



Headquarters
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OIA-2022-4501

27 September 2022

[REDACTED]
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Dear [REDACTED]

I refer to your email of 29 August 2022 requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), the following:

- *Communications including all emails, briefings and reports to the Minister of Defence and all other ministers in the period of Jan. 15 to Feb. 15 on the New Zealand's Defence Force's ability to respond to the situation in Tonga and the availability of assets for the response?*
- *The titles of all the reports and briefing notes written by the NZ Defence Force and sent to the Minister of Defence during the period July 1 to Aug 29.*

At Enclosure One, find attached a note to the Minister of Defence of 20 January 2022. Certain information regarding our partners' military response is withheld in accordance with section 6(a) of the OIA. Where indicated, the name of an official is withheld in accordance with section 9(2)(g)(i) of the OIA, and their contact details are withheld in accordance with section 9(2)(a) of the OIA. The public interest in providing this information does not outweigh the reasons to withhold it in this instance.

The following are extracts from weekly updates sent 25 January 2022, 31 January 2022, 7 February 2022 and 14 February 2022. Threat assessment information is withheld in accordance with section 6(a) of the OIA.

Defence Weekly Report (week commencing 25 January 2022)

Operation PACIFIC RELIEF (Tonga)

- Approximately 84 percent of the Tongan population have been affected following the volcanic eruption and tsunami in Tonga on 15 January. Many buildings have been damaged or destroyed, and rainwater holdings, leafy crops, and infrastructure have been affected by ash fall. The main areas of damage are to the west of Tongatapu and the lower part of the Ha'apai Division. There are internally displaced persons from Mango, Fonoifua, and likely to be further numbers from Nomuka on Tongatapu. Priority needs have been assessed as water, food, shelter, the re-establishment of communications and local infrastructure including port facilities, medical centres, schools and churches.
- A Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) P-3K2 Orion aircraft provided initial damage assessments to the governments of Tonga and Fiji on 17 and 19 January.

Three C-130H Hercules aid flights have also taken place with the third flight being conducted on 27 January. This was also used for the repatriation of the British fatality to New Zealand. HMNZS WELLINGTON, with an SH-2G(I) Seasprite helicopter embarked, left for Tonga on 18 January. On arrival vital survey work was carried out confirming that the main port and approaches were safe for shipping. On completion of this task the ship and embarked crew have carried out further survey work on other ports.

- HMNZS AOTEAROA arrived shortly after WELLINGTON and commenced the offload of seven relief containers as well as fresh water. To date 415,000 litres of fresh water has been provided. AOTEAROA has also provided refuelling to United States (US), British, Tongan, French and Australian ships as well as WELLINGTON and HMNZS CANTERBURY. CANTERBURY arrived in Tonga on 26 January. On board are elements of the Deployable Joint Headquarters, an NH90 helicopter and the Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Task Unit. AOTEAROA departed Tonga on 27 January to move to Antarctica via New Zealand to deliver fuel to the New Zealand and US bases.
- NZDF personnel have / will deploy with Personal Protection Equipment and appropriate precautions will be taken to mitigate these risks. All aid provided in Tonga is being carried out in a contactless manner with deployed personnel receiving regular COVID-19 tests.
- Work is now progressing to a recovery phase. Deployed personnel are working closely with the Government of Tonga on how to support them in the near future and in the coming weeks whilst respecting their COVID protocols. The next planned NZDF C-130H flight is scheduled for 1 February.

Defence Weekly Report (week commencing 31 January 2022)

Operation PACIFIC RELIEF (Tonga) - Update

- In the past week HMNZS AOTEAROA, HMNZS CANTERBURY and a C-130H have continued to supply fresh water and deliver supplies, with the CANTERBURY taking over the AOTEAROA's command role on 26 January. HMNZS WELLINGTON continued its surveying and dive tasks and worked with the UK's HMS SPEY to facilitate Digicel technicians landing on Kao Island to restore communications infrastructure.
- The Tongan Government approved the offload of the CANTERBURY in Nuku'alofa over the weekend. This included relief supplies such as water, milk powder, tarpaulins, ladders, water pumps and various personal protective equipment. It was conducted under strict supervision using contactless procedures. Only essential offload personnel temporarily disembarked in order to facilitate the offloading of the aid supplies onto the wharf only. The supplies remain quarantined onshore for 72 hours before being picked up for distribution by Tongan authorities. CANTERBURY has continued the work started by the AOTEAROA in producing fresh water via desalination. The New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) has now delivered a combined total of over half a million litres of fresh water to the people of Tonga. The receipt of aid encountered a setback with the confirmation of two Tongan dock worker COVID-19 cases on 1 February (these cases are not linked to the New Zealand deployment). The NZDF will continue to manage activity around these restrictions.

- Australian assets remain in the area of operation. The USS SAMPSON and the SPEY have now departed. Japan's Osumi amphibious transport dock is expected on 7 February. China's WUZHISHAN dock loading ship and CHAGANHU large supply ship are expected to arrive between 13 and 16 February.
- Planning for the recovery phase in consultation with the Tongan Government is continuing. Planning is also in progress for a possible third party resupply of the WELLINGTON and CANTERBURY. The next C-130H flight scheduled for 5 February will deliver vaccines, COVID-19 tests and generators.

