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OIA-2026-5802

10th June 2026

[REDACTED]

To the requestor

I refer to your email of 12 May 2026 requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), regarding New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) reservist policy.

I request access to any current policy documents, instructions, guidance, regulations, or administrative directions governing:

the process by which an active Army reservist may voluntarily become fully discharged from all remaining Army or NZDF service liability, if such a process exists;

Territorial Force members may request voluntary resignation or release from service at any time, subject to approval. Voluntary resignation automatically incurs a Reserve liability period as detailed in Defence Force Order (DFO) 4. There is no standard provision that allows a member to voluntarily resign and simultaneously be discharged from all remaining service liability.

A member may be discharged without incurring Reserve liability only where: the NZDF initiates discharge or dismissal; or, a waiver of Reserve liability is granted by the relevant Service Chief in accordance with DFO 4.

the duration and operation of any reserve liability period following resignation or discharge from Army Reserve service;

Reserve liability is a statutory obligation under section 40 of the Defence Act 1990¹. DFO 4 prescribes the minimum liability periods as: members with less than 20 years' service - four years; members with 20 years' service or more - two years. The Reserve liability period commences from the member's terminal date or the conclusion of their engagement.

whether periods of recall, reactivation, mobilisation, or service affect or reset any reserve liability period;

The governing legislation and policy documents do not explicitly address whether periods of recall, reactivation, or mobilisation affect or reset a member's Reserve liability period.

the policy and circumstances under which former reservists may be recalled, mobilised, or deployed;

¹ <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1990/28/en/latest/#DLM204973>

Former reservists who remain within their Reserve liability period may be required to render service under section 40 of the Defence Act 1990. Mobilisation of the Reserve Force is a significant constitutional action and may only occur following: a determination by the Government that a situation of national importance or warlike situation exists; and, a Proclamation by the Governor-General authorising mobilisation.

Once a member's Reserve liability period has expired, there is no legal basis to compel further service.

the policy and circumstances under which serving reservists may be called up, mobilised, or deployed abroad;

Serving members of the Territorial Force may volunteer for operational service, or transfer to the Regular Force for a period of engagement, subject to meeting operational requirements.

Compulsory mobilisation of the Territorial Force is governed by section 39 of the Defence Act 1990 and occurs only through the same Government and Governor-General process outlined above.

and the legal or policy basis under which former reservists may be required to render service following discharge from active service.

The liability to render service once discharged from active service is set out in section 40 of the Defence Act 1990. The specific terms prescribed by CDF at present are promulgated in DFO 4, Chapter 2, Section 7. A copy provided at Enclosure 1.

I also request any policy documents or guidance relating to enlistment eligibility where an applicant remains subject to active service liability to a five eyes foreign military force specifically Australia...To minimise processing time and costs, I am primarily seeking the current governing policy documents and instructions.

The Defence Act 1990, DFO 4, and Army General Orders – Personnel (AGO-P) govern the matters raised in this request. The relevant sections of AGO-P are provided at Enclosures 2 and 3.

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

Enclosures:

1. DFO 4, chapter 2, section 7
2. AGO-P, chapter 2, part 6
3. AGO-P, part 13, chapters 3 and 4

Section 7 The Reserve

Liability for Reserve

- 2.141. On release all Service members other than those specified in paragraph 2.143 of this Section are to be transferred to the Reserve of their Service. The period of liability is to be set by the respective single Service Chief with the following minimum periods:
- a. Less than 20 years service – four years.
 - b. Twenty or more years service – two years.
- 2.142 Service members who do not have a liability or whose liability has been terminated, may elect to transfer to or remain in the Reserve of their Service, if it is considered in the interest of the Service concerned. The relevant Service Chief will make a decision on a case by case basis for Service members up to the rank of Brigadier. For Service members above that rank the decision will be made by the CDF.

Exemptions

- 2.143 Service members in the following categories will not incur a reserve liability:
- a. Service members aged 60 years or over.
 - b. When dismissed or discharged from the Service.
 - c. Falling below the required medical standard prior to release from the Service.
- 2.144 Service members who have requested release due to pregnancy or for childcare purposes will be exempt from this liability for 52 weeks after release; at which time the liability will be deemed to resume.
- 2.145 Notwithstanding the period of liability set by the respective Service Chief, Service members on the Reserve will have their liability terminated when:
- a. Reaching age 60 years.
 - b. Sentenced to a period of imprisonment by a Civil Court.

Waiver of Reserve Liability

- 2.146 A waiver of Reserve liability may be granted by the relevant Service Chief on application by the Service member or ex Service member. Decisions are to be made on a case by case basis on compassionate grounds or where there are compelling personal circumstances.
- 2.147 Specific criteria for waiving in these circumstances include:
- a. Joining an overseas Defence Force, or other employment overseas or in New Zealand where this would be precluded if there was a Reserve liability in New Zealand; or
 - b. Where there is a serious health or other personal issue that would mean a Reserve liability would not be able to be activated; or
 - c. Where pregnancy or family-care responsibilities would be adversely affected if the Reserve liability was activated.
 - d. Other compassionate circumstances as determined by single Service Chiefs.

