

OIA-2017-2888

14 November 2017

Mr Reuben Tilley

fyi-request-6791-5596e702@requests.org.nz

Dear Mr Tilley

I refer to your email of 3 November 2017 requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), *documents for the defence force 'Project Seal' in the 1940's*.

You added that the project was a "tsunami bomb", that it was meant to simulate a natural disaster, and that it was tested in the Hauraki Gulf. You stated that you had particular interest in correspondence between New Zealand and the United States and the rationale for New Zealand's involvement in the enterprise.

An old Navy Department file (Miscellaneous: Inventions: Seal Development) dating from the period 1944 to 1952, is attached. It is unlikely that the Defence Force will have retained any other records associated with Project Seal, although a request will be circulated internally to learn if that is indeed the case.

A search on the Archives New Zealand Archway online catalogue, however, using Project and Seal as keywords, brings up files including the Project's final report [Archives NZ R1768240]. *The Final Report of Project "Seal"*, by Professor T.D.J. Leech, School of Engineering, Auckland University College, 18 December 1950.

The same keywords entered into Google will locate articles from the *New Zealand Herald*, the *National Business Review*, the *Telegraph* and other publications. There is also a Wikipedia entry, although it is arguably less clearly-written than it might have been. Online, there are also articles that discuss the practicability of bomb-triggered tsunamis in publications such as *Business Insider Australia*, or *Real Clear Defense*.

Essentially, the Project Seal experiments were conducted to discover whether coastlines could be inundated to reduce Allied casualties sustained in the bloody frontal assaults on Japanese-held Pacific Islands. The physics of water displacement and of energy pulse-generation in water suggest that the experimenters were unjustifiably optimistic.

I trust that the publicly-available information which I have mentioned will satisfy your request for information. I shall write to you again, should any non-public papers remain in New Zealand Defence Force archived files.

Yours sincerely



G.R. SMITH

Commodore, RNZN
Chief of Staff HQNZDF