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New Zealand Defence Force  
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New Zealand

December 2025

OIA-2025-5598

[Redacted]  
[Redacted] [@taxpayers.org.nz](mailto:[Redacted]@taxpayers.org.nz)

Dear [Redacted]

I refer to your email of 11 November 2025 requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), the following information:

- *The total cost incurred by NZDF for hosting this years Five Eyes Special Forces Commanders' meeting or some other named meeting in Queenstown, broken down by travel, accommodation, catering, venue hire, entertainment, and any other associated expenses.*
  - Copies of any briefings, approvals, or correspondence authorising the decision to host the meeting in Queenstown rather than at NZSAS or other NZDF VIP facilities.
  - Any documentation outlining the rationale for selecting Queenstown as the location, including cost comparisons or options considered.
  - Any internal communications, reports, or correspondence discussing the cost, funding source, or budget impact of this event.
  - Details of any hospitality, gifts, or other expenditure provided to attendees.
- *Information about any payments, incentives, or retention bonuses offered to NZSAS personnel since 1 January 2024, including the total number of eligible personnel, the amount available per person, and the total estimated cost of the scheme.*
  - Any advice, ministerial briefings, or internal documentation discussing the financial impact or justification for these retention bonuses.

This conference was the primary partner engagement for Special Operations Command New Zealand (SOCNZ) in 2025. SOCNZ is the Wellington-based headquarters function that provides strategic advice, oversight, leadership, authorisation, resourcing, and general support for the spectrum of Special Forces, including the New Zealand Special Air Service Regiment (NZSAS). For your future reference, SOCNZ is not a term that is interchangeable with the NZSAS as used in your request.

The following table provides a breakdown of the approximate cost (GST exclusive) to the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF).

Travel	\$12,500
Accommodation	\$52,750
Catering/Dining	\$2,600

Venue hire/Activities	\$8,890
Total	\$76,740

Enclosed is relevant documentation concerning this conference. While enclosure 2 was created as a dot-point brief for the Chief of Defence Force, this was only presented to the Chief of Army and the Deputy Chief of Army. Where indicated information is withheld in accordance with: section 6(a) of the OIA to avoid prejudice to the international relations of the Government of New Zealand; 6(b)(i) and 6(b)(ii) of the OIA to avoid prejudice to the entrusting of information to the Government of New Zealand by another country or agency of such a Government, and any international organisation respectively; section 9(2)(a) of the OIA to protect privacy.

It has been widely reported that the NZDF has faced high levels of attrition in recent years. While overall attrition rates have significantly improved, there remain acute issues with hollowness and retention of experienced personnel within a small number of trades across all three Services. Specific targeted payments to critical trades, as well as general NZDF-wide retention payments, have been made. These have largely been funded through operating expenditure underspends.

As part of the New Zealand Army Critical Trade Retention Scheme, the Chief of Defence Force issued a Defence Force Order in August 2025 prescribing special conditions of service for the retention of NZSAS trades. The Assistant Chief of Army (Delivery), or a delegate not below the rank of Colonel (or equivalent rank), is the approving authority for participation in the scheme. The Defence Force Order is withheld in full, as is *the total number of eligible personnel, the amount available per person, and the total estimated cost of the scheme*, in accordance with sections 6(a) and 9(2)(a) of the OIA. This is because the information concerns critical areas of NZDF capability and a limited number of individuals.

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

**Enclosures:**

1. Email, 6 October 2025
2. Dot-Point Brief, 7 October 2025

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**From:** s. 9(2)(a)  
**Sent:** Monday, 6 October 2025 4:05 p.m.  
**To:** s. 9(2)(a)

Boomrock, estimated price range of \$13,000 - \$16,000 for events (exclusive use of facilities + lunch).  
Venue hire is between \$2600 - \$5300, depended on what activities are being conducted.  
Individual activity cost (not including exclusive venue hire) and excl GST:

- Extreme 4x4 \$175
- Archery \$30
- Axe \$20
- Claybird Shooting \$35
- Extreme Golf \$25.00
- Total \$285 ea
- Total x 30 pers = \$8550
- + total venue hire = \$13,580 (less lunch @\$3,600)

Accommodation Auckland: Less conference facilities

Cordis \$349 per night, x 3 nights = \$1047 ea, \$52,350 (x 50 rooms)  
JW Marriott \$398 per night, x 3 nights = \$1194 ea, \$59,700 (x 50 rooms)

Accommodation Wellington: Less conference facilities

Intercontinental \$482 per night, x 3 nights \$1446 ea \$72,300 (x 50 rooms)  
Sofitel \$373 per night, x 3 nights \$1119 ea \$55,950 (x 50 rooms)

SELCON 2024 conference : Takania Events Centre hire \$61,000

SELCON 2024 Accommodation \$68,479

Spouse Program

Ngā mihi

s. 9(2)(a)

Mil Asst to Deputy Chief Of Army-AGS, Army General Staff  
Ngāti Tūmatauenga | New Zealand Army

s. 9(2)(a)

[www.nzdf.mil.nz](http://www.nzdf.mil.nz)

**NGĀTI TŪMATAUENGA**  
**NZ ARMY**

7 Oct 2025

## DOT-POINT BRIEF FOR CDF

### s. 6(b)(ii) CONFERENCE 2025

#### Purpose

1. This DPB provides CDF with assurances, that the planning activities for the s. 6(b)(ii) Conference 2025, hosted by NZDF, has been subject to robust scrutiny and consultation and that accountability mechanisms are in place.
2. The s. 6(b)(ii) conference is hosted annually, alternating between member countries. With the COVID pandemic, NZ has not hosted this event since 2015. The objectives of the conference are to:
  - Build and maintain strong, trusted relationships between s. 6(b)(ii) teams.
  - Brief, discuss, share and deliberate on topics of an unclassified nature impacting the FVEY SOF community, e.g. culture, recruitment, retention and transition.
  - Brief, discuss, share and deliberate classified topics, e.g. threats faced by NZ in the Pacific and how the FVEY SOF community can collectively work towards mitigating these. Operational and capability updates from commanders.
  - Seek consensus and agreed action points on all topics raised.
  - Showcase the unique culture of the hosting nation.

