



OIA-2018-3162

31 July 2018

Mr Peter King

fyi-request-8210-a636c103@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Mr King

I refer to your email of 3 July 2018 requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), information about No. 5 Squadron's record of detecting naval submarines outside of exercises since it was equipped with the P3K Orion aircraft in 1967.

In particular, you stated/asked that:

For the purposes of [your] request:

1) *A naval submarine is a military underwater craft or suspected military underwater craft not engaged in a military exercise, or visiting New Zealand, at the invitation of the government of New Zealand.*

2) *New Zealand waters are defined as anywhere within the bounds of the New Zealand Search and Rescue Region.*

3) *Timeframe. The time frame for this request is 1 January 1967 to 31 December 2010.*

4) *Detection status may be:*

Intercepted - It is observed and air to sea communication with the vessel was established

Identified - It is observed, it's position recorded and it is identified by its class or type

Suspected - It is observed, it's position recorded, and a sonar buoy was dropped to establish it is a craft of some sort.

Please supply a CSV file containing the following information:

A table of all No.5 Squadron submarine detection incidents logged in the above timeframe, formatted in columns with the following information:

Date

Latitude

Longitude

Detection status

Submarine Class (if known)

Operating Navy (if inferable from class).

Although there have been high-confidence detections of submarines throughout the operational history of the RNZAF P-3s, the Defence Force is unable to supply the precise information you have requested as a consequence of the disposal schedule for 5 Squadron documents.

The below table was prepared for an earlier request and summarises all non-exercise submarine detections that were either confirmed as submarines or assessed to be likely submarine contacts. Even though more detailed information would have been collected at

the time, it was disposed of after seven years as no tactical actions were taken as a result of the detections.

Date	Location	Detection Sensor	Classification Level	Submarine Identity
1970-1984	Northwest Pacific	visual & acoustics	Confirmed & Probable	Soviet
1971	NZ waters	radar, acoustics & visual	Confirmed	Soviet
1982	Tasman Sea	acoustics	Probable	Allied
1982	NZ waters	radar, acoustics & visual	Confirmed	Soviet
1985	Northeast of NZ	radar & acoustics	Possible	Soviet
1986	South Pacific	radar & acoustics	Probable	Soviet
1986	East of NZ	acoustics	Probable	Soviet
1986	South China Sea	radar, acoustics & visual	Confirmed	Soviet
1987	East of NZ	radar & acoustics	Possible	Soviet
1989	South China Sea	radar, acoustics & visual	Confirmed	Soviet
1989	Northeast Pacific	acoustics & visual	Confirmed	Allied
1991	Tasman Sea	radar & visual	Confirmed	Allied
1992	South Pacific	radar & acoustics	Probable	Allied
1998	South Pacific	radar & acoustics	Possible	Allied
1998	South Australian Bight	visual & acoustics	Confirmed	Allied

The classification levels are:

- Confirmed (certain submarine) – a contact that has been sighted and positively identified as a submarine.
- Probable Submarine – a contact that displays strong cumulative evidence of being a submarine.
- Possible Submarine – a contact on which the available information indicates the likely presence of a submarine.

More recently, information about submarine detections from the beginning of Financial Year 2010/11 to the present has not been recorded. RNZAF P-3s have not, and do not routinely search for submarines. Unless intelligence information is available to identify a submarine operating area, it would be quite impractical to conduct an effective search.

Although submarine detections were still being reported orally on occasion, non-exercise submarine detections have been largely unalerted and occurred during missions tasked for other purposes. These missions included the patrolling of New Zealand's Exclusive Economic Zone including fisheries surveillance, Northern Patrols of the EEZ's of some of our Pacific neighbours, border protection surveillance, some aerial reconnaissance, counter-piracy patrols overseas, regular search and rescue activities, and so on.

You have the right, under section 28(3) of the OIA, to ask an Ombudsman to review this response to your request.

Yours sincerely



G.R. SMITH
Commodore, RNZN
Chief of Staff HQNZDF