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OIA-2024-4905

15² March 2024

[REDACTED]
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Dear [REDACTED]

I refer to your email of 24 January 2024 requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), the following:

I am seeking any internal reviews and completed reports about the New Zealand Defence Force's response during Cyclone Gabrielle. Specifically, I am interested in documents that discuss response times, communication issues, evacuations, and the hours worked by NZDF personnel during this event.

If there have been any reports or emails exchanged within your agency that refer to Cyclone Gabrielle's response, please include those as well. The scope of this request is not limited to the mentioned topics, and any additional relevant information would be appreciated.

Enclosed are copies of reports that draw on lessons learned and observations from Operation Awhina¹. The raw information that informed these reports (i.e. Annex A from Enclosure 1, Annex B from Enclosure 3, and Annex A from Enclosure 6) is withheld in full in accordance with sections 9(2)(ba)(i) and 9(2)(g)(i) of the OIA in order to protect information that is subject to an obligation of confidence and to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions. The public interest in providing this information does not outweigh the reasons to withhold it in this instance.

Where indicated the following information is withheld: operational information in accordance with section 6(a) of the OIA to avoid prejudice to the security or defence of New Zealand; free and frank advice in accordance with section 9(2)(g)(i) of the OIA to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs; information concerning the legal opinion of New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) Legal Advisors to protect legal professional privilege in accordance with section 9(2)(h) of the OIA; signatures of NZDF personnel are withheld in accordance with section 9(2)(k) of the OIA to avoid the malicious or inappropriate use of staff information, such as phishing, scams or unsolicited advertising.

On 26 January 2024, you refined your request for correspondence. The refined request produced over a thousand results. NZDF emails are maintained in an archive that has limited

¹ Operation Awhina is enacted in the event of a domestic civil emergency where assistance has been requested from the controlling civil authority. Its aim is to assist a civil power with the provisioning of humanitarian aid and disaster relief.

search capability and a manual search is required to remove false positives, duplicates and irrelevant results. This part of your request is therefore declined in accordance with section 18(f) of the OIA as the information requested cannot be made available without a substantial collation effort.

A glossary of some of the military terms used in these documents is provided below:

AMED – Able Medic	Ar/R [sic] A/R – As Required
BWC – Battle Watch Captain	BPT – Be Prepared To
CDP – Capability Decision Point	CMD – Command
CN – Chief of Navy	CO – Commanding Officer
COF – Certificate of Fitness	CONPLAN – Contingency Plan
CSS – Combat System Specialist	COP – Centre of Operations
COA – Course of Action	CSST – Combat Service Support Team
C2 – Command and Control	DDP – Defence Driving Permit
DET – Detachment	DPA – Defence Public Affairs
DNB – Devonport Naval Base	DSSG – Defence Shared Services Group
DIRLAUTH – Direct Liaison Authority	ERR [sic] EOR – Explosive Ordnance Reconnaissance
FRAGO – Fragmentary Order	FEs – Far East Staff
FE – Force Elements	FSMO – Field Service Marching Order
HADR – Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief	HMEE – High Mobility Engineer Excavator
HRWS – High Risk Weather Season	ICW – Interrupted Continuous Wave
IOT – In Order To	JFT – Joint Task Force
LERG – Local Emergency Response Group	LT GLX – Lieutenant, General List
MAT – Matataua (NZDF Dive Team)	MCC – Maritime Component Commander
METOC - Meteorological/Oceanographic	MOG – Slang for UNIMOG truck
MHOV – Medium Heavy Operational Vehicles	MFU – Managed Fleet Utilisation
NERG – National Emergency Response Group	OPCON – Operational Control
OCFOR – Officer Commanding Force Element	OIC – Officer-In-Charge
OGALO – Other Government Agency Liaison Officer	OTP – Over The Period
OPORD – Operation Order	POLAD – Political Advisor
PWO – Principle Warfare Officer	POCWS – Petty Officer Combat Warfare Specialist
POMED – Petty Officer Medical	RERG – Regional Emergency Response Group
ResF – Reserve Force	RIP – Relief In Place
SA – Situational Awareness	SATCOM – Satellite Communications

SCG – Strategic Command Group	SCE BR – Strategic Commitments and Engagement Branch
SOMM – Services Operational Mission Matrix	TACOM – Tactical Command
TU – Task Unit	TG – Task Group
TE – Task Element	TOEE – Table of Organisation and Equipment Entitlement
WNGO – Warning Order	WEF – With Effect From
WHP – Base Whenuapai	2 ER – 2 Engineer Regiment

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.

Please note that responses to official information requests are proactively released where possible. This response to your request will be published shortly on the NZDF website, with your personal information removed.

Yours sincerely

AJ WOODS

Air Commodore

Chief of Staff HQNZDF

Enclosures:

1. Royal New Zealand Navy HMNZS Philomel, Post Activity Report, 10 March 2023
2. Royal New Zealand Navy HMNZS Manawanui, Post Activity Report, 20 March 2023
3. Royal New Zealand Navy HMNZS Te Mana, Post Activity Report, 29 March 2023
4. Headquarters 1st New Zealand Brigade, Post Activity Report: Operation Awhina: TC Gabrielle, 24 May 2023
5. Headquarters Joint Deployable Inter-Agency Task Force, Post Operation Report, 26 June 2023
6. Headquarters Joint Forces New Zealand, Observations Report, 30 June 2023

**ROYAL NEW ZEALAND NAVY, HMNZS PHILOMEL
TG 650.4.2 OP AWHINA 01/23: TC GABRIELLE PAR**

10 Mar 23

O3-1016/29

See Distribution

POST ACTIVITY REPORT

References:

- A. OPERATION ORDER 22/23 OPERATION AWHINA (Auckland Flood Recovery Support 1/23) 09 Feb 23 (and subsequent FRAGOs)
- B. OPERATION ORDER 023/23 OPERATION AWHINA TC Gabrielle 10 Feb 23 (and Subsequent FRAGOs)

Background

1. Northland, Auckland and Coromandel experienced a severe weather event on 27 Jan 23 that caused serious flooding and significant damage across the regions. Tropical Cyclone GABRIELLE, struck on 12 Feb 23 and subsequently caused extensive damage to many areas of the North Island and in particular the East Coast.
2. The events across Jan-Feb 23 presented a more complex scenario in that HMNZS PHILOMEL (PHL) was in an affected area in addition to responding to requests to support civil defence activities in Northland and Auckland. PHL provided civil defence assistance to both PHL's civil defence area in Northland and Base Auckland's area of Auckland. While DNB continually sustains a 25 person Civil Defence Response Group (CDRG) s. 6(a) [REDACTED], it was the first time that the CDRG had been utilised for flooding type Civil Defence in recent history.
3. DNB response to the events occurred over three distinct periods (AWHINA Green/Red/Green) and key points on the operations within the stages are identified within the Executive Summary and in the follow-on detailed account.

Executive Summary

4. The weather events across the period 27 Jan 23 – 27 Feb 23 enabled the testing of OP AWHINA plans, Orders at the References and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). The situation was unique and scenarios for SOPs did not consider the complexity of being in the affected area¹ and supporting two Areas of Operation (AO). Agility in plans and organisation to deliver the civil defence effect, whilst ensuring DNB Defence Areas were managed, was key. Successful communication across multiple commands across the Services, HQJFHQ and DJFHQ ensured information was shared, issues addressed and tasking's were achieved. The splitting of PHL Command to have an external civil defence focus and internal DNB Defence Areas focus enabled the management of damage and reporting through the Single Service in addition to OP

¹ The challenges included dealing with damage to DNB Defence Areas, challenges for personnel in transiting across Auckland and personnel being personally affected to varying degrees.

AWHINA management and reporting on the civil defence operational side.

5. Ultimately this event has provided valuable real life insights into likely scenarios and types of activity in a flooding event and will inform refinements to plans and SOPs. Key lessons identified are as follows:

Lessons identified:

- a. Deploying Liaison Officers (LOs) early enables good situational awareness of CDEM planning and situation on the ground particularly in a chaotic environment.
- b. UNIMOG crews need to consider a leader to manage tasking and fatigue management either within the crew (if junior teams) or appointing an ALO to manage this. Both were undertaken during the period.
- c. Internal PHL CDEM organisation needs to consider sustainability of the structure to support Base and civil defence needs if demands extend past four weeks.
- d. When LERG is broken down into smaller work-teams and deployed it proved important to have a suitable team leader for communication and Health and Safety monitoring.
- e. Understanding the likely tasks for UNIMOG crews before they are selected and deployed is important to ensure appropriate experience and leadership assigned from the outset.
- f. Consider early supplementation of ALO to support LO in the Northern CDEM when there are likely to be many movements and assets to manage.
- g. Ensure pool of LO's have had the LO training and to mitigate gaps ensure a SOP or role outline is in the LO Grab Bag.
- h. UNIMOG prime communication was via cell phone which proved ineffective on occasion with cell phone towers down. Consider SATPHONE capability as part of the equipment requirement.
- i. DNB to inform at Northland CDEM wash-up on C2 structure and means of requesting assistance and process for UNIMOG tasking on the ground.
- j. DPA assistance earlier in the AWHINA Green for both internal and external communications is required to ensure timely communications – noting Command staff will be fully engaged in planning and execution of effect.
- k. CONPLAN to consider most efficient/effective reporting mechanisms to meet both HQ and Single Service needs to minimise time on reporting/double up.
- l. A review of equipment for LERGs and LO needs to be undertaken based on likely

tasking and a routine to check serviceability of equipment needs to be implemented.

