



Office of Hon Mark Mitchell

MP for Rodney

Minister of Defence

Minister for Land Information

Associate Minister of Justice

Andrew Riddell

fyi-request-6162-494a60ab@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Mr Riddell

Thank you for your email of 25 August 2017 seeking information regarding *HMNZS Te Kaha* providing support to the US Seventh Fleet following the collision of *USS Fitzgerald* with a Philippine container ship. This was further to your request of 8 July, in which you sought information provided to me on this matter. I provided you with a copy of the briefing paper to me on this matter.

I apologise for the delay responding to your email. This was necessary in order to consult on the material you have requested.

Specifically you ask for:

Caveats that would apply to the tasking of the ship by the US Navy that have been prepared in consultation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Two documents have been identified that relate to the caveats developed for the re-tasking of *HMNZS Te Kaha*. Copies of these documents are enclosed, with certain information withheld pursuant to section 6(a) of the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), as making available this information would be likely to prejudice the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the Government of New Zealand.

This material was prepared between officials, which is why it was not included with my previous response.

Media statement identified at paragraph 14 of the one document provided so far

Two draft media statements were subsequently provided to my office following the document I previously released to you. Copies are enclosed.

Media points identified at paragraph 15 of the one document provided so far

The media points supporting the press release are enclosed. These were prepared between officials, which is why they were not included with my previous response.

Further advice identified at paragraph 16 of the one document provided so far

One email was subsequently sent to my office following the document I previously released to you. A copy is enclosed. Certain information has been withheld, pursuant to section 6(a) of the Act. The names of junior staff have also been removed.

Under section 28(3) of the Act you have the right to request the Ombudsman to investigate and review this response.

Yours sincerely



Hon Mark Mitchell
Minister of Defence

13 OCT 2017

- Encl. *Questions and Answers: Extension of Deployment of HMNZS Te Kaha*
Draft statement: *HMNZS Te Kaha to Support Seventh Fleet* (22 June 2017)
Draft statement: *HMNZS Te Kaha to Support Seventh Fleet* (26 June 2017)
Ministry of Defence email to the Office of the Minister of Defence (23 June 2017)
FRAGO Two to CDF Directive (21 June 2017)
FRAGO Three to CDF Directive (June 2017)

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS: EXTENSION OF DEPLOYMENT OF HMNZS TE KAHA

What will HMNZS Te Kaha be doing?

- *HMNZS Te Kaha's* first tasking will be to join the USS Nimitz carrier strike group as it transits from the Western Pacific towards the Indian Ocean.
- Other activities are still being planned.

What activities will HMNZS Te Kaha be doing as part of the USS Nimitz Carrier Strike Group?

- As part of the carrier strike group, *HMNZS Te Kaha* will be conducting a number of training activities designed to increase interoperability and readiness.

What are the command arrangements for the attachment?

- The New Zealand Defence Force will maintain full command of *HMNZS Te Kaha*, however the US Navy would task the ship.
- *HMNZS Te Kaha* will continue to operate in accordance with New Zealand Government policy.

What route will the USS Nimitz Carrier Strike Group be taking?

- Specific routes cannot be divulged for security reasons, however the route is expected to include a transit through the Philippine Sea and the South China Sea.
- All transits are on the high seas and will be in accordance with international law including UNCLOS,

What ships are in the USS Nimitz Carrier Strike Group?

- As well as the aircraft carrier *USS Nimitz*, the carrier strike group comprises an air wing and a destroyer squadron.

What activities will HMNZS Te Kaha have to forgo as a result of this attachment to the US Navy?

- *HMNZS Te Kaha* was programmed to participate in the Australian Exercise talisman Sabre. The ship is not a critical component of the exercise and even without its participation, the New Zealand Defence Force will still make a significant contribution through the deployment of more than 700 personnel and the *HMNZS Canterbury*.

Does this attachment signal a growing defence relationship with the United States, perhaps at the expense of our defence relationship with China?

- New Zealand values its relationship with both the United States and China. This attachment is an opportunity to return the support that the United States gave us after the Kaikoura earthquake.
- During its deployment, *HMNZS Te Kaha* made a port call on the PLA Navy, Southern Fleet at Qingdao and also took the opportunity to conduct a passage exercise with a PLA Navy ship.

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DRAFT

Hon Mark Mitchell

Minister of Defence



Media Statement

22 June 2017

HMNZS Te Kaha to Support Seventh Fleet

Defence Minister Mark Mitchell expressed his condolences for the loss of life following a collision between a Philippine container ship and the United States' Seventh Fleet destroyer *USS Fitzgerald* in Japanese waters on 17 June. Seven sailors were killed and the ship sustained significant damage.