Defence Weekly Report (week commencing 07 February 2022)

Update on Tonga

- Efforts this week in support of the Kingdom of Tonga have been hampered by the outbreak of COVID-19 in Nuku'alofa, some community transmission of the virus, and poor weather. HMNZS CANTERBURY and HMNZS WELLINGTON have spent the latter part of the week in the vicinity of Nuku'alofa harbour, and continued to conduct surveys of port infrastructure, support the restoration of communications, and produce and deliver fresh water to Nuku'alofa. On Saturday 5 February a Royal New Zealand Air Force C-130H relief flight delivered vaccines and aid that were urgently required by the Government of Tonga.
- The United States, United Kingdom and French ships that were supporting the relief effort have now left Tonga for other tasks. The Japan Self Defence Force's OSUMI ship has arrived to offload aid before future tasking (possibly in the outer islands). Two Chinese People's Liberation Army ships (the WUZHISHAN, an amphibious dock loading ship, and the CHAGANHU, a 40,000 tonne supply ship) are estimated to arrive in Tonga on Monday 14 or Tuesday 15 February. The Australian Task Group aboard Australia's HMAS ADELAIDE will remain in the area until at least the end of February, and an Australian resupply ship HMAS SUPPLY is currently on route to provide logistic support to the Task Group.
- The New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) are currently working through resupply options for CANTERBURY and WELLINGTON. Officials have provided advice on the continued NZDF presence in Tonga noting reduced tasking and the NZDF drawdown options as the mission moves to longer term recovery and reconstruction.

Defence Weekly Report (week commencing 14 February 2022)

Operation PACIFIC RELIEF TONGA

- An RNZAF C-130H Hercules flight is planned for 18 February as a further contribution to Operation PACIFIC RELIEF. This will be the sixth fixed-wing transport force flight to Tonga as part of this operation. This flight is tasked to deliver approximately 6,800kgs of aid on behalf of MFAT and the Ministry of Health. The aid includes additional Pfizer vaccines, associated medical consumables, Rapid Antigen Kits and PPE. Additionally, the flight will deliver approximately 680kgs of other items, including Unimog repair parts being gifted to His Majesty's Armed Forces from the NZDF as part of the Mutual Assistance Programme, along with operational stores for the New Zealand Police Liaison Officers in Tonga.

As noted in the acknowledgement to you of 30 August 2022, a list of briefings to the Minister of Defence for the month of July is available on the Parliamentary website in response to the Question for Written Answer 27974 (2022). The list of briefings for the month of August is also available on the Parliamentary website in response to Question for Written Answer 31123 (2022).

You have the right, under section 28(3) of the OIA, to ask an Ombudsman to review this response to your request. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely



AJ WOODS

Air Commodore

Chief of Staff HQNZDF

Enclosure:

1. Note to Minister: Update on NZDF Initial Response to Tonga Volcanic Eruption and Tsunami



NEW ZEALAND DEFENCE FORCE

SUBMISSION TO MINISTER COVER SHEET¹

Title	NOTE TO MINISTER: UPDATE ON NZDF INITIAL RESPONSE TO TONGA VOLCANIC ERUPTION AND TSUNAMI				
Tracking No	NZDF Tracking #2022-008 <i>(for OCDF use only)</i>		Minister's Tracking # <i>(for Minister's office)</i>		
Importance of the Issue²	High		Moderate	X	Routine
Urgency for Attention/Sign-off	Moderate		Request ministerial response by: <i>Not required</i>		
Contacts	LTCOLs. 9(2)(g)(i)		Tel: s. 9(2)(a)		A/H: s. 9(2)(a)
			Tel:		A/H:
Purpose	This note is to inform you of New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) initial support to Tonga after the recent volcanic eruption and subsequent tsunami.				
Recommendations	<p>It is recommended that you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Note the NZDF is providing support to MFAT-led assistance efforts in response to the volcanic eruption and tsunami in Tonga under the guise of OPERATION PACIFIC RELIEF – TONGA. b. Note that support consists of: transporting supplies and equipment, surveying maritime approaches and wharves, aerial reconnaissance, and water supply. c. Note that due to Tonga's COVID 19 protocols, response efforts have centred on contactless assistance. The NZDF is prepared to provide land-based assistance if protocols are changed by Tonga. d. Note that this submission details the NZDF's initial humanitarian assistance and disaster response to the Tongan eruption and tsunami. Should requirements for longer term support arise then I will advise you of options to assist whilst continuing to meet NZDF's existing outputs. 				
MoD/NZDF Consultation³	MoD Consulted				
Minister's Comments					
Minister's Action	Signed/Noted/Agreed/Approved/Declined/Discussion required				
	Referred to:				
Minister's Signature				Date:	


 KR SHORT XO OCDF
 Air Marshal
 Chief of Defence Force
 20 January 2022

¹ To accompany documents to the Minister of Defence.

² Select appropriate level of importance.