- m. Ground transportation resource plan needs some consideration for transportation of LERG/RERG/NERG teams.
- n. CONPLAN and SOPS for Civil Defence Base area leads need to consider continuity plans if personnel and Defence Areas are in the affected area themselves.
- o. CONPLAN and SOPS do not currently outline how support to multiple AOs across civil defence areas is achieved/prioritised/reported. There are now real life examples that can inform this – it maybe this needs to remain agile.
- p. The main resource of interest from Northland during flooding events was UNIMOG transportation for personnel evacuation and stores distribution. There is an opportunity to consider if the activation, sourcing and organisation undertaken during this Op could be improved.
- q. Understanding and pre-defining actual tasks LERG (or work teams) can do in flooding events (during and/or after) the resources, health, legal consideration may speed up waiting time indication of task to actual task execution.

Detailed Account

OP AWHINA Green – Initial response to 27 Jan 23 event

6. **DNB Emergency Operations.** DNB had an Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) operational from 2230 27 Jan 23. Much of this early response was assisting Base Auckland in the greater Auckland area.
7. DNB was affected by the weather event suffering varying degrees of damage across DNB Defence Areas. This required Command to balance the focus on Civil Defence support alongside effort on assessing and action on internal damage assessment and remedial actions. Base duty personnel were at full capacity responding to internal events. Additionally, some RNZN personnel's properties were affected, they were cut off in communications and/or were unable to transit major roads local to the Base.
8. **Northland AO.** DNB pre-emptively deployed a LO to Northland 29 Jan 23 to liaise with Northland Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) organisation prior to their State of Emergency Declaration WEF 1300 31 Jan 23. The LO stayed in local accommodation and operated out of the Northland EOC until return to unit (RTU) pm 1 Feb 23.
9. UNIMOGs and crew for anticipated Northland AO tasking's were sourced from 3/6 Battalion and Base Auckland and were pre-positioned at Kaitaia, Kawakawa and Whangarei over the period PM 31 Jan 23 to PM 1 Feb 23. NIL tasking's were received.
10. **Auckland AO.** In support of Base Auckland's response to the weather event of 27 Jan 23,

a LO was provided to the Warkworth Emergency Control Centre (ECC) 0830 28 Jan 23 and operated out of the Warkworth RSA. LOs initially reported on the state of the three Civil Defence Centres (CDC) established in Warkworth and subsequently undertook recce's of locations under direction of Base Auckland using 4WD transportation. Access proved challenging to areas such as Puhoi which were cut off. The LO reported directly to Base Auckland EOC. The LO remained at Warkworth for three days through to 1200 31 Jan 23.

11. DNB also provided multiple teams of five-persons to assist with solid waste management tasks in support of Base Auckland. DNB teams conducted waste disposal tasks across North, Central, West and Southern areas within the Auckland AO.

12. Initially these tasks were not well defined and there were disconnections in time, place and resources which resulted in considerable time waiting to commence tasks. However, this did improve in subsequent tasking's when an Auckland ECC met, escorted and managed interaction with those affected. Waste management tasks were paused at one point due to black mould health concerns² and legal concerns over NZDF personnel entering buildings. These were subsequently approved with extra provisions and appropriate PPE requirements in place.

OP AWHINA Red from 091600 Feb 23

13. **Northland AO.** In readiness for TC Gabrielle striking Northland, DNB pre-deployed a LO to Whangarei on 12 Feb 23, RTU 18 Feb 23. The LO operated out of the Northland ECC. A relief LO and Assistant LO (ALO) operated from 17 Feb 23 until RTU 20 Feb 23. On declaration of a National State of Emergency at 140843 Feb 23 DNB³ stood up a 50 person RERG.

14. A six-person, three UNIMOG team was deployed north until RTU 20 Feb 23 with the six-person MOG team then RTU WHP.

15. Multiple tasking requests were received from Northland ECC through the LO embedded in the AO. UNIMOG tasking included:

- a. Evacuation of personnel via UNIMOG from flood affected areas;
- b. Search of areas unable to be accessed via car/van; and,
- c. Transport of stores to flood affected areas.

16. **Auckland AO.** There was a pause over the weekend of 11/12 Feb 23 to reconstitute personnel before solid waste management tasks in continued during OP AWHINA Red in anticipation of TC Gabrielle striking.

17. **East Coast AO.** A small team of personnel drawn from the LERG, not being employed on Auckland AO tasking's, and additional PHL catering staff were deployed on HMNZS MANAWANUI to assist in the ships support efforts. Their tasking involved loading/unloading and distribution of supplies.

² OPOD 01/23 18 Feb JTF 650.4

³ J3 WNGO 025/23 OPERATION TROPICAL CYCLONE GABRIELLE NATIONAL STATE OF EMERGENCY

OP AWHINA Green

18. A change back to AWHINA state Green⁴ reverted PHL back to a normal readiness. The RERG was reduced to a LERG and the LO/ALO and three UNIMOG Det returned to home units. CO PHL disestablished TG North and reverted to AWHINA Green WEF 242359 Feb 23⁵.

19. **Northland AO.** DNB responded to the localised extreme weather event that struck Northland, concentrated around Mangawhai, on 24 Feb 23. Two UNIMOGs requested by Northland Controller operated 2137 to 2307 24 Feb 23 undertaking search and rescue until the Northland Regional Controller CDEM directed they were no longer required. LERG moved to 2HNTM at 1951 before reverting to 12HNTM 250800 Feb.

20. On Mon 27 Feb 23 a request for a UNIMOG was received from the Northland Controller. Subsequently, the Controller deemed the situation was in hand and the UNIMOG was not required. There appeared to be an overcautious approach that had developed over the course of multiple flooding events hence the request in anticipation of need which, was more aligned to being a first responder.

21. **Auckland AO.** Solid waste management taskings for both DNB and Base Auckland concluded on Fri 24 Feb 23 when private contractors took over the remaining jobs.

Command and Control

22. IAW ref A, the CO PHL (TG 650.4.2), was assigned TACOM of the Northland regional response⁶. Assets available at any one time included:

- a. 3 x UNIMOGs;
- b. 1 x LO;
- c. 1 x A/LO, and
- d. 1 x 50 person RERG.

23. PHL Command split into two with a group focused on TU 650.42 outputs/reporting and the internal group focused in DNB Defence area damage, remediation and reporting. The CO PHL retained command across all functions.

24. DNB found the command and HQ changes from AWHINA Green/Red/Green between PHL Cmd and HQ's relatively seamless. There was good communication with Base Auckland, HQJFNZ and DJFHQ throughout the period and good relationships developed. Key information was handed over as appropriate as the C2 changed. DNB provided LERG support for Base Auckland Solid Waste Management taskings and communicated detail through to Base Auckland as the lead for the AO – this worked well.

25. **Northland EOC.** During OP AWHINA there were occasions when communication needed

⁴ HQJTF 650.4 FRAGO 1 to JTF650.4 OPORD 01/23 OP AWHINA (TROPICAL CYCLONE GABRIELLE)

⁵ FRAGO 8 to HQJFNZ OP ORD 23/23 (OP AWHINA (TC Gabrielle 1/23)24 Feb 23

⁶ FRAGO 2 to HQJFNZ OP ORD 23/23 (OP AWHINA (TC Gabrielle 1/23)14 Feb 23

to be re-routed from CDEM Northland and supporting agencies. This was particularly related to requests for assets, the tasking of UNIMOGS and requests direct from first responders. These lessons will be addressed in the next Northland liaison meeting and there maybe benefit to creating a flow chart to share with CDEM Northland.

Information Management

26. PHL was given access to the JTF 650.4 DDMS site which gave ready access to information. PHL also had its own DDMS site which held all OP AWHINA relevant information:

- a. OP Orders/FRAGO's;
- b. Daily Sitreps;
- c. SOMM reports;
- d. Barrack accommodation availability for Op AWHINA requirements;
- e. Daily narratives; and,
- f. POC information.

26. **Reporting.** Reporting from Northland AO was via the LO located in the Whangarei ECC Council building to on-watch personnel at DNB. This information was then disseminated to relevant HQs to ensure a timely response to ECC North requests.

27. Daily Sitreps were submitted to JTF 650.4 at 0600, 1200 and 1600. These were loaded into the JTF 650.4 DDMS site.

28. Initially, SITREP (and other info) emails were sent directly to individuals' (of the various TGs) NZDF email address, which were sometimes not received immediately due to the individual being 'off-watch'. When shared email addresses (s. 6(a) [redacted] etc.) were established this sped up the collation and dissemination of information.

29. Reporting of status of tasks conducted by DNB resources supporting the Auckland AO were input through Base Auckland as lead for the Auckland AO reporting.

Personnel (Tracking, Shortages, Skills)

30. Functional areas across DNB were responsive to PHL in providing personnel for specific roles, LERG/RERG and follow-on rotations. N1 and N5 functions were also filled on a part-time basis.

