



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

OIA-2026-5745

30 April 2026

Dear [REDACTED]

I refer to your email of 2 April 2026 requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), further information on the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) vaccination policy. The various parts of your request are addressed below.

- 1. What specific clinical advice, risk assessments, or evidence informed the decision to retain COVID-19 vaccination as a baseline requirement*
- 2. How myocarditis risk in younger service members was evaluated and weighted in the review process*

COVID-19 boosters have already been removed from NZDF Baseline vaccination requirements. Assessment is ongoing as to whether to remove the COVID-19 initial-course from Baseline requirements. This will be based on the NZDF's requirement to deliver operational outputs in a range of environments, taking into account current New Zealand Ministry of Health advice, and published research on the relative benefits and risks of the current COVID-19 vaccine. Assessment will include data relative to myocarditis.

- 3. What consideration was given to policy changes among allied defence forces, and any implications for NZDF recruitment, retention, and interoperability*

The policies of allied defence forces may be considered, however the NZDF operating environment differs from other nations. Defence Recruiting has reported vaccination requirements have not had a significant impact on recruitment. Removal of the COVID-19 initial course from Baseline requirements will not impact any currently serving NZDF members, retention, or interoperability with other nations.

- 4. Whether any further updates or outcomes from the ongoing review are expected to be publicly released*

Changes to NZDF vaccination schedules are not routinely publicly released.

Additionally, I note the statement that certain requested information "does not exist." I would appreciate clarification on how vaccination status and discharge-related data are recorded, and whether any related or partially relevant datasets could be provided.

The NZDF maintains up-to-date vaccination information on all serving uniformed personnel as part of NZDF medical protocols, and personnel are notified when their vaccination status

is due to lapse. This is primarily to ensure all uniformed personnel can be deployed when required and/or at short notice.

When NZDF personnel and civilian staff choose to depart the NZDF, they complete an electronic request for release. As part of that process, they are required to select their "Reason for Requesting Release" from the following dataset:

Release reason where voluntary (current at 31 March 2026)	
Reason	Military (MIL) or Civilian(CIV)
Arm Transfer	MIL and CIV
Completion of Engagement	MIL and CIV
Resignation	CIV
Retirement	CIV
Accommodation Policy Issues	MIL
Dependants' Education	MIL
Dissatisfied With Job	MIL
Education Opportunity	MIL
Family Commitments	MIL
High Demands Of Service Life	MIL
Lack of Promotion Prospects	MIL
Lack Of Resources for My Job	MIL
Partner's Employment	MIL
Pay And Allowances	MIL
Personal Wellbeing	MIL
Posting Issues	MIL
Pregnancy Or Begin A Family	MIL
Self Development outside NZDF	MIL
Senior Leadership Issues	MIL
Time For A Change	MIL
Too Much Work Related Stress	MIL
Unsatisfactory Career Mgmt	MIL
Work Demands On Home/Family	MIL
Workplace Leadership Issues	MIL

The other mechanism by which a uniformed member will depart the NZDF is either through discharge or dismissal. Discharge is where the NZDF initiates the departure of a member from the Regular Force or Territorial Force, but not as part of a disciplinary process. Dismissal is imposed as a punishment by Court Martial in accordance with Schedule 2 of the Armed Forces Discipline Act 1971.

A discharge can occur under the following categories and the individual's personal file will be annotated accordingly:

1. Initial Training - When a member of the Armed Forces is unable to complete initial training.
2. Probation - A member of the Armed Forces is discharged under Probation when they have not met their probationary requirements, and their provisional or probationary service is terminated.

3. Performance - The Service may initiate the Performance discharge of a member of the Armed Forces where the member is considered to be inefficient or ineffectual in the performance of their duties, including failure to meet individual readiness requirements.
4. Conduct - The Service may initiate the Conduct discharge of a member of the Armed Forces if CDF has grounds for believing that the member has behaved in a manner that is incompatible with the maintenance of good order and discipline within a Service, or which tends to bring the Service into disrepute.
5. Medical - The Service may initiate the Medical discharge of a member if they fall below a medical standard that renders them unable to perform the duties required of them as a member of the Armed Forces.
6. Services No Longer Required - is used to manage members of the Regular Force who are impacted by NZDF organisational change and identified as no longer required as a member of the Regular Force, which may include members on Parental Leave or Leave without Pay.
7. Absent Without Leave - The Service may discharge a member who has been absent without leave (AWOL) for a period in excess of three years.
8. Death – On confirmation of the death of a member of the Regular Force or Territorial Force, action is taken to discharge the deceased Service member from the NZDF.

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