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OIA-2020-3809

~~22~~ May 2020

Valerie Morse

[fyi-request-12734-9dd8936f@requests.fyi.org.nz](mailto:fyi-request-12734-9dd8936f@requests.fyi.org.nz)

Dear Ms Morse

I refer to your request of 30 April 2020, under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), regarding the New Zealand Defence Force's participation in the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercise this year. It is important to note that on 29 April, 2020, the United States Pacific Fleet publicly announced that RIMPAC 2020 will be an at-sea-only event in light of COVID-19. This was to ensure "*minimum risk to the force, allies and partners, and the people of Hawaii.*"

Answers to each point of your request are provided below:

1. *The criteria the NZDF will use to determine if New Zealand will participate in RIMPAC 2020 and the timeframe for that decision.*

In deciding to participate in Exercise RIMPAC 2020 the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) will take into consideration the value of the revised scope of the Exercise, the risks to personnel created by the pandemic and compatibility of our national pandemic rules and those of international partners. The timeframe for a decision will take into account the time it will take to deploy to Hawaii.

2. *The number of soldiers, and number of & type of equipment NZ has committed to participation in RIMPAC 2020.*

The NZDF is currently planning to send HMNZS Manawanui to participate in RIMPAC 2020. HMNZS Manawanui is a hydrographic dive vessel and carries a crew of up to 66.<sup>1</sup> Her participation in the exercise was planned as part of her introduction into service activity and the rescheduling and re-scoping of the exercise still allows for her to attend and benefit from the opportunities presented by integrating into a large maritime force. This includes underway operations as part of a formation of military vessels, communications, manoeuvring and maritime interdiction exercises. The ability to train at sea with other naval forces is a key element of maintaining NZDF levels of preparedness necessary to interoperate effectively with our partners throughout the Pacific.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://navy.mil.nz/mtf/manawanui/default.htm>

3. *The estimated costs of NZDF participation in RIMPAC 2020.*

The estimated marginal cost of HMNZS Manawanui's participation in RIMPAC 2020 is \$85,000.

4. *Any information regarding Australia's decision not to participate in RIMPAC 2020 held by the NZ government.*

The NZDF has no visibility or awareness of Australia's decision.

5. *Any correspondence from the US regarding the impacts of Covid-19 on RIMPAC 2020.*

The NZDF has been provided a link to a United States Naval Institute News item referencing RIMPAC 2020 and the effects of COVID-19 on the exercise, titled *Navy Will Host Scaled-Down RIMPAC Exercise in Hawaii With At-Sea-Only Events*.<sup>2</sup>

An email from the US Navy is enclosed, which outlines changes to the exercise in order to mitigate the effects of COVID-19. The US Navy has re-scoped the exercise to include only underway activity by maritime units. The exercise would normally have a significant harbour training and engagement programme and see participation by visiting air and land elements, however, these have been removed due to the impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Logistics support will remain available to visiting ships at Pearl Harbour. As this was communicated to partner militaries in confidence, certain information has been withheld in accordance with sections 6(a) and 6(b)(i) of the OIA.

You have the right, under section 28(3) of the OIA, to ask an Ombudsman to review this response to your request.

Yours sincerely



**AJ WOODS**

Air Commodore  
Chief of Staff HQNZDF

**Enclosure:**

1. Email from US Navy, 1 May 2020

<sup>2</sup> [https://news.usni.org/2020/04/29/navy-will-host-scaled-down-rimpac-exercise-in-hawaii-with-at-sea-only-events?utm\\_source=Sailthru&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=EBB%2004.30.20&utm\\_term=Editorial%20-%20Military%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief](https://news.usni.org/2020/04/29/navy-will-host-scaled-down-rimpac-exercise-in-hawaii-with-at-sea-only-events?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%2004.30.20&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Military%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief)