



Headquarters
New Zealand Defence Force
Defence House
Private Bag 39997
Wellington Mail Centre
Lower Hutt 5045
New Zealand

OIA-2025-5369

22nd
May 2025

Dear [REDACTED]

I refer to your email of 28 April 2025, requesting information relating to veterans living in the Eastern Bay of Plenty. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

Specifically, you asked the following:

- *How many veterans who went to Vietnam live in the Eastern Bay of Plenty?*

The New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) only holds information on former uniformed personnel who contact Veterans' Affairs (VA) to register themselves or to seek support. If a former member of the NZDF has not contacted VA, they will not be represented in the following information. There are 22 former members of the NZDF who served in Vietnam and who provided an address in the Eastern Bay of Plenty.

- *How many veterans have been affected by Agent Orange and are receiving ex-gratia payments from Veterans Affairs/Govt?*

The NZDF does not hold information on whether a former member of the NZDF was exposed to, or affected by, Agent Orange or other defoliants used in Vietnam.

In 2006, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Crown and organisations representing Vietnam veterans. Among other measures, this provided for ex-gratia payments that would be made to Vietnam veterans who suffered from a number of specified prescribed conditions.

The MoU accepted as a prescribed condition any of the conditions that appear on the United States National Academy of Sciences list of conditions for which the Academy considers there is "sufficient evidence of association" with Agent Orange. At the time the MoU was signed, these conditions comprised:

- Chronic lymphocytic leukaemia
- Soft tissue sarcoma
- Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
- Hodgkin's disease
- Chloracne.

In 2021, two new conditions were added to the list:

- Monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance
- Hypertension.

The MoU also provided for an ex-gratia payment to the surviving spouse or partner of a Vietnam veteran where there was reasonable evidence the veteran had died of one of the prescribed conditions, and to natural-born children of Vietnam veterans who suffered from one of five accepted conditions:

- Spina bifida
- Cleft lip
- Cleft palate
- Acute myeloid leukaemia
- Adrenal gland cancer.

Proof of exposure is not a requirement for eligibility for these payments, and this cannot therefore be taken as evidence of exposure to Agent Orange. More information about the MoU and eligibility for ex-gratia payments under the MoU can be found on the VA website¹. The MoU itself is also publically available².

- *How many ex-gratia applications by veterans are being processed by Veterans Affairs/Govt?*

Since 2007, over 1,100 payments have been made to veterans nationwide who were diagnosed with one or more of the prescribed conditions. Most of these payments reflect the addition of hypertension to the list of prescribed conditions in 2021.

- *How many applications have been declined? By Veterans Affairs/Govt*

Ex-gratia claims are commonly declined on the basis that:

- the veteran has already received an ex-gratia payment (the MoU only makes provision for this payment to be made once);
- the veteran does not have a confirmed diagnosis for the claimed condition;
- there is insufficient evidence supporting a claim that the condition contributed to the veteran's death;
- the veteran's service in Vietnam is outside the dates covered by the MoU;
- the claim is made by someone who is not eligible (for example, a relative of a Vietnam veteran).

The NZDF does not, however, track or report on the number of declined claims for ex-gratia payments, and this information cannot be provided without a substantial research and collation effort. This aspect of your request is declined in accordance with section 18(f) of the OIA.

- *How many veterans have died since their exposure to Agent Orange?*
- *How many NZ children have been affected by their parents' exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam?*

As noted above, the NZDF does not hold information on whether a veteran has been exposed to, or affected by, Agent Orange or other defoliants used in Vietnam. The MoU, however, provided for an ex-gratia payment to be made to children of Vietnam veterans who suffered one of five accepted conditions. Since 2007, 32 ex-gratia payments have been made to children of Vietnam veterans nationwide.

- *Does the government include exposure like cerebral palsy or Crohn's disease under the Agent Orange ex-gratia payment scheme?*

No, only the aforementioned conditions are accepted under the MoU.

- *What mental health support is available for families and veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange?*

Information regarding access to mental health treatment for veterans with qualifying service can be found on the VA website³ along with information regarding the support that is available to the families of Vietnam veterans (including mental health support)⁴.

¹ <https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/news-events/articles/more-vietnam-veterans-will-become-eligible-for-an-ex-gratia-payment/>

² <https://va.cwp.govt.nz/assets/Corporate/Memorandum-of-Understanding-EVSA-2006.pdf>

³ <https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/a-z/mental-health-treatment/>

⁴ <https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/a-z/support-for-families-of-those-with-service-in-viet-nam/>

- *What mental health support is available for families and veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange?*

Information regarding access to mental health treatment for veterans with qualifying service can be found on the VA website⁵ along with information regarding the support that is available to the families of Vietnam veterans (including mental health support)⁶.

- *How many veterans have applied for assistance through veterans service and been accepted (In the Eastern Bay of Plenty)?*

A total of 148 former members of the NZDF in the Eastern Bay of Plenty are receiving support from VA per entitlements under the Veterans' Support Act 2014. For your information, 22 of these former members are Vietnam veterans. This support includes the the Veterans' Independence Programme that provides services such as lawn mowing, gardening, and gutter and exterior house cleaning on a needs basis.

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

⁵ <https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/a-z/mental-health-treatment/>

⁶ <https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/a-z/support-for-families-of-those-with-service-in-viet-nam/>