31. While land assets were on task, a three watch 24/7 watch system was maintained from the DNB Command Centre. This ensured there was someone available 24/7 to deal with OP AWHINA requests and reporting. The system worked well and relieved pressure from Base Duty Watch personnel but would have needed more thought as to sustainability if it were to be active longer term. The watch systems was a simple construct as follows:

- | | | | |
|----|---------------|------------------|--------------|
| a. | ALHPA watch | 1 x OIC, 1 x BWC | 0600 – 1400 |
| b. | BRAVO watch | 1 x OIC, 1 x BWC | 1400 – 2200 |
| c. | CHARLIE watch | 1 x OIC, 1 x BWC | 2200 – 0600. |

32. Notice to move for LERG groups was reviewed and amended by CMD as necessary.

This included s. 6(a) consultation with Base Auckland and CDEM Northland to respond to any potential short notice tasking during weather events. Although, in hindsight the time from task identification to task execution meant s. 6(a) notice would have been sufficient for all tasks for the LERG. The LO NTM was also lowered as more certainty around weather and ideal deployment windows were identified.

33. UNIMOG drivers, although holding the correct qualifications, were not experienced in the type of driving that was required for the earlier tasking's that were received (i.e. carrying civilian passengers, crossing through high water fords etc.). Understanding the likely tasks before crews are selected and deployed is important to ensure appropriate experience and leadership assigned from the outset.

34. Some LOs utilised during OP AWHINA met some but not all training requirements such as the specific LO course⁷. This was mitigated by briefings from an experienced LO. During the high tempo periods in the initial stages of the Northland emergency response it became apparent it was a challenge for the LO to manage the position outputs – specifically engagement with Northland CDEM, HQ, PHL and assets on the ground. This was supplemented with an ALO but consideration of this earlier would have alleviated information gaps particularly about UNIMOG crew management.

LOGISTICS

Vehicles

35. The intent for this operation is that NZDF personnel would be self-sufficient for ground transport⁸. Due to a lack of Service vehicles suitable for a 50-person RERG, DNB is reliant on commercial rental vehicles – these would not have been available able to be sourced if the request had been raised on the weekend⁹. A ground transportation plan to support LERG/RERG/NERG needs some consideration.

36. UNIMOGs were the most requested and utilised asset. DNB's only UNIMOG is Flatbed trucks for transporting goods, necessitating us outsourcing adding time and requirement to liaise with Joint and across Services. This is not necessarily a problem but is a conscious consideration that needs to be included in plans.

Accommodation

37. **Northland AO.** On arrival in Whangarei, the LO had to find accommodation for himself and other NZDF staff (MOG crews) utilising unit Credit card for payment. This was soon corrected and payment taken over by Civil Defence through Purchase Order.

38. **Auckland AO.** 90 Bed barrack accommodation, off base at Narrowneck and at DNB, was made available in anticipation of AOG/NZDF requests in support of Op AWHINA.

39. One request for accommodation was received however, this was met by Base Auckland.

⁷ Appendix 1 to Annex K to HQJFNZ CONPLAN 101: AWHINA dated 24 FEB 20 – LO Training, para 2, 6 responsibilities.

⁸ HQJFNZ OPORD 022/23 OPERATION AWHINA (Auckland flood recovery 20 b)

⁹ This was not an issue during this OP, because rental vehicles were already on hand due to recent flooding in Auckland, however, rental transportation did become unavailable across broader Auckland at one point.

There was a further inquiry around accommodation suitable for families which was not supportable. DNB supported two of its own personnel with emergency accommodation as they were affected by flooding.

Equipment

40. PHL purchased a quantity of furniture removal equipment, trolleys and hand carts, at the suggestion of deployed OICs to ensure safer working conditions for our teams in the field.

41. PHL made a series of purchases of leather gloves to meet initial demands of deployed personnel. PHL does not stock and was required to use Base Auckland supplies of rubber gloves and disposable suits as directed by the Health Services Support Plan to OPORD 025/23¹⁰. It may need some consideration of what equipment should be stored for the LERG based on types of civil defence and likely tasks.

Health and Safety

42. Health and safety briefs were delivered to LERG personnel prior to departing DNB for waste management tasking's. Once LERGs were on site – site specific briefings were given by ECC representatives. To mitigate risks in the field DNB chose to deploy five-person teams rather than four-person teams with an OIC assigned to provide oversight and Health and Safety assurance.

Legal

43. LEGADS provided briefs to LERG personnel prior to tasking's. Rules of Conduct, IAW FRAGO 1 to JTF650.4 Order 01/23 19 Feb 23, were issued and briefed. s. 9(2)(h)

Communications

44. Externally, OP AWHINA communication updates from CO PHL were posted on the RNZN Community Facebook page by DPA. Internally, this messaging was via DIXS Group email address.

DPA assistance for DNB at the initial stages and throughout OP AWHINA is required for both internal and external communications.

45. UNIMOGs deployed within Northland experienced communication issues with intermittent cellular coverage which created a disconnection in communication with the LO and Northland EOC. Deploying with Satellite Phones would ensure connectivity.

46. Having the LO in place early to establish effective lines of communications was beneficial. In particular, to assess the situation, to 'filter' requests for assistance, and to relay the assessment back to command and to manage expectations of other agencies.

¹⁰ Annex H HQJFNZ OPORD 025/23 – Health services support plan: OP TC Gabrielle

Observations

47. Observations and key lessons are outlined in the Executive Summary and at Annex A. More detail can be provided on any aspect if required.

J.A. SIMPKINS

CDR, RNZN
CO PHL

Distribution:

Internal:

COMJFNZ
MCC
LCC
ACC
SOCC
COS IG
(J) WO
(J) J03 –
J9
JWC WK
HQJFNZ Head of Operational
Psychology HQ JFNZ WPS
Implementation Officer DPSC
File

Royal New Zealand Navy

HMNZS MANAWANUI MINUTE 18/2023

20 Mar 23

MAN 3250-0001

See distribution

OP AWHINA 01/23 POST ACTIVITY REPORT: HMNZS MANAWANUI

Reference

- A. COMJFNZ Operational Order 023/23 - OPERATION AWHINA (TROPICAL CYCLONE GABRIELLE) 01/23

PAR Identifiers

1. **Activity:** OP AWHINA **Year:** 23, **Rotation:** 01, **Service:** Navy, **Unit:** MAN.

Executive Summary

2. HMNZS MANAWANUI (MAN) deployed on Operation AWHINA 01/23 between 15 Feb and 26 Feb 23. MAN was tasked to provide supporting effects to the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Regional Civil Defence and Emergency Management (CDEM) Groups in support of all Government response to the impacts of Cyclone Gabrielle in Aotearoa, New Zealand.
3. MAN was given a BPT task on Sun, 12 Feb 23. Initially tasked by MCC on Tue, 14 Feb 23 (see annex A) and then was chopped to JTF 650.4 on Fri, 17 Feb 23.
4. MAN effort was concentrated in Gisborne Region and included delivery of HADR stores into Gisborne port by RHIB and once alongside, by ship's crane. MAN worked with TG East land forces to achieve the delivery effect.
5. MAN also conducted 'hearts and minds' visits to isolated communities and helped to build the ground picture for Gisborne Emergency Control Centre (ECC). In the latter stages of MAN participation in the operation, the ship was used to onward deliver critical water treatment plant stores from Napier to Gisborne.
6. Once all economic value to the operation was gained from MAN the decision from CMD to 'out chop' was granted on Fri, 24 Feb 23, thereafter MAN returned to Devonport Naval Base to reconstitute.

Command and Control

7. DJIATF was tasked to be the Joint Task Force (JTF 650.4). A shadow posting in OCFOR released a LT GLX to act as the Maritime Liaison Officer (LO). The LO did a good job of organising the maritime effort but ideally, the shadow position would sit better with a PWO, if only for the increased depth of understanding and experience in a HQ.
8. The C2 between the ship, the NZDF LO in the ECC, the JTF and NEMA was confused at times. Most apparent when the ship identified communities to visit (based upon face-to-face discussion with community leaders) s. 9(2)(g)(i) [REDACTED].

9. An example of where the C2 did work well is that of the tasking of MAT to conduct the Water Treatment plant de-silting. An initial discussion between Mr Ben Green (Controller ECC) and CO MAN revealed a possible task for naval divers. Discussion between CO MAN and CO MAT, and embarked divers, identified it would be a Surface Supplied Breathing Apparatus (SSBA) task using the ERR team from MAT (supplemented by MAT divers already embarked in MAN). NZDF LO in the ECC was briefed on the best way ahead and formally requested support to JTF 650.4 who then requested the support of MAT through MCC. MAT were then tasked by J35M in associated support to JTF 650.4. Lines of communication and control were clear and the tasking was successfully completed.

Information Management

10. MAN does not have the requisite personnel to manage information especially not 24/7. There are no CSS borne; traditionally the trade who coordinate operational information and support the PWO and/or Operations Officer (OPSO) to 'feed' the machine. Consequently the collation of information fell to the OPSO and the CO which meant at times, strategic and operational situation awareness was cloudy.

11. s. 6(a)

. Notably for AWHINA the ability to tap into the unclassified COP shared between NZDF and OGAs would have been of benefit for planning and reporting. Certainly, for MAN, the sharing of the Battle Board in Gisborne Emergency Co-ordination Centre would have enabled much greater SA and might have allowed MAN to target specific 'black spots'. Considering the whole of TG C3 this would also have been an appropriate method to expand a wider shared mental model of the areas assigned to each FE.