Administration

- 2.148 The Reserve will be administered by the respective single Service authority.

Chapter 2 - Conditions Affecting Territorial Force Postings

6.2.1 General

- a. Members of the TF serve in one of the following categories:
- (1) **Ready Reserve (RR).** The RR holds TF members who are available to attend training or authorised duty. RR members are posted to RR positions in TF and integrated units.
 - (2) **Standby Reserve (SBR).** The SBR holds TF members who are not available to attend training or authorised duty, but who have skills and experience which make them attractive to retain. The SBR consists of three sub-categories, described as follows:
 - (a) **Standby Reserve Transition.** For members transitioning from the RF to the TF who are not available to attend training or authorised duty. Members in this sub-category are managed by DACM.
 - (b) **Standby Reserve Retention.** For members transferring from the RR or SBR Transition who are not available to attend training or authorised duty. Members in this sub-category are managed by DACM.
 - (c) **Unit Standby Reserve.** For members of the RR who have requested a temporary absence from unit training for up to a maximum of two years, or who are under release action. Members in this sub-category are managed by the unit.
- b. **Employment.** A SBR member should have no expectation of employment. However, a SBR member may be employed by any NZDF unit or headquarters that requires the members skills or experience, and has the necessary funds available to pay the member.
- c. **Promotion.** SBR members are not eligible for promotion while they remain in the SBR. In order to be promoted SBR members must be posted to an established, and vacant RR position.

6.2.2 TF Postings

- a. TF members are usually posted to a unit, or sub-unit within their geographical location, and generally for the duration of the members' service, unless a request to transfer is received.
- b. TF members may be posted between the Standby Reserve and the Ready Reserve at any time on approval by their Commanding Officer and/or DACM.
- c. A member may be held surplus to the establishment of the new unit until the member can be absorbed into the unit establishment. This is to be in consultation with DACM, and is subject to DACM approval.

- d. Requests for postings are to be forwarded through command channels to the approving authority. Members may also advise their preferences using the AFNZ 49 – Posting Preference, the PDR3 (on-line or PDF version), or write directly to DACM (TF Career Management) to express their preferences, or provide details of circumstances that may affect future postings.

6.2.3 Approving Authority for TF Members

- a. Approving authorities for postings of TF members are detailed in [Table 6-2-1](#).
- (1) Colonel and Brigadier – the Chief of Army on the recommendation of the Senior Career Management Board.

Table 6-2-1 – Approving Authorities for Postings of Territorial Force members

TF Rank	Approving Authority
Private(E) to Warrant Officer Class One	Unit Commander
First Appointment to a Commission: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within units, • Within formation, • Between formations and commands. 	TF Principal Advisor (DACM)
Unit Commanders	CA
Colonel and Brigadier	CA in consultation with CDF as appropriate

- b. On receipt of the posting approval, the originating unit is to advise the member concerned. Personal documents are to be forwarded to the new unit under cover of form MD121 – Transfer of Documents.
- c. Units are authorised to upload postings on SAP HCM, which will be reviewed and approved by DACM. The TF members in the rank of MAJ and above will be approved

Chapter 3 - Efficiency

13.3.1 Efficiency

- a. Territorial Force personnel achieve efficiency in a training year by completing 20 days of approved Territorial Force training. Approved training is any training that is authorised at unit or sub-unit level.
- b. The provisions relating to the award of the Efficiency Decoration (for officers) and the Efficiency Medal (for other ranks) are available on the NZDF Medals website: www.medals.nzdf.mil.nz.
- c. The effect of a Seamless Transfer on a Regular Force Engagement (STRFE) on efficiency where the Regular Force service precludes the Territorial Force member from completing 20 days of approved Territorial Force training in a training year is reserved pending the revision of long service award eligibility criteria.

13.3.2 Less than 20 Days' Efficiency

- a. A Territorial Force member who has completed less than 20 days of approved training in a training year may apply to be deemed efficient. Approval authority is the individual's commanding officer and each case is to be considered on its merits. Applications are to be made in writing, along with supporting documentation, before the end of the training year. Reasons for approval or non-approval are to be communicated to the applicant and recorded on the applicant's personal file. Requests of this nature are to be limited to two successive years. Members who have completed less than 15 days of approved training are to be deemed efficient in exceptional cases only. Examples of reasons why a member may be deemed efficient are:
 - (1) when the member is unable to attend training due to sickness or injury or for compassionate reasons; and
 - (2) where there is insufficient time at the end of the training year to complete 20 days' training due to enlistment, transfer, or attachment.

