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OIA-2019-3637.1

26 March 2020

Mahrugh Sarwar

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Dear Ms Sarwar

I refer to your further correspondence of 27 February 2020, regarding your previous request made under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) for information for the purpose of participating in the Royal Commission inquiry into the attack on Christchurch Mosques.

Practical approaches and proper consideration are given to all requests for information received by the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF). As per the OIA, the response of 3 October 2019 requested further refinement of your request at question 1. As noted in that response, the key words you identified would likely include collections of open source media items. There is limited capability to electronically filter correspondence created by the NZDF from correspondence that may be generated by third parties. In those circumstances a manual search is required.

This approach is informed by previous experience with requests such as yours. That experience has proven that the ability of the NZDF to collate relevant correspondence/documentation is limited to approximately 300 items. This takes at least 3 months to manually review in order for a decision to be made on the request. There are likely thousands of results within each of the time periods you noted. A refinement of this part of your request, for example, to particular documents or shorter timeframes, may facilitate the research and collation process.

You may have noted that the response of 11 July 2019 (Enclosure 1 to your response), addresses a request that covers any culture and religion training. By definition this also includes training regarding Muslims and Islam. It is explained in that response that cultural and language training is provided by third parties and specific information contained in those courses is withheld in accordance with section 9(2)(ba)(i) of the OIA. A summary of NZDF training specific to cultural lessons on training the Iraqi Army is included as well as an explanation for why additional material from that training is withheld. Apologies for not including the material from the NZDF training on religions in the South Pacific. These are included with this reply.

An explanation for why material regarding the training of D Squadron (Commando) is withheld was provided in the response to you. To reiterate, the release of training material

would necessarily provide information on the capability and training of that squadron. This decision was based on advice from Special operations Command that reviewed the information in scope. It is not, as you suggest, a “blanket” approach with no consideration of the information itself.

Yours sincerely



AJ WOODS

Air Commodore

Chief of Staff HQNZDF

Enclosures:

1. Religions in the South Pacific training script
2. Religions in the South Pacific PowerPoint presentation regarding diversity