12. Despite being an action addressee on Orders, MAN was not sent some orders in a timely fashion resulting in late decision making and tactical orders;

- a. Initial OPOrd on 10 Feb 23 left MAN off the distribution, meaning that it needed following up from the ship and was received 12 Feb 23;
- b. Formal Orders from MCC received 15 Feb 23 including reporting requirements;
- c. TACOM change from HQJFNZ to CTG650.4 17 Feb 23; and
- d. JTF 650.4 OPOrd received late on (2119) 18 Feb 23. The information contained within was somewhat dated given MAN arrival at AO 16 Feb 23.

13. The Navigating Officer was receiving standard NZ Coastal packages from MetJet and 'PassageWeather.com' for weather forecasting. s. 9(2)(g)(i)

. It would have been hugely beneficial to have a bespoke, 5-7 day forecast that provided key advice such as the developments of low pressure systems to the south of the AO or when it was expected that wind would start to oppose swell etc. This would have enabled better outlook on which communities might be cut off from support due to wind and sea being outside of safe operating limits.

14. Based purely on prior experience of Gisborne, the Navigating Officer was aware of the presence of Infra Gravity waves within the Gisborne and Hawke's Bay area and that the Ports on the East Coast experience significant surge within the Ports when exposed to certain swell. The Navigator arranged to receive the Ports forecasting system which provided detail of times the Port would be experiencing significant surge including when the surge would reach, or exceed, the Port limit for having Ship's alongside. It is recommended N2 METOC support in HQJFNZ provide future guidance to any ship going to Gisborne.

Personnel

15. Embarked forces living on stretchers is not ideal but allowed increase in overall personnel numbers; deemed critical for ability to sustain operations. These additional personnel consisted of the following:

- a. 2 RHIB Coxswains which enabled boat operations to be conducted iot offload stores when MAN was unable to get alongside or close in to the communities that required them;
- b. 8 MAT Det, this team included Divers and Hydrographers and the Remote Piloted Arial System (RPAS) team, a POCWS and a POMED. Four members of the team were also Zodiac Coxswains and capable of operating in the surf zone (mission critical for delivery of stores into communities without a jetty or boat ramp);
- c. A Medical Officer and two AMEDs from Devonport Health Unit;
- d. 12 personnel from HMNZS PHILOMEL Local Emergency Response Group; and
- e. A Defence Public Affairs Videographer.

16. The DPA videographer was instrumental in getting the NZDF message out into the local and national community and removed a possible stressor from the Command team. It is also worth noting the DPA person did a very good job of pre-empting where he needed to be rather than waiting on direction from Command or ashore.

Logistics

17. With regards HADR Stores, the biggest lesson is that NZDF should provide what is needed not what is available; pull not push stores. Initial Order from HQ was to essentially, load up whatever HADR stores were available in the s. 6(a) load window. Consequently SCG and supporting orgs (did what they thought was the right thing) and loaded MAN with whatever stores were available. It was later revealed there was a specific need for bottled water, food and hygiene products. Delivering significant amounts of untargeted items into Gisborne gave the ECC and volunteers a potential headache rather than help. Recommend if no specific pull stores are requested (or needs assessment conducted) then a standardised HADR pack up kit focusing on immediate aid such as bottled water, shelter, food, health and hygiene products are embarked. Recommend SCG research, compile and hold these items (or at least a list of items and suppliers that can be sourced easily).

18. 'Hearts and Minds' packs – ship's boats were used to make contact with small coastal communities. Offloading large amounts of stores was not an option due to boat capacity, weather conditions and lack of wharf/beach access. Therefore smaller 'care type' packages were developed on board. It is assessed they would have proved to be a good introduction to then allow RNZN pers to establish communication and ascertain what communities actually need. 'Hearts and Minds' packs would consist of small quantities of items at para 17.

Again, recommend SCG research, compile and hold these items or a list of these items so ships can easily make up these small packs while on route out of bulk stores embarked in para 17.

19. Cost Centre (CC) for the operation – Ideally a CC for Op AWHINA would have been allocated rather than having to use the ships CC for stores procured and distributed. Alternatively having an SPC allocated quicker would have avoided retrospective accounting.

20. Accounting for stores ‘given away’ – there was no direction from HQJFNZ, or otherwise, on how stores were to be expensed/issued/donated/consumed. There was some initial direction from HQ on how to capture stores accounting but assess this might have been missed in some units. MAN will be retrospectively raising a gratuitous issue for CN approval.

21. On Sat 18 Feb 23, while the ship was alongside Gisborne, four LAVs from Wellington East Coast Squadron of the Queen Alexandra’s Mounted Rifles appeared by the ship. The inhabitants, who had been operating for the previous four days, had headed to the ship in the hope of a hot meal (having been living on ration packs). Not only did the ship provide dinner but also breakfast the following morning, access to showers and the laundry. The ship also provided a top up of diesel and water. The provision of (non-CANTERBURY) maritime support to land elements is notable and highlights a way in which land forces might be kept sustained without leaning into the resources of the local population.

22. During two of the ‘hearts and minds’ visits there were requests for female sanitary products from the locals and MAN was able to provide from ship’s stores. Subsequent reporting of this action led to direction from J1 HQJFNZ to not provide such items and, instead, direct locals to make requests through the ECC. The direction failed to appreciate there were no available communications from cut-off coastal communities to the ECC. Nor did the direction seem to consider the reputational risk. JTF 650.4 later provided direction whereby, if the circumstances of the case were such, the local Commanders could decide to provide supplies from own stocks.

Health and Safety

23. MAN provided 106 m³ of water ashore from ship tanks and 20 m³ of water ashore in Intermediate Bulk Containers (IBC) filled from Auckland city supply. The water delivered complied with all RNZN and NZDF requirements in accordance with MI 42.21 RNZN Water Safety Plan. Local authorities were not able to utilise the water for consumption by the populous as the NZDF is not a “certified” drinking water supplier. In order to be recognised as a drinking water supplier, the NZDF must prove they comply with s22 of the Water Services Act 2021, Drinking Water Standards. The Naval Engineering Authority (NEA) has been informed of the issues and is investigating and updating RNZN policy and procedure in collaboration with NZDF Environmental Health. The water delivered ashore by MAN was utilised for cleaning of flood and silt damaged properties.

24. MAN had sufficient Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the range of evolutions conducted during the supply of the isolated communities.

25. MAN was ready in all respects to assist with the cleaning of houses that had been affected by flooding in the city of Gisborne. Prior to MAN ships personnel deploying, additional direction on the PPE required (when dealing with the cleaning of silt and the

possibility of encountering black mould) was provided in form of an email. MAN could not meet this higher direction and so were unavailable to assist in the cleaning process.

Communications

26. s. 6(a)

. Blurred lines of communication did result in some information being lost.

27. Due to the nature of infrastructure damage along the East Cape early in the Op, communications with coastal settlements through centralised command was disjointed and difficult. The hand held satellite phones held by the ship for the operation proved useful although not completely suited to littoral/surf zone conditions.

28. Given the nature of the coastal detached boat ops the s. 6(a) radios embarked for the deployment were a key enabler as MAN fit is limited in ability and number.

29. A large volume of inbound information traffic was directed to a few key positions; a combined MAN Operations and Watchkeeper email group address with associated rule set established sooner likely would have led to quicker response form the ship incoming communications.

Observations

30. Lessons identified observations can be found at enclosure 1.

31. The maritime contribution to Op AWHINA, and MAN specifically, is marked by tactical decisions and actions having strategic impact. During the early stages of the operation there was a lot of discussion concerning possible risk to personnel (water and PPE being the obvious examples) which appeared to not consider the risk to NZDF reputation had personnel on the ground not taken action. A clearer understanding of risk appetite at all levels might have been useful.

s. 9(2)(k)

YM GRAY
CDR, RNZN
CO MAN

Annex:

A. Initial tasking from MCC

Enclosure:

1. MAN lessons identified

Distribution:

COMJFNZ

MCC

LCC

ACC

SOCC

COS

IG(J)

WO(J)

J03 – J9

JWC WK

HQJFNZ Head of Operational Psychology

HQ JFNZ WPS Implementation Officer

DPSC

CFOR

CO MTG

LC(M)

ANNEX A TO
MAN 3250-0001
DATED 20 MAR 23

WARNING ORDER

From: s. 6(a)
Sent: Tuesday, 14 February 2023 9:10 p.m.
To: Maritime operations hjjfnz, Maritime Operations; Barr David, Commanding Officer HMNZS Aotearoa; s. 6(a) Fleet Operational Readiness; Dowling Andrew, Commander MOET; GRAY YVONNE, CDR; Heslop Bronwyn, Commanding Officer HMNZS Canterbury; s. 6(a) Naval Operational Support Unit; s. 6(a) Operational Performance Trials - FOR; Leslie Trevor, Commanding Officer HMNZS Matataua; Mankelow Samara, Commanding Officer HMNZS Taupo; Mcqueen John, Commanding Officer HMNZS Te Mana; s. 6(a) CoS Fleet Operational Readiness; Sutherland Kane, Commanding Officer HMNZS Te Kaha; Trotter Alexander, Commanding Officer No 6 Squadron
Cc: Golding Garin, Maritime Component Commander; Brown Andrew, Deputy Chief of Navy; s. 6(a), Command Warrant Officer MCC; Simpkins Julie, Base Commander - PHLBASE; s. 6(a), Additional to Org Effective - JOM; s. 6(a) Deputy Director Operations Regional
Subject: OP AWHINA - Command Direction

Good evening all,

BLUF – OP AWHINA is now MCCs priority and all Fleet units are to be prepared to support (in whatever form necessary) but maintain their current tasking until otherwise directed.

