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

OIA-2026-6022

11th November 2026

[redacted]

Dear [redacted]

I refer to your email of 4 October 2026 requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), information regarding *historic NZDF email systems, mailbox retention and PA-2018-0113 search methodology*. You stated that *the relevant historical period is principally 28 December 2016 to 31 January 2019.*

> *1. Email platform and institutional architecture*
>
> *Please provide information and existing records identifying the email/messaging platform or platforms used for NZDF @nzdf.mil.nz civilian email accounts during that period, including:*
>
> *a. the email platform/service in use;*
>
> *b. any enterprise email archive, journaling, compliance/eDiscovery or inactive-mailbox repository;*
>
> *c. any system used to preserve or search former employees' mail; and*
>
> *d. any enterprise system through which mailbox content was migrated, archived or restored after the original environment was decommissioned or changed.*

Details for the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) email platforms and archive systems in place between 28 December 2016 and 31 January 2019 are withheld under section 6(a) of the OIA.

> *2. Former-employee mailbox lifecycle*
>
> *Please provide the policies, instructions, procedures or records of general application that governed former NZDF civilian employee email accounts in the relevant period, including:*
>
> *a. account disablement/deactivation;*
>
> *b. mailbox retention after an employee left;*
>
> *c. archiving or export of the mailbox;*
>
> *d. deletion timing;*
>
> *e. recoverability/restoration; and*
>
> *f. handling of mailbox data where an OIA, Privacy Act request, complaint, investigation, litigation or other records-preservation requirement was active.*

The published policies that covered retention of employee mailboxes between 28 December 2016 and 31 January 2019 were Defence Force Order (DFO) 101 *Defence Force Orders for Communications and Information Systems,* and DFO 102 *Defence Force Orders for Use of NZDF Communications and*

Information Systems. DFO 102 was subsequently revoked and replaced with DFO 101. DFO 101 is withheld under section 6(a) of the OIA.

The disposal authorities in force at the time were applied to specific classes of business records and information. Therefore, individual emails could be sentenced[1], where they met the definition of a record, but the disposal authorities did not prescribe retention periods for email mailboxes as a whole. Between 28 December 2016 and 31 January 2019, there were no technical mechanisms available to manage retention and disposal at the individual email level across mailboxes.

> *3. Archive, backup and historical-search capability*
>
> *Please provide information showing whether the relevant historic email environment, and any successor/archive environment, allowed or presently allows searches using:*
>
> *a. mailbox/account identity;*
>
> *b. sender or recipient;*
>
> *c. date range;*
>
> *d. subject or keywords;*
>
> *e. Message-ID;*
>
> *f. attachment name; and*
>
> *g. other identifiers associated with an individual former employee.*
>
> *Please also identify whether native messages and/or complete mailboxes can presently be exported where retained.*

The historical email environment, and any successor or archive environment, allows searches by mailbox/account identity, sender or recipient, and date range. Searches by subject, keywords, and attachment name are also available where a mailbox/account identity is specified. Searches by message-ID or other identifiers associated with a former employee are not available. Native messages and complete mailboxes can be exported.

> *4. System migrations and decommissioning*
>
> *Please provide records identifying any material migration, replacement or decommissioning affecting the NZDF email environment that held 2016–2019 @nzdf.mil.nz mail, including:*
>
> *a. date of migration/decommissioning;*
>
> *b. source and destination systems;*
>
> *c. what categories of historic mail data were migrated or retained;*
>
> *d. whether inactive/departed-user mailboxes were included;*
>
> *e. any validation or exception process; and*
>
> *f. present search/recovery route for retained historic data.*

There has been no decommissioning of the environment that holds the historical NZDF email records from 2016 to 2019. All historical email data was migrated or retained, including inactive and departed-user mailboxes. Information identifying the source and destination systems is withheld under section 6(a) of the OIA.

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[1] The process of evaluating and classifying records against specific classes and sub classes of a disposal authority which determines how long they must be kept and what will happen at the end of the retention period.

5. Retention and disposal authority

Please identify and provide the relevant retention/disposal rules, schedules, policies and authority references that applied, or were subsequently applied, to:

a. individual employee mailboxes;

b. archived email;

c. journal/compliance/eDiscovery copies;

d. mailbox backup/restoration copies;

e. account provisioning/deprovisioning records;

f. mailbox deletion or disposition records;

g. message-tracking or mail-routing records; and

h. records of migration from a legacy email environment.

For each applicable disposal authority or schedule, please identify the authority number, record class, disposal trigger and minimum retention period where that information is held.

I am not assuming that DA558/GDA6, DA576/GDA7, DA710 or any other particular authority necessarily governed these records; I am seeking the actual authority/class applied by NZDF.

Currently, it is not possible to apply disposal authority classes to individual emails within user mailboxes. Accordingly, retention and disposal decisions applied since February 2019 have continued to be managed at the mailbox level rather than individual email level. Most emails will be deleted once 'sentenced'.

6. PA-2018-0113 — search methodology

On 25 December 2018 I made a request concerning the four NZDF Safety Reporting System events:

ARMY-3426/16
ARMY-1862/17
DEF-1448/18
ARMY-2923/18

NZDF subsequently dealt with that matter as PA-2018-0113.

Please provide any records held that identify the search methodology used in responding to PA-2018-0113, including:

a. systems or repositories searched;

b. business units, commands, custodians or subject-matter experts consulted;

c. search terms, identifiers and date ranges used, where recorded;

d. whether my then/former NZDF mailbox or any NZDF email archive was searched;

e. whether counterpart mailboxes of relevant recipients/senders were searched;

f. whether NZDF searched for correspondence with ACC / AEPU and WorkSafe outside the printable SRS records;

g. whether archived, legacy, backup or migrated records were considered; and

h. any search log, search schedule, tasking record, consultation record or similar record created in the processing of PA-2018-0113.

In response to your Privacy Act request, you received records retrieved from the NZDF's Directorate of Safety. The NZDF's People Capability Portfolio was consulted at the time of your request, and no

additional information was received. There are no records identifying the search methodology used in responding to PA-2018-0113. This aspect of your request is therefore declined in accordance with section 18(e) of the OIA.

> *7. Preservation/search procedure for current requests*
>
> *Please provide any current policy or instruction that describes what NZDF staff should do to preserve and search historic electronic records when:*
>
> *a. an IPP 6 Privacy Act request concerns a former employee account; or*
>
> *b. an OIA request concerns legacy, archived or migrated email.*

Defence Force Instruction 7.2 states:

> "When undertaking electronic searches for information, key words and other search terms used to locate the information should be recorded for future reference for similar enquiries or an Ombudsman's investigation."

As such search requests are made via email, records of these are retained as part of email record retention. Data search exports are not stored beyond a few months unless flagged as being something that might require additional distribution or preservation; for example, the collection of data searches as part of an investigation. Data searches can be undertaken when required using the appropriate parameters.

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

JHR Sellwood
Captain, RNZN
Chief of Staff HQNZDF