi-request-33608-8d444f3d@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Stan,

Official Information Act Request

We refer to your official information request, which was transferred to us by New Zealand Police on 2 March 2026, for the following information:

Dear New Zealand Police,

To whom it may concern,

I am making this request under the Official Information Act 1982 for any official information held by your department relating to the presence, operation, testing, monitoring, or authorisation of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), drones, satellites, aerial sensor platforms, or other coordinated aerial or space-based systems operating over Invercargill and elsewhere in New Zealand.

For approximately five years, I have continuously observed and recorded persistent aerial activity in the Invercargill area. This activity is ongoing, structured, and repeatable. I have captured extensive video footage over this period using night-vision recording equipment, documenting objects and light sources operating at varying altitudes, including low-altitude activity below conventional aircraft levels.

The recorded activity demonstrates coordinated movement and behaviour consistent with a networked system of aerial platforms. The scale and persistence of this activity resemble a distributed system of drones, satellites, and nodes operating in concert, and it does not correspond with known civilian aviation or recreational drone activity.

I am seeking clarification as to whether this activity relates to authorised government operations, contracted third-party programmes, trials, research initiatives, or commercial technologies operating within or over New Zealand airspace.

In particular, this request includes any information held by your agency concerning:

Any involvement, authorisation, monitoring, or awareness of aerial or satellite-based systems operated by, supplied by, or associated with SpaceX, Starlink, Elon Musk-controlled entities, or

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their contractors; Any agreements, partnerships, approvals, briefings, correspondence, or assessments involving foreign aerospace or technology companies operating aerial or space-based platforms affecting New Zealand airspace; Coordinated or networked UAV or drone operations, including low-altitude aerial platforms; Aerial surveillance systems, sensor networks, or autonomous or semi-autonomous technologies; The use of telecommunications infrastructure, including 5G or related systems, in support of aerial or space-based platforms; Any reports, assessments, correspondence, or incident records relating to persistent or unexplained aerial activity reported by members of the public or other agencies.

I hold a substantial volume of recorded footage documenting this activity and am prepared to supply this material if it assists in determining whether relevant information is held by your agency.

If this request, or any part of it, is more closely connected with the functions of another department or agency, I request that it be transferred in accordance with section 14 of the Official Information Act.

If any information is withheld, please clearly state the grounds for refusal relied upon under the Act.

Please provide the requested information in electronic form where possible.

Regards Stan Smith

Due to the extensive work required to collate and process large volumes of surveillance and drone flight data from multiple systems, we are refusing your request under section 18(f) of the OIA. Processing would require an extensive and complex search and extraction process, totalling approximately 182 hours for surveillance data and an additional eight hours for archived drone flight records. Meeting the request would therefore require a significant allocation of specialist staff time and would unreasonably interfere with Airways' ability to carry out its other operational responsibilities.

We considered charging or extending the timeframe as per section 18A of the OIA, but even at the maximum charge of \$14,332 and a six-month extended period, the workload remains excessive.

Consultation under section 18B of the OIA has not resolved these difficulties. As noted in our email of 3 March 2026, we invited you to narrow the scope or clarify your request to reduce costs and complexity, but no revised request has been received.

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.

If you wish to discuss this decision with us, please feel free to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Naoka Iwase

Legal Counsel/OIA Advisor