The ongoing and increasing challenge posed by TC Gabrielle is now placing greater demand on the NZDF for support across the North Island. Knowledge of the tactical situation in areas such as Napier and Gisborne is increasing as HQ JFNZ receives reports from LOs on the ground, demands from NEMA/ECC and inputs from other agencies.

We assess that the NZDF will have a greater understanding of the exact nature, and location of task, overnight and into tomorrow (Wed). At this time I know that the DJIATF Command Element is looking to relocate from AKL to WGN tomorrow and at present Land are standing up a Combat Support element (100 pers plus) to deploy and provide basic logistical support such as food/water. Comms is proving to be a major challenge and SATCOM is likely to be a resource required.

Formal orders will follow as required tomorrow and be released by J35-M and the MarOps team/HQ JFNZ. In the meantime the following direction is to be actioned:

1. **ALL Fleet Units** are to be prepared to support OP AWHINA noting that may mean a platform is utilised or personnel may be tasked to deploy. Unless directed otherwise below, or in the future, you are to maintain your current programme.
2. Priority Units, in order, are MAN then TEM
3. **MAN** – be prepared to sail as early as Wed 15 Feb and only once you have embarked the enablers required to support HADR type activity off the East Coast of the North Island. PHL LERG (25 pax) is

being activated now and will be ready to embark you as required tomorrow; numbers can be pared back pending support from wider RNZN/NZDF etc. Likely operating areas will be Gisborne coastline and Napier

4. **TEM** – Return to DNB iot reconstitute post the SAR task. You are no longer required to support Art Deco activity in Napier. Develop a plan for at sea activity iot support NOTE and action as required.
5. **MAT** – BPT support MAN with personnel as determined between CO MAT/CO MAN.
6. **TAU/MTG** – proceed with s. 6(a) programme as discussed with MCC
7. **MTG** – provide SME support as required eg FMED both ashore and afloat
8. **CAN** – maintain conduct s. 6(a)
9. **ALL Fleet Units** – surge support to MAN to ensure they have all we think they may need to deliver relief effect. Consider transfer of any HADR stores, drinking water, warm kit etc. Over to you.
10. **PHL** is requested to provide the LERG for embarkation in MAN noting the numbers required may vary. Additionally explore numbers of deployable chefs/caterers to support Land or deploy in a maritime unit (as discussed between XO MCC and CO PHL).

I appreciate there is a great deal of goodwill circulating alongside a number of RFIs. Please remain patient and dynamic in the coming 24hrs as we begin to understand the task and assign assets appropriately. Good ideas are appreciated but may swamp the team – you will be notified as soon as there is a likelihood of activation.

Stay safe and I send best wishes to those with friends and whanau in affected areas.

ACK – MAN, MAT, TEM, TAU, CAN (to prove comms)

Yours Aye,

XO

s. 6(a)

Executive Officer to MCC, Headquarters Joint Forces New Zealand
Te Ope Kātua o Aotearoa | New Zealand Defence Force

s. 6(a)

www.nzdf.mil.nz

Royal New Zealand Navy
HMNZS TE MANA MINUTE 54/23

29 Mar 23

J8

TEM 1630-0001

For information

MCC
CFOR

POST ACTIVITY REPORT – HMNZS TE MANA OP AWHINA 16 – 20 FEBRUARY 2023

Reference

A. Operation AWHINA (Tropical Cyclone Gabrielle) Operation Order 01/23

Purpose

1. The purpose of this Post Activity Report is to submit the lessons learnt from the actions taken by HMNZS TE MANA (TEM) in response to the devastating impact Tropical Cyclone Gabrielle had on the Hawke's Bay region.

Executive summary

2. The short notice nature and clarity of detail of TEM's tasking was a feature that initially affected TEM's planning and HADR storing plan. This meant that a number of HADR stores held as NZDF assets were embarked or not embarked that may not have been required if more time and detailed operational planning was able to take place. Nevertheless, once in situ and a great understanding of the operating environment as a 'first responder' type asset was able to be appreciated, TEM was able to make a swift response to incoming tasking needs and deploy personnel where needed. Overall, TEM made a significant and positive contribution to the region and it is assessed that the NZDF's reputation was made stronger by way of providing 239 personnel who contributed 1658 hours, over 26 discrete tasks over the four days TEM remained alongside Napier.

Introduction

3. TEM was tasked by HQJFNZ to sail on 16 Feb 23, from Devonport Naval Base (DNB) to the Port of Napier IOT support TG 650.4.4 in rendering aid to the Hawke's Bay region. TEM sailed with a crew of 162 personnel with stores and equipment, including 20 tonnes of fresh water, two large generators for the Napier City Council, an additional sea boat, PPE, three zodiac boats, 5 pallets of food and donated goods and a further one tonne of aid stores. Of note the ship had only returned to DNB from sea on 15 Feb 23 after completing a search and rescue operation which meant minimal time was spent embarking HADR stores.

4. From 17-21 Feb 23, TEM provided direct support to the DJIATF TG 640.4 in the Hawke's Bay region. The specifics of required tasks were not known by the ship upon sailing for Napier. This meant that HADR stores were unable to be arranged and/or prioritised to achieve best effect for affected region. The ship was not able to be used as an aviation platform due to a number of factors, including availability of a flight team at short notice.

5. On arriving in Napier, the Command team proceeded ashore to meet with CTG 650.4.4 to gain situational awareness of the affected areas and seek clarification on task requirements and C2 lines of reporting. This was useful as it gave Command a practical appreciation of the worst hit areas and shaped where to plan Ship's Company to be used as a Human Resource pool to assist affected areas. The primary value of this Recce enabled command to understand the C2 being used between TG and local ECC authorities, and how TEM fitted into this construct as a Direct Support Unit. Operational Command remained with the Maritime Component Commander.

6. The primary nature of tasking undertaken by the Ship's Company were to assist the local populace where manual labour was required, alongside several more tailored maritime effects tasks. TEM personnel were also able to support the local land unit TU 650.4.4.2 – 2ER CSST) based out of the Port in terms of logistical support, and provide personnel to supplement their staff on various recon and delivery of stores tasks into cut off areas to the North of Napier. It is assessed that the presence of Ship's Company had large effect on the local community and an emotional uplift was often observed whenever NZDF personnel were spotted contributing.

7. A comprehensive breakdown of dates, tasks, and personnel hours can be found in annex A.

Planning

8. In the initial planning phases there was insufficient task information available to permit accurate tactical planning. This degraded the ship's ability to optimise support to the affected area. The primary impact of the planning timelines was that stores were not prioritised between maritime units. For example, TEM sailed with a number of stores, such as Zodiacs, that may have been better suited to a second wave maritime unit or maritime units that were operating at sea¹.

9. Another significant impact to effective tactical level planning was the rapidity and out of context media reporting. In several cases, COAs were forced on maritime planners because of an early release of planning information by Defence media channels. This included sailing times ahead of when ships were ordered to sail. This is assessed to undermine the whole planning process and led to wasted effort and inefficiencies.

Interoperability

10. Interoperability was a strong point of this response. TEM embedded Ship staff in to several liaison officers and support teams into components of the TG 650.4.4 across the region. Liaison officers once again proved their value in joint operations and smoothed out the complexities associated with being a maritime unit in direct support to a primarily land based staff construct.

11. The heavy emphasis on communications and a shared mental model was important to ensure TEM efforts did not undermine TG 650.4.4 aims. In particular, it was important that NZDF assets remained supporting local civil disaster response frameworks and not be seen to be taking over. This required a stronger effort in some areas, such as the distribution hub

¹ The Zodiacs were subsequently left at the Port of Napier for CAN to use Ar/R.

in Hastings where land-based support was being reinforced but a gap in logistics specialists hamstringing local efforts to support cut off communities.

