

Hon James Meager

Minister for the South Island
Minister for Hunting and Fishing
Minister for Youth
Associate Minister of Transport



24 JUL 2026

Marcus

JMOIA-138

By email: fyi-request-34997-dde6ad71@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Marcus,

Thank you for your email of 28 June 2026, requesting the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

"A copy of the following advice which you would have received from the Ministry of Transport in your capacity as Associate Minister of Transport"

- OC260148 Aide Memoire: Observing Indo-Pacific Regional Information Sharing Platform Virtual Submarine Cable Break Exercise"

The document requested is released to you with some information withheld under the following sections of the Act:

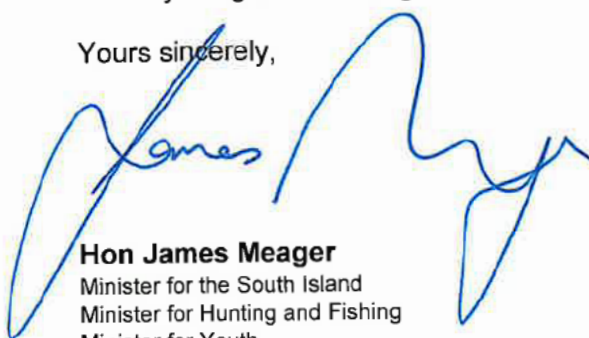
- 6(a) as release would be likely to prejudice the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the New Zealand Government
- 9(2)(a) to protect the privacy of natural persons

With regard to the information that has been withheld under section 9 of the Act, I am satisfied that the reasons for withholding the information at this time are not outweighed by public interest considerations that would make it desirable to make the information available.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review of this response by the Ombudsman, in accordance with section 28(3) of the Act. The relevant details can be found on the Ombudsman's website www.ombudsman.parliament.nz

Thank you again for writing.

Yours sincerely,



Hon James Meager

Minister for the South Island
Minister for Hunting and Fishing
Minister for Youth
Associate Minister of Transport

AIDE MEMOIRE

6 March 2026

OC260148

Hon James Meager

Associate minister of Transport (Lead Minister for Maritime Security)

AIDE MEMOIRE: OBSERVING THE INDO-PACIFIC REGIONAL INFORMATION SHARING VIRTUAL SUBMARINE CABLE BREAK EXERCISE
Purpose

- 1 Provide background information to support your observation of a maritime security-based regional exercise at Pastoral House on Tuesday 10 March, 12:15pm – 12:45pm.

New Zealand uses the European Union's (EU) information sharing platform for maritime security

- 2 New Zealand uses the EU-funded Indo-Pacific Regional Information Sharing (IORIS) platform for maritime coordination and information sharing. IORIS is part of the EU's Critical Maritime Routes (CRIMARIO) project. The Ministry of Transport joined CRIMARIO in 2024 on behalf of the 11 Maritime Security Oversight Committee (MSOC) agencies. Over 150 agencies from 55 countries already use this platform. Users are shown in Annex 1.

What is the regional exercise programme (REGEX)?

- 3 REGEX is a virtual tabletop exercise run by CRIMARIO to practise regional maritime safety and security coordination. Scenarios typically include search and rescue or cross-border maritime security events. You observed a search and rescue scenario in May 2025 (OC250358 refers).

You directed officials to practise a submarine cable break

- 4 Following your direction in October 2025 to strengthen critical underwater infrastructure (CUI) resilience (OC250895 refers), the MSOC Secretariat has worked with CRIMARIO to design a REGEX scenario involving disruption to the Southern Cross NEXT submarine cable connecting New Zealand with Australia and Fiji (refer Figure s 6(a))

We will update your office on attendees on the morning of the exercise.



Fig 1: Location of the Southern Cross NEXT cable.

- 5 The REGEX on 10 March is the first time New Zealand will have exercised a submarine cable break and is also the first time globally that IORIS will be used for this. It also supports the EU's recently declared priority of improving global cable security through 'cable diplomacy' (i.e. engaging with overseas partners to cooperatively improve our responses to disruptions). New Zealand and Fiji being the first countries to do this sends multiple important signals internationally, including:

- 5.1 (R) New Zealand works regionally to improve Pacific security, s 6(a)

- 5.2 New Zealand takes CUI security and resilience seriously.

- 5.3 (R) New Zealand has the capability to detect vessels that impact our CUI. s 6(a)

- 5.4 New Zealand values its partnerships with the EU and supports the use of IORIS to improve Indo-Pacific maritime security.

What is your involvement in the REGEX?

- 6 The REGEX will be displayed on a TV screen and officials will explain how the scenario works, and answer any questions you have about the IORIS platform and how maritime security agencies benefit from using it. Officials attending will include:

- 6.1 Gavin Birrell, National Strategic Coordinator Maritime Security, MSOC Secretariat.
6.2 Mike Dale, Operations Manager, National Maritime Coordination Centre.

Ms Zuzanna Bieniuk, EU Deputy Head of Mission and Counsellor, will also attend as CRIMARIO is an EU-led initiative

- 7 Ms Bieniuk has offered to invite representatives from a few EU Embassies. We will confirm these attendees on the morning of the exercise.

We propose preparing a social media update for you to consider posting, and to be shared by the EU delegation and CRIMARIO team on their social media pages

- 8 This post could include a picture of you observing the REGEX with the Deputy Head of Mission and be captioned "Great to join with the government of Fiji and Southern Cross Cables Ltd to exercise New Zealand's first submarine cable break. This simulated, virtual exercise was hosted on the EU-funded IORIS platform. Subsea cables carry 99 percent of our international data, so practising how we respond to incidents is vital for resilience. Proud to see our maritime security agencies working with partners to protect the lifelines that keep New Zealand and our region connected."

Contacts

Name	Telephone	First contact
Gavin Birrell, National Strategic Coordinator for Maritime Security	s 9(2)(a)	
Josh Bullivant, Policy Lead Maritime Security		✓

Annex 1: Partner nations using IORIS

