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New Zealand Defence Force
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Wellington Mail Centre
Lower Hutt 5045
New Zealand

OIA-2025-5529

2nd October 2025

[redacted]@rnz.co.nz

Dear [redacted]

I refer to your email of 4 September 2025 referring to an online Army News item about the New Zealand Army using local drone technology. You have asked for the following information:

> *In relation to this FPV potentially offensive-used technology, RNZ requests release in full and in fully searchable and copyable format:*
>
> - *A full summary of every activity - at any stage (early, late) and including both research and training and operational - that has contributed in the last six months to NZDF "actively looking"*
> - *Titles of any and all documents produced in the last six months about NZDF "actively looking"*
> - *Copies of the 3 most substantive documents* produced in the last six months about NZDF "actively looking"*
> - *Additonally to the 3 docs above, copies of the 2 most substantive documents* NZDF is using to assess the "changing … way combat occurs" due to this tech; please note with this question we are seeking to determine in what ways NZDF is considering the rules of engagement or similar around its use of offensive drones - please provide additional comment on how that is being done*
> - *A summary of any advice going to decisionmakers in any of the Services about NZDF "actively looking" at this tech*
> - *A copy of any advice going to the govt executive including the Defence Minister, about NZDF "actively looking" at this tech*

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

In February 2025, a member of the New Zealand Army attended the Drone Capability Coalition in Latvia, and (as reported in the Army News story online), members of 2nd/1st Battalion received training on first-person view (FPV) platforms from 21-22 August 2025 at Burnham Military Camp.

A PowerPoint presentation outlining specific drone capability considerations and costs is withheld in full in accordance with sections 6(a), 9(2)(f)(iv), and 9(2)(g)(i) of the OIA. This presentation covered the following Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) technology that the New

Zealand Army is actively considering: baseline Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaisance UAS; First Person View strike UAS; and, air-to-air interceptor UAS.

Enclosed is a copy of the Post Activity Report from attendance at the Drone Capability Coalition in Latvia. Where indicated, information is withheld to: avoid prejudice to the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the Government of New Zealand in accordance with section 6(a) of the OIA; avoid prejudice to the entrusting of information to the Government of New Zealand or protect information provided in confidence in accordance with sections 6(b) and 9(2)(ba)(i) of the OIA respectively; maintain the effectiveness of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinion in accordance with section 9(2)(g)(i); and, avoid the malicious or inappropriate use of this information, such as phishing, scams or unsolicited advertising in accordance with section 9(2)(k) of the OIA.

As a result of the limited activity, there is no advice that has gone to *decisionmakers* or to *the govt executive* at this point.

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

Enclosure:
1. Post Activity Report - Drone Capability Coalition, 24 March 2025

24 MAR 25

To: DCA (Through DSC and ACA(S))

For Info:
LCC
IDCC Lead, MOD
DLD
Dir Land Domain, MOD
Cap Br UAS Working Group

POST ACTIVITY REPORT – DRONE CAPABILITY COALITION s. 6(b)(ii) **LATVIA**

Executive Summary

1. In June 2024 the NZ Government pledged NZD$4 million to the Drone Capability Coalition, a multi-national coalition designed to provide a variety of Unmanned Air Systems (UAS) to Ukraine while enhancing development and manufacturing capabilities within member nations.

2. s. 6(b)(ii)

3. s. 6(b)(ii) . The wider DCC provides the opportunity to enhance Army's ability to FIND, STRIKE, INTERCEPT and PROTECT utilising UAS and C-UAS platforms. s. 6(a)

Recommendation Summary

4. Continued NZ engagement with the DCC, s. 6(a) and attendance at the DCC Summit in Latvia in MAY 25.

5. s. 6(a)

6. Commence low level skill development within Army to identify and train suitable personnel to enable a future FPV UAS capability.

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s. 6(b)(ii)

7. Commence rapid capability development to incorporate FIND, STRIKE, INTERCEPT and PROTECT effects through UAS and C-UAS platforms.