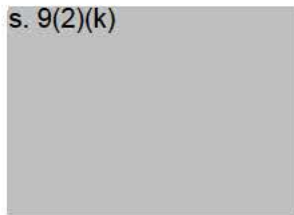
Observations

12. Lessons learnt can be found in annex B.

Recommendations

13. It is recommended that the lessons found within this PAR are **noted** and considered for future disaster relief and/or short notice tasking.

s. 9(2)(k)



JJ MCQUEEN
CDR, RNZN
CO

Annexes:

- A. HMNZS TE MANA Op AWHINA Hawke's Bay Response Task List
- B. HMNZS TE MANA Op AWHINA Lessons Learnt

Enclosure:

- 1. HMNZS TE MANA Op AWHINA Storyboard

HMNZS TE MANA OP AWHINA Hawke's Bay Response Task List

Date	Task	Personnel	Personnel Hours
18, 19 & 20 Feb	Support to CTG 650.4.4	8	80
18 Feb	Havelock North (Joll Rd)	10	60
18 Feb	Bayview Welfare Checks	10	60
18 Feb	Chef Catering Support	2	16
18 Feb	Port of Napier Debris Clearance Assistance	4	8
19 Feb	Havelock North (Joll Rd)	30	200
19 Feb	Bayview Welfare Checks	10	60
19 Feb	Pakowhai incl Links Road	7	28
19 Feb	Waikou clean up	3	24
19 Feb	Waipataki Beach	4	32
19 Feb	Rissington	5	40
19 Feb	Franklin Road	5	40
19 Feb	Distribution Centre Assistance	36	264
19 Feb	Soup Kitchen	10	60
19 Feb	Port of Napier Navigation Aids Survey	1	6
20 Feb	Havelock North	16	128
20 Feb	Pakowhai incl Links Road	16	128
20 Feb	Bayview	12	96
20 Feb	Eskdale Valley	32	192
20 Feb	Dartmoor Bridge	8	64
20 Feb	Northern Recce	4	40
20 Feb	Napier EOC Resupply	4	24
20 Feb	Port of Napier Navigation Aids Realignment	2	8

Headquarters 1st New Zealand Brigade, NZ Army

S3 MINUTE 02/2023

24 May 23

D6-0074/05

COMD 1 (NZ) BDE (Through: CoS)

POST ACTIVITY REPORT: OPERATION AWHINA: TC GABRIELLE

Reference

- A. [HQ1\(NZ\)BDE S3 MIN 01-2023 MID POINT ACTION REVIEW OP AWHINA TC GABRIELLE \(U\)](#)
- B. [Unit Post Activity Reports.](#)

Background

1. This PAR has been created IOT summarise key learning points, ICW Ref A, from the recent Op AWHINA, which was the NZDFs response to TC GABRIELLE. TC GABRIELLE heavily effected the North Island, specifically causing large scale damage within the Hawkes Bay region New Zealand. Op AWHINA occurred OTP 12 - 24 February 2023 and saw elements from all 1 (NZ) BDE units deploying to assist. Unit level PARs are at Ref B and contain all observations made by units during Op AWHINA.

Executive summary

2. A local state of Emergency was declared in Auckland on 27 Jan 23 in response to TC HALE which caused unprecedented flooding across the Auckland region. The Local State of Emergency was extended on Fri 3 Feb 23 for a period of 7 days. The severe weather event caused significant damage and disruption across the region with hundreds of houses severely damaged or uninhabitable. On 7 Feb 23, NZDF was directed to provide 100 people, as soon as possible, to assist with the Auckland flood recovery efforts.

3. On 12-14 of February 2023 Cyclone Gabrielle had a devastating impact on the Hawkes Bay region with a national state of emergency being declared on the 14th of February and remained in place until the 14th of March. The weather event left over 70,000 residents without access to power, medical services, road connectivity in all directions, wastewater drinking water and cell phone networks. 1 (NZ) Bde led the response to support Tairāwhiti and Hawkes Bay residents with a range of tasks including assisting displaced personnel, uncovering buildings and belongings which were drowned in silt and opening access ways for emergency services and then isolated locals.

4. Several key themes were identified during the PAR for wider consideration, notably regarding the mobilisation, communications, deployment of assets and pre-emptive administration. All observations are stated at REF B – H, these lessons learnt will be broken down into the applicable war-fighting functions.

Mission Command

5. During Op AWHINA, 2 ER HQ was deployed as the TG HQ within the Hawkes Bay region, after reinforcement from across 1 (NZ) Bde. CONPLAN AWHINA currently states that 16 Field Regiment is the headquarters for AWHINA in the North Island. This requirement heavily reduced the ability of 2 ER to sustain TU Holdfast and support TU Holdfast from the rear.

a. **Fix.** S5 is to rewrite the 1 (NZ) Bde Op AWHINA OPORD IOT dictate which unit is the HQ for AWHINA with details provided regarding the contingency and in what situations this would be applied.

6. The flexibility of the RIP enabled units to monitor personnel who needed to come in and out when required and allowed units to manage their personnel effectively. This needs to be enhanced by having clear chain of command and appropriate levels for approvals.

a. **Sustain.** Maintain giving units command initiative to relieve and swap personnel as required.

b. **Fix.** On activation of Op AWHINA S3 to create and maintain a clear wire diagram / chain of command was created to illustrate approval levels for demands, contracts, and tasks.

7. The first LERG to deploy to Auckland was not task organised and instead was an adhoc group of three units. This did not enable clear communication and caused inefficient transfer of information.

a. **Fix.** S5 to add a dedicated LERG structure including C2 to 1 (NZ) Bde Op AWHINA OPORD with actions-on if lead unit is unable to fill LERG requirements.

Command and Control (C2).

8. Due to the fluid nature of the situation, the 1 (NZ) Bde Op AWHINA OPORD should implement clear SOPs in regards to reporting lines for LOs and LERGs, unit internal and out to Bde and/or HQJFNZ. Reporting requirements need to be flexible with a concise mechanism to manage potential fluid situations that can involve simultaneous local, region and potential national responses, IOT provide timely actionable information while avoiding duplication of effort.

a. **Fix.** S5 is to add clear reporting SOPs into the 1 (NZ) Bde Op AWHINA OPORD to include activation and releasing procedures. The following C2 related areas should be reviewed;

i. The authority for releasing and recovering TE needs to be made clear.

ii. The reporting arrangements for 1 (NZ) Bde, HQDJIATF and HQJFNZ need to be aligned.

iii. The role, responsibility and C2 relationship between the LO and the LERG needs to be made clear.

iv. DIRLAUTH should be given between ResF Units on Op AWHINA activation to ensure that all available local personnel are utilised.

9. Force flow into the AO was at times ad hoc with multiple communication lines to different HQs based on planning the enduring requirements of the TG.

- a. **Fix.** S5 is to develop a 1 (NZ) Bde force flow approval SOP for increase of FEs from LERG, to RERG and finally to NERG for the 1 (NZ) Bde Op AWHINA OPORD.
10. The initial deployment can be rapid in nature and the ResF units are perfectly placed to provide the initial response in the regions. After a period of time, the ResF response becomes untenable due to work and personal commitments.
- a. **Fix.** S5 to draft an amendment to the 1 (NZ) Bde Op AWHINA OPORD that clearly articulates the initial response requirement from ResF units s. 6(a) [REDACTED] A BPT task should be given where ResF units can manage RTU replacements s. 6(a) [REDACTED] before a RIP would be required by another LERG.
11. To deliver water from the RO units the TU Holdfast SOMM needs to include an EH detachment for testing. This created an issue when the RO units were tasked to deploy to the Hawkes Bay and an EH tech had to be spun up last minute to support the RO section.
- a. **Fix.** S5 is to establish clear SOP for reinforcing 1 (NZ) Bde FEs with an EH Det and medics.
12. Safety in training policy is not clear when applied to operations including Op AWHINA. To improve this, an understanding is required of where the risk lies in making decisions against policy to achieve the mission.
- a. **Fix.** CoS to provide guidance on HQJFNZ appetite for policy breach in pursuit of mission success, to enable appropriate decisions to be made.
 - b. **Fix.** S5 to identify clear CDP as part of Op AWHINA for the decision to prioritise the mission over adherence to policy and then a second CDP for adherence to policy to be reinstated to enable complete safety of our people.
13. An RO element from 2 ER deployed to Hawkes Bay to create and distributing water to locals. Upon arrival into the AO they were informed that they did not have government approval to distribute water within New Zealand.
- a. **Fix.** Director Land Domain, Capability Branch is requested to gain approval to allow NZDF RO units to deliver water within NZ.
14. There is currently no suitable operations room for command and control of an Op AWHINA response within the Auckland Defence Centre.
- a. **Fix.** 3/6 RNZIR ICW DEI is to re-design the current 'Training Wing' office into an Ops Room, not only for OP AWHINA but also for BAU training and operations.
15. A 1 (NZ) Bde or NZDF Op AWHINA H&S Aide Memoire and code of conduct should be developed and available openly on the publications library for a commander to use on any initial response.
- a. **Fix.** S5 to collate and develop an Aide Memoire be developed for future OP AWHINA activities. This Aide Memoire is to include:
 - i. Medical pers allocation to LERG,
 - ii. Guidelines regarding the cleaning or destruction of clothing and equipment exposed to contaminated flood water,

- iii. Requirement of unit holdings of stores, equipment and PPE appropriate for OP AWHINA response.

Manoeuvre and Mobility

16. During OP AWHINA, a helicopter external lift of a Pinzgauer LOV was considered IOT provide mobility to areas cut off by flooding. Previously, external lift of a LOV (GS and C2 only) has been done twice during the Introduction into Service (IIS) of the NH90, however, due to issues around aerial delivery equipment during the IIS, the testing phase of the LOV lift was never finished and a load rigging procedure was never published into the NZAP 6210.000-10. This makes the rigging and lifting of a LOV non-viable at short notice. MRZR underslung was also discussed as an option, this is achievable without any air trials by placing the MRZR in a 10K net.

- a. **Fix.** Bde Mov WO ICW 3 SQN and TTS is to finalise LOV external lift rigging procedure, with a confirmation test flight and published chapter inserted into the NZAP for future use.
- b. **Fix.** 1 RNZIR ICW 3 SQN is to fly MRZR externally as a confirmation flight only.

