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OIA-2025-5855.1

LR

December 2025

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

I refer to your emails of 20 November 2025, requesting further information about the response of 20 November 2025. Your follow-up questions have also been considered in accordance with the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

What was the purpose of the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Squadron conducting demolition tasks at Cambridge quarries on 10 May 2023 and 24 October 2024?

- Were these training exercises or real-life operations? I see from the NZ Defence Force website the role of the squadron is to provide a chemical, biological, radiological and explosive capability as part of the whole-of-government response to domestic explosive disposal incidents.*
- What were the object(s) and risk(s) responded to:*
- How were the object(s) and risk(s) responded to and managed? What were the outcomes?*
- Was any follow-up action required (eg. reports to police, prosecution)?*
- What was the response specifically, e.g. defusing a home-made or other bomb or military ordinance, or other?*
- Which quarries were the operations carried out at, including the business names, quarry names and addresses? Please provide business names at both the date of the operations and at the present time if there have been any business name changes.*
- Were public notices issued for these activities? If so, where and when were these published?*

Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) teams were in Cambridge at the request of the New Zealand Police to conduct the safe disposal of hazardous or explosive substances. Police had identified old and deteriorated commercial explosives, which had been recovered in the conduct of Police duties. The incident on 10 May 2023 related to commercial black powder. The incident on 24 October 2024 related to commercial explosives.

The events at Cambridge were emergency disposals that needed to be carried out as soon as possible. There were no reasonable means to inform the public in advance. Where possible, EOD Personnel select disposal locations that will not affect the public. When this is not possible, the New Zealand Police will be asked to implement cordons and evacuation of the public to a safe distance. Quarries provide a suitable disposal location without affecting the Public. Further details are withheld in accordance with sections 6(a) and 6(d) of the OIA.

Could you please advise how often these types of events occur in NZ; including on average per year. Please include how many events on average per year specifically relating to quarries. So I can contextualise; eg are these types of events extremely unusual or relatively routine for the squadron?

In this instance, *events* are defined as the destruction of hazardous or explosive items that are a risk to the public and require disposal. These are relatively routine and make up approximately 75 percent of the 150 to 200 events that EOD responds to annually. Not all events require the disposal of explosives or hazardous substances, they may also include callouts for hoax, misidentified (non-hazardous or non-explosive), and/or inert items.

Quarries are used if they are available when required as they provide a suitable and safe area to dispose of a hazardous or explosive item. In the 2024 calendar year, quarries were used five times as a safe location for disposal.

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