#### What are we doing and why?

3. The programme is split into two components:
  - Cultural experiences and operational briefings and discussion, to be hosted in both Queenstown and Wellington.
4. The varied locations included in the programme are reflective of previously hosted conferences, s. 6(b)(ii) .
5. Hosting an offsite in Queenstown enables Principals and other staff to build trusted relationships outside of a formal environment, while experiencing aspects of NZ culture and shared interests.
6. It should be noted that there are new members participating in the conference this year, so the programme has been designed in a less formal location, enabling more robust and franker conversations during the actual meetings. Also freeing up requirements for secure spare and floors in Wellington.

## Who is involved?

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



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



## Consultation with other NZDF Portfolios?

9. DPA were engaged in March 2025. Their advice included that while there is inevitable public perception risk surrounding the conference, it is not to an unfamiliar degree to the NZDF, and are relatively easily mitigated.

10. DPA Comment: I don't see much risk in the perception of who is involved with the talks – they are regular partners who NZDF meet with routinely. DPA observes that the primary optics risk being that it is being partly hosted in Queenstown, although risk of negative optics is minimal.

11. Key reactive messaging, should there be any media attention includes *“This conference was organised XX months ago, and forms part of a regular and routine calendar of events between the nations involved. It has not been organised in relation to, nor in reaction to any specific events”* – to again remove any perceived link to current activities or events.

12. DLS were engaged in March 2025 to support contract negotiation with accommodation providers. Significant changes were made to contracts before signing to ensure that NZDF's is being accountable to Parliament and ensuring the public that the NZDF's activities credible and legitimate.

## Key points

13. Best practice lessons learnt applied to planning, from previous SOF Commanders Conferences.
14. NZ Intelligence Community hosted and senior leader's conference, in Millbrook, 23/24. Staff have a high level of security and experience hosting VIP engagements, providing assurance to SOCNZ. Millbrook provides a secure location in a remote area, out of the public eye. The location meets the wider security requirements of our FVEY partners. We have also secured exclusive use of conference facilities and access to the Taramea Meeting House (as used by the NZ PM in his recent meeting with the AU PM).
15. The NZ hosted conference in 2015 was in Defence House and Waiarapa area.
16. Millbrook provides a conducive setting for the initial wellbeing and relationship building focus of the FVEY conference. This has become the norm and focal point for the first two days for the conference.

17. Hotels in Wellington booked out for WOW and other events in Wellington.
18. Hotel accommodation room in Wellington (less secure conference facilities, at the Intercontinental x 3 nights for all delegation personnel = \$72,300.
19. Comparison hotel accommodation room in Auckland (less secure conference facilities): Cordis x 3 nights for all delegation personnel = \$52,350.
20. Cancellation of Millbrook, as of 7 Oct 25 would result in losing the amount of \$85,044.00.
21. Cultural activities incorporated into programme at discounted cost. Cancellation of Oxbow activities, would be 50% of the total \$16,360. Total charge to pay if we cancel \$8,180.
22. Comparison: Similar activities conducted in Wellington through the 'Boomrock' event venue would be an estimated (range) of \$13,000 - \$16,000 for events + exclusive use of facilities.
23. There would be significant reputational risk to NZDF if we were to cancel the Queenstown component of the engagement. Advanced protection teams arrive in Queenstown 7 Oct. Other delegations have booked their own flights into Queenstown and changes to their itinerary would be at a cost to our partners. s. 6(b)(i) [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED].
24. Main dining (Bellamy's and Sherwood) has been restricted to principals plus 1.
25. At the same time as the s. 6(b)(ii) [REDACTED] Conference in Queenstown there is a 'International Security Forum' with keynote speakers of the Directors of NZSIS and GCSB. The enhanced security posture will be leveraged which benefits our conference and partners security requirements. It also shows a normative approach of Queenstown being a world class conference facility that showcases NZ culture.
26. A conference issues and risk register has kept up to date to ensure mitigation is assessed and included in all planning.

### **Value Proposition to NZDF**

27. Hosting this conference is an opportunity for SOCNZ to reinforce the depth and breadth of New Zealand comradeship, partnership and hospitality, whilst maintaining scrutiny and responsibility throughout all planning and preparation WRT our actions and activities.
28. The objectives of the conference will be achieved through the two phased location approach. Relationships will be strengthened with a relaxed but professional atmosphere in Queenstown, noting the extensive travel many participants face. It will allow for enduring and productive relationships, far outweighing the costs of the conference. The unique nature of NZ culture, and why our SOF can compete at a FVEY level will be showcased. The Wellington phase will further cement the relationships with deeper discussion on classified topics, and action plans for implementation. This is hugely important for NZ in the Pacific given resource completion from both friendly and adversary actors. [ENDS]