³ Sheet not to exceed one page. Shaded areas to be completed.



Headquarters NZDF
Freyberg Building
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Wellington 5045
NEW ZEALAND

20 January 2022

Minister of Defence

UPDATE ON NZDF INITIAL RESPONSE TO TONGA VOLCANIC ERUPTION AND TSUNAMI

Purpose

1. This note is to inform you of New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) initial support to Tonga after the recent volcanic eruption and subsequent tsunami.

Background

2. On 15 January 2022, a significant eruption from Hunga Tonga Hunga Ha-apai underwater volcano occurred and generated a tsunami that impacted Tonga, Fiji, Vanuatu and parts of the coast lines of a number of nations around the wider Pacific. The volcanic eruption also resulted in significant ash fall across Tonga. These events have disrupted power, communications networks, shipping and aviation in Tonga, and created water and food shortages.

NZDF support to Tonga

3. The NZDF is providing support to MFAT-led assistance efforts, as follows, under the guise of OPERATION PACIFIC RELIEF – TONGA:

- a. 17 & 19 January – A P-3K2 aircraft flew two reconnaissance flights. The imagery and assessments have informed Tonga's recovery efforts. The second flight included Fiji's Lau Island group, and imagery was shared with the Fijian Government.
- b. 20 January – A C-130H aircraft delivered relief supplies to Fua'amoto Airport, Tongatapu. The next flight is planned for 22 January before the aircraft is redeployed for operations to Antarctica.
- c. 20 January – HMNZS WELLINGTON will arrive at Nuku'alofa in the early evening. The ship will conduct a dive and hydrographic survey of Vuna Wharf and approaches followed by other wharves prioritised by the Government of Tonga. An embarked Seasprite helicopter will conduct aerial reconnaissance and will be available to deliver relief supplies.
- d. 21 January – HMNZS AOTEAROA (ROA) will arrive at Nuku'alofa at approximately midday. The ship will provide drinking water, fuel and seven shipping containers of supplies. The ship has a COVID PCR test facility. ROA must depart Tonga on 24 January in order to complete scheduled Antarctica resupply of US and NZ bases.
- e. 21/22 January – HMNZS CANTERBURY (CAN) will be ready to deploy, after a period at sea testing and proving capabilities, whilst vehicles, equipment, and supplies for embarkation are consolidated at Devonport Naval Base. If a request to deploy the ship is received, the transit to Tonga will take 3 days. Two NH-90 Helicopters, an Army Engineering unit complete with heavy engineer equipment, and a command

element for the deployed NZDF forces will be embarked. The ship is also capable supplying water.

4. NZDF offers of support have been accepted by the Government of Tonga and formalised through two tasking notes from MFAT along with Government of Tonga diplomatic clearances.
5. Relief operations are funded from within baseline. MFAT is funding the provision of relief supplies and equipment.
6. Tonga's COVID border settings require significant periods of isolation which prohibits timely land-based assistance. As a result, the response has centred on contactless assistance. New Zealand and Australia have submitted protocols for the conduct of land-based operations designed to prevent COVID transmission, which may provide sufficient comfort for Tonga to permit land-based assistance. This would be delivered primarily through landing personnel and their equipment and supplies from CAN and could be supplemented by further flights from New Zealand.

Other partners' military response

7. NZDF and the Australian Defence Force (ADF) are cooperating closely to ensure response efforts are complimentary. Advice and coordination assistance is being provided to partner militaries wishing to assist Tonga. To date this has included the US, UK, France (including Pacific territories), Japan, Fiji, Malaysia, India and Thailand.
8. The ADF completed P-8A and C-130J reconnaissance flights on 17 and 19 January. On 20 January two C17 transport aircraft successfully landed in Tonga with supplies. HMAS ADELAIDE, a large amphibious ship, is expected to arrive in Tonga by the 26 January.

9. s. 6(a)

10. The US destroyer USS SAMPSON is intending to join ADF assistance efforts s. 6(a)

11. The Government of Japan has allocated over USD 1 million and relief supplies to assist Tonga. s. 6(a)


Future intent

12. The above details the NZDF's initial humanitarian assistance and disaster relief response. Should requirements for longer term support arise then I will advise you of options to assist whilst continuing to meet NZDF's existing outputs.

Recommendations

13. It is recommended that the Minister:
 - a. **Note** the NZDF is providing support to MFAT-led assistance efforts in response to the volcanic eruption and tsunami in Tonga under the guise of OPERATION PACIFIC RELIEF – TONGA.
 - b. **Note** that support consists of: transporting supplies and equipment, surveying maritime approaches and wharves, aerial reconnaissance, and water supply.
 - c. **Note** that due to Tonga's COVID 19 protocols, response efforts have centred on contactless assistance. The NZDF is prepared to provide land-based assistance if protocols are changed by Tonga.

- d. **Note** that this submission details the NZDF's initial humanitarian assistance and disaster response to the Tongan eruption and tsunami. Should requirements for longer term support arise then I will advise you of options to assist whilst continuing to meet NZDF's existing outputs.


for **KR SHORT**
Air Marshal
Chief of Defence Force

SA/AC SCE