8. Utilise NZ-based industry linked to the DCC to provide capability demonstrations for wider Army and NZDF.

9. Further details on Recommendations can be found on p.9 of this PAR.

Drone Capability Coalition Background

10. The Drone Capability Coalition (DCC) was formally established on 14 February 2024. It is an initiative proposed by Latvia and coordinated in conjunction with the United Kingdom to support Ukraine's efforts to defeat the Russian Federation's invasion of that country. The objectives[2] of the DCC are to:

    a. Ensure Ukraine's UAV supremacy through a stable supply of drones
    b. Promote creation of a safe drone part supply chain in the West
    c. Support drone manufacturing in the West
    d. Promote allied UAV capabilities

11. At present the following countries are formal members of the coalition: Australia, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Estonia, Germany, Italy, Canada, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and Ukraine. The United States provides input, and additional nations are currently looking at joining the coalition, including Norway and Croatia.

12. New Zealand formally joined the DCC in July 2024 following the NATO Leaders Summit in Washington DC, committing NZD$4 million towards the DCC[3]. Active participation commenced in September 2024, s. 6(a) [redacted]. Discussions around funding have taken place between NZ MOD and UK MOD. DCC engagement is currently sitting with Strategic Concepts within Army General Staff.

DCC Capability Development and Progress to Date

13. s. 6(b)(ii) [redacted]

[2] https://www.mod.gov.lv/en/drone-coalition-0
[3] https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/new-zealand-increases-support-ukraine

s. 6(b)(ii)

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s. 6(b)(ii)

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20. s. 6(b)(ii)

s. 6(b)(ii) **Location**

21. s. 6(b)(ii) Selonia training area, approximately 2hrs/130km SE of the Latvian capital, Riga. The site was opened at a training rea in 2024, due to the increased activity in Latvia with the NATO Forward Presence Battlegroup.

22. The site was chosen due to the low population density and ability to secure the required airspace. It also allowed for the use of electronic warfare systems (jammers) without any concerns regarding local population. In order to simplify range approvals the UAS carried dummy payloads during their strike sorties (drainage pipe filled with concrete).

