

**WELLINGTON**

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PROTECTING NEW ZEALAND'S BORDER

13 August 2018

Ref: OIA 18-169

Mr Thomas Beagle

By email: fyi-request-8330-40560b36@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Mr Beagle

Request for information under the Official Information Act

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act (the OIA) dated 15 July 2018 to the New Zealand Police. On 16 July 2018, the New Zealand Police transferred your request to the New Zealand Customs Service (Customs). You have requested the following information:

"I am writing to ask for information about the use of drug detector dogs in airports, and in particular, their accuracy. Please assume that all questions are asking for monthly of annual statistics for the last five years for which data is available.

- 1. When drug dogs are searching people with their personal baggage and indicate that a person is of interest, what percentage of times are illegal drugs found?*
- 2. When drug dogs are searching baggage not in the presence of their owners and indicate that a bag is of interest, what percentage of times are illegal drugs found?*
- 3. When performing tests of the drug dogs using people carrying samples, what is the success rate of the dogs in finding the samples?*
- 4. When performing tests of the drug dogs using baggage containing samples, what is the success rate of the dogs in finding the samples?*
- 5. Please send me a copy of the procedures used by drug dog handlers in their work."*

We have interpreted your term 'drug dog' to be Customs detector dogs. Please note that Customs dogs are dual-purpose dogs, and are trained to detect both drugs and cash. Our reporting systems do not capture consolidated data that distinguishes between dog drug indications and dog cash indications. Therefore, the information that we have provided you in Tables 1 and 2 are both drug and cash indication referrals.

It is important to note that the detector dogs are only indicating that an odour is present. This does not mean that every time a dog indicates, that drugs are found. At times, it can be hard to verify what odour is present, as the searcher can be relying on the information received from the interaction and utilising other tools such as ion (a drug-detection system) scanning and profiling. The detector dogs are one of a number of methods Customs uses to ensure compliance at the border.

1. *When drug dogs are searching people with their personal baggage and indicate that a person is of interest, what percentage of times are illegal drugs found?*
2. *When drug dogs are searching baggage not in the presence of their owners and indicate that a bag is of interest, what percentage of times are illegal drugs found?*

In response to questions one and two, Customs does not hold percentage statistics of times where illegal drugs are found resulting from a dog indication, as it does not record all passenger and bag interactions involving dogs. Customs only holds records for the number of passengers and bags subsequently referred for further Customs interaction as a result of a positive dog indication. Therefore, questions one and two are refused under section 18(f) of the OIA, as the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation.

However, to assist in responding to your enquiry, please find attached a document which contains yearly breakdowns of the number of drug and cash referrals due to a dog indication, broken down by passenger (Table 1) and baggage (Table 2) indications. Detector dog teams manually record all positive indications of drugs therefore we are able to provide you with the number of positive drug interceptions resulting from a dog indication (Table 3).

The information in the three tables is accurate as at the date of its extraction from the Customs database on 2 August 2018. Please note that the tables may contain different information to what has been previously publicly released by Customs, as the database can be updated or amended at any time.

You will note in tables 1 and 2 that from 2016 onwards that there have been a reduction in the number of referrals by dog indications. A factor that affected the number of referrals can be partially attributed to the retirement of some of the very experienced dogs. New Zealand Customs replace detector dogs from the Australian Border Force, who firstly need to identify any suitable dogs that are available and then they undertake a lengthy training programme to develop their level of skill and experience.

3. *When performing tests of the drug dogs using people carrying samples, what is the success rate of the dogs in finding the samples?*
4. *When performing tests of the drug dogs using baggage containing samples, what is the success rate of the dogs in finding the samples?*

In response to questions three and four, Customs does not record percentage statistics of successful indications during training. The focus in training is not solely based on the success rate, but on continuous improvement and extending the dog's existing capability. There are various tools and indicators that Customs utilises after a detector dog has indicated on a person or bag, which would then guide an opinion on what degree of search would be undertaken. Therefore, your request for this information is refused in accordance with section 18(e) of the OIA, as the information does not exist.

A significant part of Customs work is based on researching and developing the capability of drug detector dogs that are deployed in a border environment. When Customs trainers are working with the detector dog teams, they are generally in a training mode rather than a testing one. This is because Customs are always looking to extend and push the dogs capability to detect the various target odours during training exercises. During training, Customs trainers will vary the method of concealment of the target odours, which may allow an odour to be relatively simple to detect or make it very difficult for the dog to detect. The type of odour used, environmental conditions and availability of the odour can also influence

whether or not the dog is successful. Customs does not use the public to carry drug training samples, therefore this restricts the type of training exercises Customs can do.

Customs detector dogs undergo regular training and an annual certification to ensure their operational capability is maintained on the various odours they are trained to detect. The detector dog is just one of a number of tactical options for Customs. A detector dog can also be deployed in combination with other technology, which makes it an invaluable tool in the border environment.

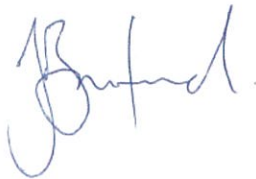
5. *Please send me a copy of the procedures used by drug dog handlers in their work.*"

In response to question five, please find attached a document labelled 'OPS PRO 041 Detector Dog Procedure', which contains the information you requested. Please note that some information has been withheld under section 6(c) of the OIA – where it is necessary to withhold information that may prejudice the maintenance of the law, including the prevention, investigation and detection of offences, and the right to a fair trial.

You have the right, by way of complaint to the Office of the Ombudsman under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act 1982, to seek an investigation and review of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available online at: www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or you can phone 0800 802 602.

I trust you find this information about Customs' drug detector dogs helpful. If you have any queries, please contact us at OIA@customs.govt.nz

Yours sincerely



Jamie Bamford
Group Manager, Intelligence, Investigations and Enforcement