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OIA-2026-5682

*24th* March 2026

Graeme Doull  
[fyi-request-33846-f7c40a73@requests.fyi.org.nz](mailto:fyi-request-33846-f7c40a73@requests.fyi.org.nz)

Dear Graeme Doull

I refer to your email of 24 February 2026 requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), the below information about drone research and development:

*1. Total DST expenditure*

*For the a recently completed 12-month period (whatever is practical for example a full financial year), please provide:*

*The total expenditure for DST, including personnel costs (wages and salaries).*

For the 2024/25 financial year, the total New Zealand Defence Force Defence Science and Technology (DST) expenditure is \$11.1M. This amount includes personnel costs of \$8.28M and \$2.82M operating costs.

*2. Drone-related research expenditure*

*For the same 12-month period, please provide:*

*The total expenditure (including personnel costs) on drone or uncrewed systems-related research and development undertaken by DST.*

*Ideally please provide a breakdown of this expenditure by operational domain as follows:*

- a. Land domain – including ground-based and airborne drones primarily intended to influence land operations.*
- b. Sea domain – including surface, sub-surface, and airborne drones primarily intended to influence maritime operations.*
- c. Air domain – drones primarily intended for air operations that are not already included within the land or sea domains.*

*Where a system or research programme may apply to multiple domains, please attribute expenditure to the domain where the majority of its intended operational use is expected. If it is not reasonably practicable to allocate expenditure in this way, please advise and provide the total drone-related expenditure without domain breakdown.*

Total DST expenditure on drone or uncrewed systems-related research and development undertaken in the 2024-25 financial year was just under \$1M. This amount includes personnel and operating costs. The approximate distribution of effort by domain for uncrewed systems in the 2024-25 financial year was 50% maritime, 30% land, and 20% air.

*3. Direction and prioritisation*

*I am interested in understanding if DST has been formally directed to prioritise drones.*

*Please provide:*

*Copies of any formal direction, guidance, prioritisation statements, tasking orders, strategic documents, or written instructions issued within the last 24 months to DST relating to drones or uncrewed systems.*

*Any documentation outlining the prioritisation of drone or uncrewed systems research within DST work programmes.*

While strategic documentation around drone projects has not been developed, Enclosure 1 outlines DST research projects. DST's direction and guidance for its priorities come from the Defence Capability Plan and through alignment with the Defence Industry Strategy, which are both publicly 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

**Enclosures:**

1. DST science programmes

# OUR SCIENCE PROGRAMMES

## INFORMATION WARFARE



### Sensing & Intelligence

*Application of AI for Intelligence & Data Collection*

- Understand and exploit artificial intelligence
- Automating tools and detecting patterns
- Faster data analysis and enhanced cueing



### Cyber & Electromagnetic Warfare

*Cyber Defence & Radio Frequency Systems*

- Exploring cyber resilience, awareness & protection
- Novel radio frequency sensing
- Resilient communications alternatives



### Concepts, Strategy & Analytics

*Research to inform Decisions, Planning & Policy*

- Analytical methods to enhance strategic decision making
- Analysis of emerging and disruptive technology



### Human Sciences

*Understanding our People: Cognitive & Physical Performance*

- Integration with emerging technological systems
- Increased survivability in high-risk environments



### Climate Intelligence

*Supporting the NZDF through a Changing Climate*

- Understanding the ability of NZDF to respond
- Adapt to decrease operational risk
- Compliance with legislation and regulation

## PLATFORM WARFARE



### Air Warfare

*Advancing the Protection of NZDF Aircraft*

- Assurance of aircraft self-protection systems
- Informed procurement and through life support
- Reduced combat risk for operations



### Maritime Warfare

*Tactics & Technology to Protect our Sailors & Ships*

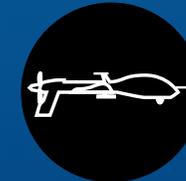
- Fully realise our ship's self-protection systems
- Research into advanced sensors, effectors and autonomous systems
- Protect our ships, cables and pipelines from underwater threats



### Land Warfare

*Maximise the Safety & Effectiveness of our Soldiers*

- Armour & protection systems
- Detection of and protection from chemical and biological threats
- Signature management of people and platforms



### Autonomous Systems

*Harnessing the Potential of Autonomous Systems*

- Accelerate Government and NZDF adoption
- Generate knowledge to support acquisition
- Counter autonomous threats



### Space & Navigation Warfare

*NZDF's Research Pathway to Space Domain Operations*

- Surveillance of space activities
- Space domain interoperability
- Resilience of NZDF navigation and timing services