"On behalf of the New Zealand Government, our thoughts are with the families and the crew of the *USS Fitzgerald* following this terrible event."

The frigate *HMNZS Te Kaha* is in the vicinity of Japan as part of the Naval Task Group deployment throughout Asia. The New Zealand Government has offered the support of the *HMNZS Te Kaha* to the United States' Seventh Fleet for a two week period which the United States has accepted.

"Following November's earthquake the United States was quick to divert the *USS Sampson* from the New Zealand International Naval Review to Kaikoura, to aid in the recovery efforts. This assistance, and the assistance and offers made by other countries, was enormously appreciated. Given *Te Kaha* is nearby, we are in a position to lend a hand", said Minister Mitchell.

Roles and tasks for *HMNZS Te Kaha* are being finalised. *HMNZS Te Kaha* is scheduled to return to New Zealand in early August.

In February the Naval Task Group departed New Zealand for an extensive deployment to Australia and then Asia to participate in exercises, undertake port visits and attend the Republic of Singapore's International Naval Review. Port visits have taken place in Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, Cambodia, China, the Philippines, South Korea and Japan.

The second ship of the Naval Task Group, the tanker *HMNZS Endeavour*, arrived back in New Zealand this month from this deployment.

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DRAFT



Hon Mark Mitchell

Minister of Defence

26 June 2017

Media Statement

HMNZS Te Kaha to Support Seventh Fleet

Defence Minister Mark Mitchell has expressed his condolences for the loss of life following a collision between a Philippine container ship and the United States' Seventh Fleet destroyer *USS Fitzgerald* in Japanese waters on 17 June. Seven sailors were killed and the ship sustained significant damage.

"On behalf of the New Zealand Government, our thoughts are with the families and the crew of the *USS Fitzgerald* following this terrible event."

The frigate *HMNZS Te Kaha* is in the vicinity of Japan as part of the Naval Task Group deployment throughout Asia. The New Zealand Government has offered the support of the *HMNZS Te Kaha* to the United States' Seventh Fleet for a three to four week period, which the United States Navy has accepted.

"Following November's earthquake the United States was quick to divert the *USS Sampson* from the New Zealand International Naval Review to Kaikoura, to aid in the recovery efforts. This assistance, and the assistance and offers made by other countries, was enormously appreciated. Given *Te Kaha* is nearby, we are in a position to lend a hand", said Minister Mitchell.

HMNZS Te Kaha's first task will be to join the USS Nimitz Carrier Strike Group for a period of time as it transits towards the Indian Ocean.

Te Kaha will contribute to the overall security and protection of the Carrier Strike Group during the transit. As part of the group, the frigate will also be conducting a number of training activities designed to increase interoperability and readiness.

Other potential activity with Seventh Fleet are still being planned.

HMNZS Te Kaha is scheduled to return to New Zealand in early August.

In February the Naval Task Group departed New Zealand for an extensive deployment to Australia and then Asia to participate in exercises, undertake port visits and attend the Republic of Singapore's International Naval Review. Port visits have taken place in Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, Cambodia, China, the Philippines, South Korea and Japan.

The second ship of the Naval Task Group, the tanker *HMNZS Endeavour*, arrived back in New Zealand this month from this deployment.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 23 June 2017 6:03 p.m.
To: [REDACTED]@parliament.govt.nz'
Cc: QUILTER HELENE, MS; LYNCH TONY, MR; BEAGLEHOLE CHARLOTTE, MRS; SMITH ROSS, CDRE; [REDACTED]
Subject: Extension of the Deployment of HMNZS Te Kaha

As discussed, grateful if you could forward this update to the Minister re Te Kaha's support to the Seventh Fleet. We have done this as an email rather than a submission because of the time constraints.

Proposal

2. The plan is that *HMNZS Te Kaha* will join the USS Nimitz Carrier Strike Group (CSG) for the passage from Guam to the Andaman Sea as the CSG transits to the Middle East.

Comment

3. *HMNZS Te Kaha* has left port in Japan and will rendezvous with the USS Nimitz Carrier Strike Group in 3-4 days time (26/27 June). A strike group is normally made up of a carrier, at least one cruiser, a destroyer squadron and a number of frigates. The strike group will conduct a routine transit through the Philippines, the South China Sea and the Malacca Strait, which will take approximately seven days. Tasks will include escort duties as part of the Nimitz Carrier Strike Group, contributing to the regional maritime picture and conducting standard presence operations (in accordance with national caveats). Helicopter operations may be used in support of these tasks.

4. section 6(a)
[REDACTED]

5. By joining the USS Nimitz Carrier Strike Group, *HMNZS Te Kaha* will be contributing to the security of the group as well as improving NZ/US interoperability and relationships at all levels.

