



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

OIA-2026-5635

 February 2026

Dear 

I refer to your email of 24 December 2025 to the Minister of Defence seeking a clarification about an NZDF training scenario—reportedly involving a fictional internal conflict in a South Island-like setting, where one of the armed factions is depicted as emerging from “Christian communities” engaged in intimidation and violence. As this information is more closely connected with the work of the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF), your request was transferred in accordance with the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

You have specifically asked for information regarding the following:

1. *The intent behind framing an armed faction as emerging from “Christian communities.”*
2. *The definitional safeguards NZDF uses to distinguish religious orthodoxy or traditional values from violent extremism.*
3. *Whether any faith communities or internal chaplaincy teams were consulted before or during the development of this scenario.*
4. *How the NZDF ensures that lawful religious belief and community life are not inadvertently framed as security threats.*
5. *Whether the NZDF is prepared to issue a public assurance that Christian service personnel are not being symbolically alienated through this training material.*

There is no intent by the NZDF to direct threat group alignment in exercise scenarios to any particular religion or ideology. The NZ Army decided in 2021 to adopt the Decisive Action Training Environment (DATE) as its future training environment (fictional) and procured this through the NZDF capability process. The purpose of its adoption was to simplify and reduce the need for New Zealand to develop and maintain its own unique training environment, to enable interoperability with international partners, and to support detailed live, virtual, and constructive training in a modern operating environment.

DATE is a United States (US) Army system managed by the US Army Training and Transformation Command (previously known as US Army Training and Doctrine Command) and is also used by other partners, including Australia. It is made up of fictional nations and associated non-state groups organised by region: Africa, Eurasia, Indo-Pacific, and Polar.

New Zealand uses the DATE-Indo Pacific (DATE-IP) region, and Army trainers and exercise planners build scenarios using the nations and forces from DATE-world. They create fictional narratives and, as required, overlay additional information to meet specific training needs.

The characterisation of various groups and forces as allied or opposing forces may change from scenario to scenario.

Within DATE, the Visayan Peoples Front (VPF) is one of many actors within the different scenarios. It is an armed insurgent group in the fictional country of Belesia, and is described as a predominantly Christian group with separatist aims to establish a new Visayan state broadly modelled on Christian values. A detailed explanation of the VPF can be found at these public links <https://date.army.gov.au/packages/date-indo-pacific-non-state-threat-actors/visayan-peoples-front> and here [https://odin.tradoc.army.mil/DATE/Visayan Peoples Front](https://odin.tradoc.army.mil/DATE/Visayan%20Peoples%20Front).

In August 2023, 2nd/1st Battalion, Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment (2/1 RNZIR) developed a general scenario for Stability and Support Operations (SASO) training using DATE as its basis. In 2025, the 3rd Regional Training Wing (3 RTW) then adopted this general scenario for use on its Junior NCO Course. This adoption was approved by the Army Command School, the 3 RTW parent headquarters. In addition to 3 RTW courses, 2/1 RNZIR used this scenario on Exercise Urban Warrior, Exercise Cassino, and Exercise Belesia Stability.

After a review, the Army has directed the removal of actors in training scenarios that are not contained within the DATE-world. As the transition to fully utilising DATE continues, the Army will conduct assurance work to confirm adherence to this and to confirm that there is coherence across the fictional training environment.

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



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Private Bag 39997
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New Zealand

 February 2026

OIA-2025-5622

S.E. Shaw

fyi-request-33328-71410da9@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear S.E. Shaw

I refer to your email of 19 December 2025 requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA):

We refer to the internal training documents that were used by 3RTW in Burnham Military Camp for JNCO Courses in 2025. Specifically we refer to the General Idea, Company OPOrd and other specific OPOrds. We note the framing of the enemy for the exercises as "Christians extremists" and their intent to defend "traditional values". Our questions relate to this and are as follows:

- 1. How widely is this General Idea with this enemy scenario used? i.e. what units and courses use it?*
- 2. When and by whom was this enemy scenario developed?*
- 3. When and by whom was this enemy scenario approved?*
- 4. Why does this enemy scenario differ from the DATE-P scenarios generally used by NZ Army?*
- 5. What other current training documents within the NZDF use an enemy based on Christians or people with traditional values?*
- 6. Given that fictional enemy scenarios are typically built upon actual or likely adversaries does the NZDF assess Christians or people with traditional values as a likely adversary?*
- 7. What, if any, communication has occurred from senior leadership directing alignment to Christians or people with traditional values as a threat group?*
- 8. What, if any, communication has been provided from government or other government agencies on Christians or people with traditional values as a threat group?*

There is no intent by the NZDF to direct threat group alignment in exercise scenarios to any particular religion or ideology. The NZDF has not received any communications from government or other government agencies on Christians or people with traditional values as a threat group.

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