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OIA-2024-5207

21 February 2025

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Dear [REDACTED]

I refer to your email of 18 November 2024 requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), information on New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) reporting of brain health hazards in military activity. A response to the various parts of your request is set out below:

1. *Does the lack of reported instances give Defence Health confidence that no such instances have occurred?*
2. *The G7 Minute 1635/1 says that Army health and safety is "not fit for purpose" - is Defence Health concerned there might be reporting gaps?*

It is not appropriate for Defence Health to speculate on Single Service safety in training matters.

3. *What other mechanisms would Defence Health expect to be notified and are those mechanisms effective?*

Paragraph 13 of Defence Health Directive 23/003 Medical Management of Brain Health Hazards in Military Activity states:

Monitoring for and reporting of health problems

Defence Health are not aware of when an individual has been exposed to military weapons systems health hazards. As such, Single Service Safety Authorities, command/management of individuals, or individuals themselves (can also be in conjunction with the Directorate of Safety) are responsible for notifying Defence Health where an individual has been exposed to military weapons system hazards (ongoing or accidental exposures).

This can be done through personnel reporting to their respective Defence Health Centre, completing a Weapons System Post Activity Self Questionnaire or through formal incident reports and casualty notification reports (for operational and training related incidents and accidents).

4. *The individual sent for specialist assessment appears to contradict the zero reporting of instances of exposure to hazards. Para 12 of the directive set the responsibility for reporting instances of hazard impacting on personnel and Para 13 described what happened when that reporting happened. In response to the Para 12 OIA question, the answer was zero yet the answer to Para 13 was one person was sent for specialist assessment. Could NZDF please explain how this is not a contradiction?*

No formal incident or casualty notification reports occurred. The one individual completed a Weapons System Post Activity Self Questionnaire, and was sent for specialist assessment in accordance with Defence Health Directive 23/003, paragraph 19.

5. Does NZDF know how many current personnel are or might be subject to the effects of a brain health effect from a military weapons system hazard?

No. Personnel medical information is recorded in an individual's personal file. A central record of all personnel who may or may not be exposed to brain health hazards from military activity has not been created.

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

GA Motley

Brigadier

Chief of Staff HQNZDF