6. *HMNZS Te Kaha* will depart from the USS Nimitz Carrier Strike Group on reaching the Andaman Sea. section 6(a) *HMNZS Te Kaha*, section 6(a) transits back through the Malacca Strait before making a short logistic port call in Singapore prior to continuing passage to New Zealand. The ship is expected to return back in Auckland in early August.

Foreign policy considerations

7. A contribution by *HMNZS Te Kaha* to the Seventh Fleet is consistent with our foreign policy objective of supporting regional peace and stability in the Asia Pacific region. The offer to US Pacific Command underscores our commitment to the US as a close security partner and further enhances our political military relationship in a meaningful way. New Zealand's offer has been welcomed by US Pacific Command.

In order to ensure that the extended deployment and associated tasks of *HMNZS Te Kaha* is consistent with the New Zealand government's approach section 6(a)
[REDACTED]

9. Further, in order to manage any potential risks with New Zealand's support for the US Navy fleet operations, we have requested that Pacific Command ensure any public messaging on fleet operations while *HMNZS Te Kaha* is with the carrier group, is consistent with our own public messages section 6(a)
[REDACTED]

10. section 6(a)

11. HMNZS Te Kaha's plans to undertake routine patrols on return transit through the Malacca Straits supports regional efforts to counter transnational organised crime, including piracy. Patrols in the area are generally welcomed by our South East Asian partners, particularly Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia.

12. Australia has been informed that the offer to the US will preclude HMNZS Te Kaha's participation in Operation Talisman Sabre in Queensland and understands this re-prioritisation.

Publicity

13. We recommend that a media statement is released on Monday 26 June. A draft media statement is attached. The draft has been consulted with the United States system. We will liaise with your office on this.

Consultation

14. We continue to work closely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade to ensure that the deployment is in line with wider foreign policy considerations and risks are minimised.

Next steps

15. Further advice will be provided to your office as planning progresses, including on the proposed passage, tasking and risk mitigation strategies.

16. We also recommend that this advice is referred to the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister for information.

Thanks,

DDI: | DTelN: | Mobile:
Fax: | Email: | defence.govt.nz



170622 DRAFT Te
Kaha to Assist...

NZDF 3250/NA/GEN

21 Jun 17

See Distribution List

FRAGO TWO TO CDF DIRECTIVE 04/2017: OP CRUCIBLE

Reference:

A. Out of scope
[REDACTED]

SITUATION

1. On 17 June the USS Fitzgerald, which is assigned to the USN 7th Fleet, collided with a Philippine flagged container ship. The USS Fitzgerald sustained significant damage and a number of the crew were killed.

2. NZDF has approval to offer HMNZS Te Kaha (TEK) to the US in support of 7th Fleet operations for a period of approximately three weeks while the USS Fitzgerald is being replaced.

3. If an offer of support is accepted by the US, TEK will be assigned under TACOM to C7F. section 6(a)
[REDACTED]

4. This FRAGO outlines amendments to the Ref should an offer of support be accepted by the US. Authority to execute and detail on national caveats to be applied will be issued in a subsequent FRAGO.

Tasks:

5. On command, COMJFNZ is to

- a. assign TEK TACOM to C7F; and
- b. amend the remaining OP CRUCIBLE deployment programme, including cancelling TEKs participation in TS17, to facilitate the assignment.

6. All other aspects of the Ref will remain extant.

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7. **Acknowledgement.** HQ JFNZ is to acknowledge receipt of this FRAGO to DDSC-G.

 **T.J. KEATING**
Lieutenant General
Chief of Defence Force

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NZDF 3250/NA/GEN

Jun 17

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FRAGO THREE TO CDF DIRECTIVE 04/2017: OP CRUCIBLE

Reference:

- A. FRAGO Two to CDF Directive 04/2017: Op CRUCIBLE
- B. Out of scope

SITUATION

- 1. Further to the situation update in Ref A, the US has accepted an offer of TEK for a period of approximately three weeks in support of 7th Fleet operations.
- 2. This FRAGO outlines amendments to Ref B following the acceptance of the offer.

Tasks

- 3. **COMJFNZ** is to:
 - a. assign TEK to C7F; and
 - b. adjust the remaining OP CRUCIBLE deployment programme, including cancelling TEKs participation in TS17, to facilitate the assignment.

Additional Planning Guidance

- 4. **Freedom** COMJFNZ is to determine the period of assignment as well as the status of command and advise these to HQNZDF via SCE Br.

5. Restrictions

- a. section 6(a)

- b. section 6(a)

- c. section 6(a)

- 6. All other aspects of Ref B remain extant.

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7. **Acknowledgement.** HQ JFNZ is to acknowledge receipt of this FRAGO to DDSC-G.

T.J. KEATING

Lieutenant General
Chief of Defence Force

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