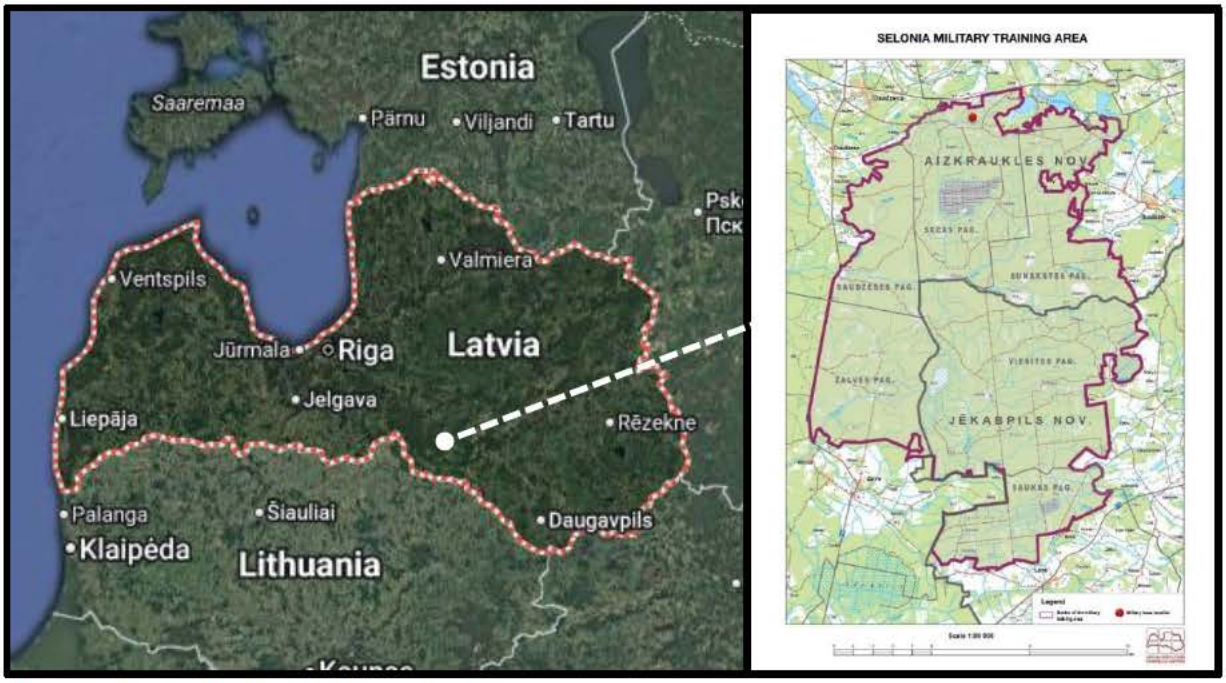

Figure 1: Selonia Military Training Area and Location

Participants

23. DCC Personnel. The following participants were either directly involved in the evaluation of systems, or were present as observers.

Country	Name	Role	T&E Role
NZ	s. 6(a), s. 6(b)(i)		Observer
Ukraine			Evaluator
UK			Evaluator
			Evaluator
			Evaluator
Latvia			Evaluator
			Co-Ordinator
USA			Observer
Denmark			Observer
Germany			Observer
Czechia			Observer
Italy			Observer
Canada			Observer

Table 1: DCC National Participants

24. s. 6(b)(ii)

s. 6(b)(ii)

25. s. 6(b)(ii)

s. 6(b)(ii)

26. s. 6(a), s. 6(b)(ii)

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s. 6(b)(ii) **Observations**

30. s. 6(a), s. 6(b)(i)

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33. s. 6(a)

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s. 6(b)(ii)

35. s. 6(a), s. 6(b)(ii)

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Recommendations

40. Capability and Potential Procurement Options

a. Involvement with the DCC will ensure that NZ and the NZDF has awareness of, and preferential access to, emerging systems which will allow potential procurement of battle proven RAS.

b. s. 6(a), s. 6(b)(i), s. 6(b)(ii)

c.

d.

41. Skill Development Within NZ Army

a. There is a particular skill set required to operate FPV UAS platforms. s. 9(2)(ba)(i)

b. While there is currently no confirmed FPV systems planned for the NZDF, beyond the Black Hornet 4 UAS, there is the opportunity to begin low-level, low-cost simulator training now to identify specialist pilots and prepare personnel for the arrival of future systems. This will ensure that the NZ Army is well positioned to integrate future systems as they arrive.

42. s. 6(a)

s. 6(a), s. 6(b)(ii)

43. s. 6(a), s. 6(b)(ii)

44.

s. 6(a), s. 6(b)(ii)

45. Attendance at the DCC Drone Summit

a. The next DCC Drone Summit will take place in MAY 25 in Riga, with participants up to and including Defence Minister level, in addition to uniformed personnel from all coalition nations.

b. s. 6(a) attendance is recommended.

46. RAS Capability Demonstrations and Experimentation

a. Syos Aerospace develop systems across the air, land and maritime domain, and have achieved significant success in the UK with the UK MOD. This includes heavy lift UAS trials undertaken with the Royal Navy, and their ongoing contract to

provide the Royal Navy with 20x SM300[4] Unmanned Surface Vessels (USVs) per month.

b. As a New Zealand based company, they provide the opportunity to demonstrate and trial RAS systems, to provide awareness for the wider NZDF on current capabilities and what is likely to be available over the next 5-10 years.

c. s. 9(2)(g)(i)

47. s. 6(a), s. 6(b)(ii)

48.

Summary

49. The DCC has demonstrated an ability to provide capability in line with Ukrainian requirements within a short period of time, leveraging innovation within smaller industry

[4] https://.syos-aerospace.com/sm300-usv/

players to provide a battlefield advantage. Continued involvement in the DCC s. 6(a) [redacted] will also provide a invaluable opportunity to both understand current technological and tactical advances within the UAS space, and to exploit opportunities provided by the DCC to enhance UAS and C-UAS capability within the NZDF.

s. 9(2)(k) [redacted]

RPR ADAMS
CAPT, SO UAS (A)
AGS

Annexes

s. 6(b)(ii) [redacted]