17. The planned deployment of the RO 3000 without previously trialling it on the C-130 created a lot of staff effort burden for no effect. 2ER was tasked to prep the RO 3000 and transport it to Ohakea to be airlifted to Hawkes Bay. On arrival in Ohakea, the RO section were forced to wait until 40 SQN determined that they would not fly the RO 3000.

- a. **Fix.** 2 ER and Bde Mov WO ICW 40 SQN to trial RO 3000 flight.

18. The 2ER Reverse Osmosis (RO) units were required to deploy at short notice by air. Subsequently no MD 450/451s and MD 460/461s were prepared.

- a. **Fix.** 2 ER ICW Bde Mov WO to prepopulate MD450/MD451s and MD 460/461s for the RO 500 and 3000 units and have all associated chemicals available at all times.
- b. **Fix.** Bde Mov WO ICW 2 ER is to facilitate a UMC course to qualify up to twelve 2 ER personnel.

19. Deployment of the HMEE was required as it was the quickest plant to deploy without further planning. Once in theatre, a more suitable piece of plant would have enabled further work and more flexibility of operators if transport for the plant could have been sourced.

- a. **Fix.** S5 is to add a CDP to the 1 (NZ) Bde Op AWHINA OPORD for the hire of civilian transporter and plant to enable more flexibility with plant deploying to support.

20. Shadow posts were used outside of Position Description i.e. Effects Planner re-rolled to Battle Captain/DJ33.

- a. **Fix.** HQDJATF are requested to employ shadow posts in dedicated roles and a request for additional support staff be submitted if required.

21. The first LERG to deploy to Auckland was only given 1x roll bag and 1x carry on as baggage allowance from Bde S4 Cell. They were re-rolled on task which required FSMO less webbing which they did not have.

- a. **Fix.** S5 to add a LERG pack up to 1 (NZ) Bde Op AWHINA OPORD including FSMO, Roll bag and carry on to ensure deployed LERGs retain flexibility whilst on task.
22. LERG lacked pers with forklift DDP limiting our ability to self-load/unload whilst on task.
- a. **Fix.** S5 to add ringfencing of certain capabilities to 1 (NZ) Bde Op AWHINA OPORD IOT guarantee specialised capabilities. The below capability bricks need to held at R0 – 3 to align to the AWHINA LERG, RERG and NERG requirements.
 - i. NSE and AD Det at R0.
 - ii. Distribution PI including load and unload capability at R1.
 - iii. HADR TU at R2.
 - iv. CSST including caterers at R3.
23. Training gaps were identified with driver variation and communications equipment. This led to improtu instruction for driver variation and communications equipment which caused delays in deployment.
- a. **Fix.** S5 and S3 to plan satphone and driver variation training to be delivered prior to HRWS as part of 1 (NZ) Bde annual compliance training.

Information Actions

24. 1 (NZ) Bde deployed personnel local to the area that deployed on Op AWHINA. This was very beneficial to achieving tasks in areas where mobile service was limited and local tracks were not on maps. They also had connections with locals and knew areas which were previously flood prone.
- a. **Sustain.** All units are to plan on utilising personnel local to the effected region.

Sustainment

25. ResF U1700 vehs proved to be a significant asset for all LERGs deployed in the North East of the North Island. Having these vehicles as a component of the LERGs that 3/6 RNZIR deployed greatly enhanced their utility for CDEM. During the Op AWHINA responses 3/6 RNZIR loaned three U1700s from CSS (North) to enable the deployment of two separate LERGs. A group of vehicles also supported RNZN due to their loc3/6 RNZIR settled on a basic structure for the LERG of 4 x U1700 and other vehs as necessary. This provided:
- a. The ability that RNZN lacked to respond to the Northland region.
 - b. The ability to lift the pers and stores and equipment required.
 - c. The ability to split the LERG into smaller TE for specific tasks.
 - d. The ability to be deployed in pairs, as this provided mutual support and the ability to self-recover.
 - e. The ability for each vehicle to have a minimum crew of four, made up of two DDP qualified drivers and two crew for the rear of the vehicle. This allowed adequate drivers for extended operation periods and two crew in the rear if transporting civilians.

- f. **Fix.** S4 to review ResF TOEEs to increase to 8x U1700s or 8x HX60s. An additional pool of 4x U1700s is to be held held at CSS (North) for any response options in the top of the North Island.
- g. **Fix.** S5 to add into 1 (NZ) Bde Op AWHINA OPORD clear SOPs for support to the RNZAF and RNZN regions.

26. s. 6(a)



27. Lack of vehicle availability was a big constraint, this was due to backlog of VSF servicing, aging fleet of U1700s and potential MHOV unsuitability for initial response. Vehicles received from MFU were due COFs and had other issues that further delayed deployment.

- a. **Fix.** S4 is to prioritise 1 (NZ) Bde vehicles once a response is activated and prioritise servicing and repair prior to HRWS.
- b. **Improve.** S4 is to confirm if current contractual arrangements provide the required flexibility and are being met.

28. The medical and dental requirements for deployment changed mid deployment from Z5 to Z4 and dental CAT 2.

- a. **Fix.** S5 is to specify medical and dental requirements in the updated CONPLAN AWHINA.

29. On activation, task elements were deficient significant items that could have posed a problem for safety of the force or task completion.

- a. **Fix.** S5 is to add into CONPLAN AWHINA the following pack-up stores should be held at strategic locations for use during an initial response:
 - i. SAT phones for emergency communications.
 - ii. s. 6(a)
 - iii. Generator, power banks, or chargers from a vehicle, for radios, cell phone, laptops or iPads to enable communications when power has been cut.
 - iv. Safety Equipment for operating in hazardous environments, such as high visibility vests, Vehicles road kits (cones and flashing lights), gumboots, gloves, mask and eye protection.

30. Currently there is a lack of uniforms since the new NZMTP have been introduced into service. When deployed on OP AWHINA and pers are required to work in mud and contaminated flood waters with limited ability to wash uniforms, there needs to be a more efficient resupply process.

- a. **Fix.** S4 is to confirm how many personnel need to be issued their full SOE of MTP and identify a viable COA to bring personnel up to full SOE.
- b. **Fix.** S4 ICW 2 CSSB and 3 CSSB is to hold a 10% holding of PWS for deployed pers to allow for NZMTP exchanges in the field.

31. Arranging civilian air travel and buses at short notice and on weekends was difficult as DSSG travel cell don't work after hours and APX can be hard to get hold of and also require someone with FINDEL to approve MD420s.

- a. **Fix.** Bde MOV WO be given a \$5,000 FINDEL for Travel only IOT expedite civilian travel at short notice.

Conclusion

32. Op AWHINA provided a large scale test of NZDF Combat Service Support capability and learning opportunity for all levels which provide valuable learning outcomes to improve processes for future Op AWHINA activations. The tasks in this minute need to be completed NLT 25 Sep 23 in preparation for HRWS.

s. 9(2)(g)(i), s. 9(2)(k)



MAJ
S3 1 (NZ) BDE)

Headquarters Joint Deployable Inter-Agency Task Force

COMD MINUTE 003/2023

26 Jun 23

03-1016/03

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OP ĀWHINA (CYCLONE GABRIELLE) 01/23: POST OPERATION REPORT

Background

1. On 27 Jan 23, Auckland experienced a severe weather event that required NZDF support (under Op ĀWHINA 1/23 – Auckland Flood Recovery). On 9 Feb 23, in preparation for Tropical Cyclone Gabrielle – also expected to severely impact Auckland – HQ DJIATF deployed as JTG 650.4 to provide C2 over the NZDF assets assigned to the flood recovery, and in support of the Auckland Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC).
2. Downgraded from a Tropical Cyclone to a Cyclone, Gabrielle impacted the upper North Island from 12-14 Feb 23 with Te Tairāwhiti and Hawke’s Bay regions suffering significant damage and resulting in the declaration of a State of National Emergency. Consequently, on 15 Feb 23, HQ JTG 650.4 was redirected from leading the NZDF’s regional response in Auckland, to leading the NZDF’s national response from the National Crisis Management Centre (NCMC) in the Beehive.
3. During this response COMD JTG 650.4 was assigned OPCON of all land based RERGS as well as HMNZS MANAWANUI and HMNZS CANTERBURY. 3x NH-90 were assigned TACOM and HMNZS TE MANA was assigned in direct support.

