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OIA-2024-5226.2

13 February 2026

Rodney Parsons

[fyi-request-28866-f8d43041@requests.fyi.org.nz](mailto:fyi-request-28866-f8d43041@requests.fyi.org.nz)

Dear Rodney Parsons

I refer to your email of 4 January 2026 seeking information on what actions the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) has taken with respect to war crimes. You also referred to matters/items you assert are illegal trophies within the New Zealand Special Air Service (NZSAS) mess, you mentioned possession of documents indicating the NZDF has knowledge of such matters, and have asked what actions have been taken regarding those items.

You provided some specifics of the war crimes allegations you referred to in your earlier communications, namely:

*... during Op Waea[sic], 1NZSAS personnel are alleged to have mutilated the bodies of enemy combatants, killed following release of explosive devices. Subsequently, materials (both human remains, weapons and other items) are alleged to have been collected, retained and returned to NZDF. The Op Watea image in Papakura's "Hunting Lodge" depicts elements of these, but needn't do so since the lodge is littered with illegal trophies- Kalashnikov's, paintings unlawfully removed, and bodily remains.*

Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

With respect to your comment on classification waivers, there is no express or implied waiver to the normal rules of classification when asking for examples.

The response of 19 September 2025 provided information based on the broad query that was submitted at the time. Based on the more specific allegations you have provided, subsequent searches identified a complaint made to the Military Police by a person outside the timeframe that you specified.

The person made allegations outlined below which may have been war crimes between 2001 and 2013:

1. Perfidious use of the protected symbol of the Red Cross. The first allegation was about members of 1NZSAS adopting the symbol of the Red Cross (and feigning non-combatant status) handing out medical aid in a village as cover for an intelligence gathering exercise. The second was about the use of medics to guard/enforce the detention of an injured suspected combatant at the "Battle of Baghak" in 2012 awaiting their handover to American custody.

2. Allegation of misconduct regarding human remains - in there being bodily materials from a suicide bomber who in 2011 detonated themselves in a room of the Kabul Hotel Inter-Continental.

The Joint Military Police Unit investigated these matters and found:

1. Perfidious use of the protected symbol of the Red Cross. First allegation: No evidence to support the allegation. Second allegation: While medics were used to guard the wounded prisoner, this was a tactical and resourcing decision to prevent the participants in the engagement having to guard them and did not contravene the Laws of Armed Conflict regarding their non-combatant role.
2. Allegation of misconduct regarding human remains. No evidence to support the allegation of there being human remains on the painting. Forensic testing by the (then) Institute of Environmental Science and Research supported this. Further there was no evidence of cleaning products being applied either.

In addition, no record has been found in relation to an allegation of bodily mutilation after the release of an explosive device, as described in your email of 4 January 2026.

With respect to the assertion of “illegal trophies” at the NZSAS’s mess, the NZDF is comfortable that those items were, and remain, properly in its possession in compliance with domestic law and all relevant international obligations. Accordingly, the NZDF will not be taking any further action in relation to those items.

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](http://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.

Yours sincerely

**GA Motley**  
Brigadier  
Chief of Staff HQNZDF