



19 February 2013

Suzette Dawson
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Dear Ms Dawson

Official Information Act Request

I refer to your email of 24 December 2012 in which you requested the following information:

1) *The nature of the operational use, specifically the type of suspected offences (e.g. drugs, or otherwise) involved in the investigations.*

Answer:

On 9 July 2012 Wellington Police were called to a scene in Mount Victoria where a woman had been found in an unresponsive state. Ambulance staff attended and confirmed that she was deceased.

The scene was on the side of steeply sloping bank that was mostly covered in scrub that reached up to approximately 2m in height and was surrounded by mature pine trees.

The matter was treated as suspicious and the scene treated as a crime scene. Late on the 9th of July 2012 out of concerns for the preservation of evidence the deceased woman was removed.

On the 10th of July 2012 it was decided that should the matter be found to be a homicide it was desirable that the scene be photographed from the air to show the remoteness of the location and the steepness of the bank.

Because of the overhanging trees it was decided by those at the scene that it would not be safe to use a helicopter for such purposes. The remoteness of the scene also prohibited the use of a ladder from a fire appliance or other possible solution.

The decision was made to contract a commercial operator who had a number of unmanned aerial vehicles so that the photographs could be taken. The contractor chosen had experience in operating the unmanned aerial vehicles in film production and had an unmanned aerial vehicle that could also carry a digital camera.

This matter is pending an inquest in the Coroner's Court.

Operations Group is aware of one other instance where Police has contracted an external company to provide aerial imagery taken by UAV to assist a Police investigation. Police cannot provide further details about this investigation as the matter is currently before the Court.

2. The outcome of the use of the drones (e.g. whether it resulted in actionable intelligence/charges being laid/etc)

Answer:

Both uses resulted in imagery that assisted Police to conclude and investigation, with one resulting in a prosecution.

3. Whether any sub-contracting or outsourced company or organisation was involved in controlling the drones or whether they were controlled directly by NZ Police staff

Answer:

On both occasions described, the drone capability was outsourced.

If you are not satisfied with my response to your request you have the right to complain to the Office of the Ombudsman and seek an investigation and review of my decision.

Yours sincerely



Barry Taylor
National Manager: Operations