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

OIA-2026-6042

17th November 2026

[redacted]

Dear [redacted]

I refer to your email of 20 November 2026 requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), information *concerning NZDF's consideration of directed-energy capability, including high-energy laser and high-power microwave or radio-frequency weapons.*

...I am interested in whether NZDF's consideration of directed energy capabilities has developed since 1 March 2023 to the date of this request.

Requesting:

1. *Copies of any substantive assessments, studies, research reports or briefings prepared or commissioned by NZDF concerning the military utility, technical maturity, limitations or potential future applications of directed-energy weapons.*
2. *Any assessments or advice considering the potential suitability of directed-energy weapons for NZDF capabilities, particularly counter-uncrewed aerial systems, naval force protection, short-range air defence and counter-drone operations. This includes any assessment of DEWs as a possible option within the counter-UAS capability programme identified in the 2025 Defence Capability Plan.*
3. *Records of any formal industry engagement, market research, requests for information, supplier demonstrations or discussions with international defence partners concerning DEW technologies. I am primarily seeking summary records, meeting outcomes and reports rather than routine correspondence.*
4. *Details of any DEW demonstrations, trials, evaluations or research programmes that NZDF personnel have participated in, observed or received formal briefings on, including programmes operated by overseas defence forces or research organisations. Where held, I request the dates, broad technology category and any resulting NZDF assessment.*
5. *Any substantive recommendations or decisions since March 2023 concerning whether NZDF should pursue further DEW research, experimentation, technology monitoring or capability development.*

Three members of the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) Defence Science and Technology (DST) team attended the Canadian Innovation for Defence Excellence and Security program

Counter Uncrewed Aerial System (CUAS) Sandbox from 10 to 20 June 2024. Information on this Sandbox is publicly available on the Government of Canada website[1].

The 13 August 2024 Post Activity Report summarised DST attendance as *a valuable opportunity for DST to observe a range of CUAS systems and technology types, and access both industry experts and government researchers and operators…The experience and knowledge gained by DST will be used to directly inform the DST Autonomous System research programme*.

A copy of the Report is withheld in full in accordance with sections 6(a) and 6(b)(i) of the OIA to avoid prejudice to the security or defence of New Zealand and the international relations of the Government of New Zealand; and to protect the entrusting of information to the Government of New Zealand on a basis of confidence by the Government of any other country or any agency of such a Government.

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

[1] https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/programs/defence-ideas/element/sandboxes/challenge/counter-uncrewed-aerial-systems-sandbox-2024.html