Thematic Summary

4. The NZDF’s successful response to Cyclone Gabrielle highlighted a number of sustains and improves that should be incorporated into future domestic HADR operations. The J8 Br is finalising an Observations Report that will provide the detail of these. This POR summarises the most important sustain/improves from the perspective of Comd JTG 650.4. These are outlined thematically below.
5. **Mission Command – Sustain.** Underpinning the NZDF support to NEMA (and the Regional ECC) response was the CDF’s intent, reinforced by COMJFNZ, that NZDF commanders be empowered to provide immediate support to ease the suffering of those in need. This intent enabled mission command – at all levels – and set the scene for mission success during the response.
6. **HQ DJIATF composition/SOPs – Improve.** HQ DJIATF’s SOPs and resourcing assumes that the HQ JTG will operate from one location. However, during both phases of this response (Auckland and Wellington) the HQ was required to split across two locations; a forward C2 node focused on the tactical level response, and a rear C2 node which focused on the operational/strategic level response. While manageable in this instance, it stretched the HQ DJIATF staff and induced significant fatigue. Consequently, the HQ DJIATF SOPs and Shadow Post Directive will be developed to include considerations for a split HQ, and the findings of this will be included in a reviewed JP 3.0 (for subsequent COMJFNZ approval).
7. **Answering Strategic RFIs – Improve.** HQ DJIATF spent a significant amount of time answering questions from Ministerial and NZDF Senior Officials – so much so that at times this detracted from the HQ’s ability to coordinate the emergency response. However, if a similar event was to occur again the requirement to answer these RFIs will not diminish. Consequently, HQ DJIATF will work with the HQ JFNZ and SCE Br and MoD POLAD to review the processes for answering RFIs so this can be done more efficiently, and without detracting from the mission. This requirement will also be reflected in the HQ DJIATF SOPs and Shadow Post Directive review.

8. **OGALO Employment – Improve.** The tempo of the operation necessitated the rotation of a number of NZDF staff through the role of OGALO at short notice. These staff deployed without an understanding of the requirements of the role. While they were able to provide sound and timely advice, they would be able to better support mission success if they had been provided pre-training to familiarise them with the role. To achieve this, it is recommended the OGALO SOPs (owned by the J3 Br) be reviewed by the J3 Br (with support from HQ DJIATF and recommended support from SCE Br). It is also recommended that likely OGALOs complete CIMS training¹, and participate in HQ DJIATF/NEMA joint training.

9. **Op ĀWHINA CONPLAN – Improve.** Lessons identified from the Cyclone Gabrielle response indicated that the Op ĀWHINA CONPLAN requires review. In particular, it is recommended that the content regarding health and safety guidance (use of PPE) and operational risk management be updated. Additionally, annexes for cultural advisors, gender considerations and a code of conduct card are required. JTG 650.4 developed annexes for these areas during the response – these can be used as a start point for the annexes to be added to the Op ĀWHINA CONPLAN.


10. **Handover Planning – Improve.** The nature of the NZDF's support to the emergency response meant that the HQ DJIATF Plans Cell was suppressed inside a planning horizon of 48 hours. Concurrently however, HQ DJIATF staff were stretched by the requirement to look further ahead, towards a conditions-based handover of C2 back to HQ JFNZ. In the future, it is recommended that HQ JFNZ take the lead on the planning of C2 handovers. This will ease the burden on HQ DJIATF and allow it to focus on delivering current operations. Furthermore, it is recommended that the requirement to plan a C2 handover be incorporated into HQ JFNZ's Ex Kiwi Command (in late 2023) as a training objective.

Recommendations

11. It is recommended that COMJFNZ:

- a. **Note** – The importance of mission command being exercised, and the role of CDF and COMJFNZ in enabling this.
- b. **Note** – HQ DJIATF is updating its SOPs, and that this will inform the JP-3.0.
- c. **Note** – HQ DJIATF will work with J3 Br and SCE to refine the procedures for answering RFIs during an emergency response.
- d. **Direct** – J3 Br (supported by HQ DJIATF and an invitation to SCE Br to support) review the OGALO SOPs and training requirements to better enable nominated staff to perform the duties required of an OGALO.
- e. **Direct** – J5 Br (supported by HQ DJIATF) review the Op ĀWHINA CONPLAN to incorporate the lessons identified from Cyclone Gabrielle response.
- f. **Direct** – J7 Br include the planning of a C2 handover between HQ DJIATF and HQ JFNZ as a training objective for Ex Kiwi Command 2023.

s. 9(2)(k)



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COMD JTG 650.5

¹ CIMS (Coordinated Incident Response System) is an all-of-government C2 system that is trained by Land Search and Rescue NZ.

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J8 MINUTE 136/2023

30 Jun 23

HQJFNZ 03-1016/03

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OP ĀWHINA (TC GABRIELLE) 01/23 OBSERVATIONS REPORT

Reference

- A. OPERATION ORDER 023/23 OPERATION ĀWHINA (TROPICAL CYCLONE GABRIELLE) of 10 Feb 23

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to highlight key areas of interest, which have been derived from insights collected regarding Op ĀWHINA (Tropical Cyclone (TC) GABRIELLE). It will also include observations relating to Op ĀWHINA Auckland Flood Recovery Support. The aim of this report is to generate discussion and identify lessons that can influence similar future operations. This report has focussed on a number of key areas of interest.

Background

2. On 27 Jan 23 Northland, Auckland and Thames Coromandel experienced a severe weather event which caused unprecedented flooding in Auckland, and significant damage across the region. Subsequently, local states of emergency were declared in Northland, Auckland, Tairāwhiti, Bay of Plenty, Waikato, Hawkes Bay and Tararua Districts.
3. On 12 Feb 23 Tropical Cyclone Gabrielle impacted sizeable parts of the north and east of the North Island. A national state of emergency was declared on 14 Feb 23. The Tairāwhiti and Hawkes Bay regions suffered significant damage and the ĀWHINA state was raised to RED on 09 1609 Feb 23.
4. Ref A directed that J8 conduct an After Action Review to capture observations of HQJFNZ response to OGA and civil support. J8 Br facilitated discussions with approximately 40 personnel with ranks ranging between OR-7 and OF-5¹. Observations were also collected in a spreadsheet loaded to DDMS², extracted from post-activity reports (PAR), situation reports (SITREP) and through planning meetings. All collected observations were analysed to generate insights which were then consolidated to produce key areas of interest.
5. Observations and recommendations not related to the key areas of interest will be discussed with branches, synthesised, coded, analysed and loaded into the Electronic Activity Reporting and Lessons Learned System (EARLLS) in the usual manner.

¹ NATO Standardisation Agreement 2116

² Available at → [Op ĀWHINA observations spreadsheet](#)

Executive Summary

6. Informed by information collected throughout the compilation of this report, it can be stated from anecdotal observations collected that Op ĀWHINA (TC GABRIELLE) was a success. The NZDF responded effectively and was able to demonstrate its ability to be adaptable in a dynamic situation.

7. By reviewing the observations raised and integrating with others from previous Op ĀWHINA and additional NZDF missions and using inductive reasoning³ the following deductions have also been made by J8:

- a. The NZDF primary role is to support the lead agency however, due to NZDF experience with planning and command structure there is a tendency to identify and fill function gaps within all of government (AOG) operations. This forward leaning approach can cause friction with other agencies.
- b. NZDF personnel can become mission orientated, prioritising task urgency above health and safety and/or risk. This is likely due to personnel having a higher tolerance of accepted risk, as a result of military training.
- c. NZDF has not fully engaged in Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM), specifically the Coordinated Incident Management System (CIMS), other government agency (OGA) engagement and all of government (AOG) exercises. Whilst this may occur at the regional level, more effort is needed to ensure this occurs at the operational and national level.

Key Observations

8. Following analysis the below key observations are assessed as having an influential impact on subsequent observations. Further details concerning respective observations can be found in Annex A.

- a. **Liaison Officers (LO).** LOs were identified as essential. However, there was a lack of preparation and training for personnel deployed into these roles. Early supplementation of LOs has the ability to improve situational awareness, establish effective communication lines, filter requests for assistance, and manage expectations of other agencies (A 17-20).
- b. **Contingency Plan (CONPLAN) ĀWHINA.** A number of observations and recommendations related to the review and amendment of CONPLAN ĀWHINA (A 24).
- c. **Risk.** For dynamic operations, risks should be regularly reviewed and mitigations checked to ensure they remain fit for purpose. Furthermore, there was a lack of clarity surrounding the ownership of risk management, a lack of personnel to fill risk management roles and a lack of risk assessment training (A 21-23).
- d. **Communications.** Current NZDF communications and information systems (CIS) capability is not optimised s. 9(2)(g)(i)

³ Inductive Reasoning – The logical thinking process in which specific observations that are believed to be true are combined to draw a conclusion to create broader generalization and theories.

s. 9(2)(g)(i) . There was a deficiency of prepared equipment and a lack of awareness of available CIS products and services. Combined, this resulted in the utilisation of non-NZDF capabilities due to the ease of establishment and availability (A 25-28).

- e. **Task tracking.** Inconsistent systems and processes were used to track tasks and activities. This caused frustration and inefficient use of time, furthermore, it created a lack of asset oversight, unclear task status and easily outdated information (A 33-34).

Conclusion

9. Individual key observations supporting the key areas of interest are contained in the annexes with Op ĀWHINA (TC GABRIELLE) PARs available to view on DIXS EARLLS. It must be considered when reviewing these observations, that they may have been drawn from the subjective opinions and views of particular individuals.

10. This report has focused on a number of key areas of interest generated from the directed J8 collection. It is of note that, whilst produced separately, these areas of interest closely align with themes highlighted in the HQ DJIATF post operation report⁴.

s. 6(a)



J8

Annexes

A. OP ĀWHINA (TC GABRIELLE) 01/23 OBSERVATIONS

Distribution

External:

1 (NZ) Bde (Attn: CoS)
HMNZS MANAWANUI (Attn: CO)
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⁴ OP ĀWHINA (CYCLONE GABRIELLE) 01/23: POST OPERATION REPORT, 26 Jun 23

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