



Headquarters  
New Zealand Defence Force  
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New Zealand

OIA-2025-5597

19<sup>th</sup> November 2025

[REDACTED]@stuff.co.nz

Dear [REDACTED]

I refer to your email of 13 October 2025 requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), the following information with respect to New Zealand Defence force (NZDF) involvement in the search for Tom Phillips:

*Were NZ SAS personnel involved in any way in the search for Tom Phillips?*

*A police press release referred to NZDF "ground assets" involved in the search - can someone tell me what these "ground assets" were?*

*The police release mentioned NZDF helicopter assets - can someone say how many helicopters were involved, and the total flying time?*

*Does the NZDF have a financial figure for the sum spent on the Tom Phillips search?*

I apologise for the length of time it has taken to provide this response. Information on New Zealand Special Air Service (NZSAS) personnel and "ground assets" provided in support to the New Zealand police is publicly available on the NZDF website, under OIA-2025-5541 NZDF tracking assistance.

NH90 helicopters provided the following support to the New Zealand Police: on 4 October 2024, two NH90s on standby in Hamilton for rapid response; on 5 October 2024, two NH90s provided transportation and were on standby for rapid response; on 24 April 2025, one NH90 on standby in Hamilton for rapid response. The short-term tasking cost for these aircraft was approximately \$44,360. This cost includes marginal personnel costs, fuel, airport charges and other associated costs; it does not include workshop maintenance costs, personnel salaries, depreciation, and capital charge. Marginal costs for NZSAS personnel are not available.

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, with your personal information removed.

Yours sincerely

**GA Motley**  
Brigadier  
Chief of Staff HQNZDF