

28 April 2023

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Tēnā koe Neville

Request for information

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) request dated 28 February 2023. The same request was sent to multiple agencies, who will each reply separately.

I have interpreted your request for information on Directed Energy Weapons as relating to Long-Range Acoustic Devices (LRADs). My response will be based around this device.

Your questions are listed below, followed by an answer for each.

Under the Official Information Act, I request any information held by your agency regarding the study and utilization of Directed Energy Weapons (D.E.W) in New Zealand. Specifically, I would like to know:

Whether the New Zealand government or any of its agencies, departments, or branches have studied or conducted research on Directed Energy Weapons.

Police has not conducted any specific research or study into Directed Energy Weapons.

Whether Directed Energy Weapons are currently being utilized by the New Zealand [Police] or any other government agency in any capacity.

Police has a device called an LRAD. This is long-distance communication device that was purchased to support Police Negotiation Teams (PNTs). It is a portable device that allows staff to broadcast voice messages over background noise and over long distances (up to 600 metres). It broadcasts directional sound for targeted communication. Voice broadcasts using LRAD can penetrate buildings and vehicles to ensure any warnings or commands from Police are clearly heard and understood.

Police National Headquarters

180 Molesworth Street. PO Box 3017, Wellington 6140, New Zealand.
Telephone: 04 474 9499. Fax: 04 498 7400. www.police.govt.nz

Whether there are any plans or proposals to utilize Directed Energy Weapons in New Zealand in the future, and if so, what are the details of these plans.

All deployment decisions of LRAD are made by PNT Commanders on a case-by-case basis. Only staff who have been trained and qualified in the use of LRAD may use the device. The LRAD can be used to communicate with barricaded subjects or in crisis intervention.

The use of the LRAD allows subjects to have the time and space to understand their options and make their own decisions without the pressure of someone being near them.

The device can also be used in situations where regular communication means are not accessible, such as search and rescue, civil defence emergencies, or disaster management (e.g. tsunami, earthquake extractions).

Police purchased these devices to be used primarily in the above-described situations as an option to communicate with subjects, to avoid more serious interventions, such as breach and use of force, or where the subject cannot be easily located (such as in search and rescue situations). The LRAD device also has an "alert/aversion tone" feature which produces a short burst of intense sound and can be used in urgent situations as a warning.

Whether there are any laws, regulations, or guidelines in place that govern the use of Directed Energy Weapons in New Zealand.

Provided with my response are the following documents:

- Police Negotiation Team – Long Range Acoustic Device (LRAD) Standard Operating Procedures
- LRAD – Long Range Acoustic Device – Police Negotiation Team – LRAD training

Some information in these documents has been withheld under the following sections of the OIA:

- Section 6(c) – the making available of that information would be likely to prejudice the maintenance of the law, including the prevention, investigation, and the detection of offences, and the right to a fair trial.
- Section 9(2)(a): the withholding of the information is necessary to protect the privacy of natural persons, including that of deceased natural persons.

The Police threat assessment methodology TENR is a decision-making process that supports the timely and accurate assessment of information directly relevant to the safety of Police and others. It enables better decision making where:

T - the **threat** is assessed

E - the **exposure** is managed

N - the **necessity** to intervene is considered

R - and any **response** is proportionate, and based on a considered risk assessment of threat, exposure and necessity.

Police also relies on legislative and standards compliance, for example those administered by WorkSafe New Zealand.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely



Superintendent Penelope Gifford
Director Tactical Operations