13.3.3 Non-Efficient Personnel

- a. When an individual has been deemed non-efficient for any training year, the unit commander is to advise the individual in writing that further non-efficient service could result in release or discharge action. See also Part 16 Retirement and Release.

13.3.4 Less than 20 Days Efficient Territorial Force Training

- a. A Territorial Force member who has completed less than 20 days' efficient training in a training year may apply to be deemed efficient. Approval authority is the individual's commanding officer and each case is to be considered on its merits. Applications are to be made in writing, along with supporting documentation, before the end of the training year. Reasons for approval or non-approval are to be communicated to the applicant and recorded on the applicant's personal file. Requests of this nature are to be limited to two successive years. Members who have completed less than 15 days' efficient training are to be deemed efficient in exceptional cases only. Examples of reasons why a member may be deemed efficient are:
- (1) when the member is unable to attend training due to sickness or injury or for compassionate reasons;
 - (2) where there is insufficient time at the end of the training year to complete 20 days' efficient training due to enlistment, transfer, or attachment.

13.3.5 Band Members

- a. To be deemed effective, band members are required to carry out the same training as other soldiers. The manner in which such training is to be performed is to be laid down by the unit commander, after consultation with the Director of Music or bandmaster. Except as authorised, attendance at performances organised by a local body or any other organisation are not to be considered as approved military duty for the purposes of training effectiveness or Army pay and allowances.

Chapter 4 - Leave

13.4.1 Introduction

- a. This Section is to be read in conjunction with NZDF promotion and career management policy found in DFO 3 *NZDF Human Resource Policy, Part 8 Conditions of Service, Chapter 8 Military Leave*.
- b. All leave is subject to the exigencies of the Service and nothing in these orders confers on individual service persons the right to take leave.

13.4.2 Types of Leave

- a. Territorial Force members are eligible for leave in accordance with the provisions of DFO 3 *New Zealand Defence Force Human Resource Manual, Part 8 Conditions of Service and Employment, Chapter 8 Leave (Military)*. The type of leave for which Territorial Force members are eligible are:
 - b. Parental leave,
 - c. Negotiated carer leave,
 - d. Returning parent incentive.

13.4.3 Leave entitlements

- a. Territorial Force members are not eligible for the following types of leave:
 - (1) Annual leave,
 - (2) Equivalent leave, or
 - (3) Stand-down.

13.4.4 Leave of Absence

- a. Territorial Force Members may apply for leave of absence from attendance at training in accordance with the provisions of this section. NEW

13.4.5 Sick Leave

- a. Although Territorial Force personnel are not eligible to sick leave, they are covered by the provisions of DFO 3 *New Zealand Defence Force Human Resource Manual, Part 5 Understanding the NZDF Workplace Environment, Chapter 1 Accident Rehabilitation and Compensation*.

13.4.6 Private Overseas Leave

- a. Territorial Force members are not to leave New Zealand without notifying their parent unit at least one month before the anticipated date of departure. The notification is to include details of the:
 - (1) destination,
 - (2) anticipated duration of absence,
 - (3) reason for proceeding overseas, and

- (4) address and contact details while overseas.

13.4.7 Short Periods of Leave of Absence

- a. A commanding officer may grant a member a short period of leave of absence from a period of duty under certain circumstances. Such leave is unpaid and is not to count towards the completion of training obligations for efficient service. Commanding officers are to exercise their judgement as to what circumstances merit the granting of a short leave of absence. As a general guideline, and providing satisfactory evidence is produced, the following would normally be worthy of consideration:
 - b. participation in an important sporting fixture,
 - c. court attendance or involvement with other legal or tenancy problems,
 - d. employment interviews,
 - e. important ceremonial or cultural occasions, and
 - f. sitting public or civil examinations.

13.4.8 Long Periods of Leave of Absence

- a. Leave of Absence is unpaid.
- b. Applications for Leave of Absence are to be forwarded up the command chain to the approving authority. In addition, for the purposes of career management:
- c. DACM is to be informed of any Leave of Absence of 12 months or more and any extension thereof granted to soldiers and non-commissioned officers, and
- d. the Territorial Force Military Secretary and the relevant formation commander are to be informed of any Leave of Absence of 12 months or more and any extension thereof granted to an officer.

13.4.9 Leave of Absence in New Zealand

- a. Leave of Absence in New Zealand. Commanding Officers may approve leave of absence in New Zealand for Territorial Force members for a period of up to two years.

13.4.10 Leave of Absence Overseas

- a. Commanding Officers may approve leave of absence overseas for Territorial Force members on the following basis:
 - (1) commissioned and non-commissioned officers – absence of up to three years, and
 - (2) privates – absence of up to one year.

13.4.11 Extension to Leave of Absence

- a. Commanding officers may grant a one-off extension to Leave of Absence of up to one year, whether the leave is being taken in New Zealand or overseas.