

OIA-2019-3414
15 March 2019

Mr Alex Hill

fyi-request-9494-3d36b717@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Mr Hill

I refer to your email of 31 January 2019 stating that you understood that the Defence Force has undertaken a study on whether or not it is feasible for Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF) aircraft to be based at RNZAF Base Ohakea.

Under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), you requested and asserted:

It is understood that the New Zealand Defence Force has undertaken a study whether or not it is feasible for Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF) aircraft to be based out of RNZAF Base Ohakea. Under the Official Information Act I ask for the following information to be handed over -

1 - The Office itself

- 1.1 - The name, organisational structure and budget of the investigating office or team;*
- 1.2 - The Terms of Reference developed for the study;*
- 1.3 - All communications between this office and any service persons present at Base Ohakea; for the sole purpose of the feasibility study;*
- 1.4 - All communications between this office and any headquarters staff (CDF, VCDF, CAF, CN, CA, COMJFNZ and it's components);*

Note: For point 1.1 above, organisational structure is to include internal structure (roles, sub-offices) and the office's external reporting structure.

2 - The Study itself

- 2.1 - The final report, any interim report or briefing provided to headquarters staff, other internal Directorates, Ministries or Ministers;*
- 2.2 - All briefings on the study provided to personnel at RNZAF Base Ohakea (such as the Base Commander/XO/Adj.);*
- 2.3 - All communications surrounding the results of the study;*

3 - Other

- 3.1 - All communications between the Defence Directorate of Security (DDS) and the investigating office;*
 - 3.1.1 - Including but not limited to briefings, meetings, emails etc.*
- 3.2 - All communications between any Defence Intelligence directorates/units and the investigating office;*
 - 3.2.1 - Including but not limited to briefings, meetings, emails etc.*
- 3.3 - All communications between Defence Public Affairs and the office;*

I understand that some of the information that I've requested may be classified. I request that every effort is made to either redact or declassify due to the significant public interest in this case. If significant information is withheld, the Ombudsman will be contacted.

I also expect names of personnel to be withheld, which is perfectly fair. However, I ask that any ranks are left in the communications, so that it can be distinguished at what strategic level that comment is being made. With regard to the names of the personnel within the Office (Para 1), I am more than satisfied with rank only.

In the context of this document, communications is to mean any information sharing between two parties through any medium (digital or physical).

There was no "office" *per se* established to investigate the proposal to use Ohakea as a base for Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF) F-15 training. Work on this proposal was undertaken jointly by the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) and the Ministry of Defence (MoD). The NZDF assigned between one and two personnel to this work, depending upon the workload, during the period the proposal was considered. When assigned to this work, the NZDF person or persons reported to the Vice Chief of Defence Force, and were termed "Special Projects Officer(s)". The varying levels of workload over the period meant that assigned personnel also worked on other tasks and projects in parallel with their work on the F-15 proposal.

The work conducted commenced in discussions with the RSAF and developed as further discussions between the parties proceeded. The work was conducted as routine staff work to assess a proposal. Accordingly, no formal "Terms of Reference" document was produced for the work conducted, and no formal budget was set. Costs were absorbed within baselines. NZDF costs over the entire period amounted to \$123,933.

The Cabinet documents that formed the basis of the Government's decision on the Singapore proposal will be published on the Ministry of Defence website shortly, at www.defence.govt.nz. These documents set out the key considerations for the decision. Accordingly, I am refusing your request for these documents, pursuant to section 18(d) of the Official Information Act, 1982 (the Act).

Copies of any draft and/or final proposals for the F-15 base at Ohakea produced by the Government, the New Zealand Defence Force, the Ministry of Defence or external consultants are being withheld in full, pursuant to sections 6(a) and 6(b)(i) of the Act. The nature of the Singapore proposal meant that many elements were related to operational details provided by the Singaporean Government on how they intended to operate when in New Zealand. This information was provided by Singapore on the basis of confidence, and release of that information would prejudice the international relations of the Government of New Zealand.

I am refusing your request for all other official advice and all other official documents as this information cannot be made available without substantial collation or research, pursuant to section 18(f) of the Act.

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

Yours sincerely



A.J. WOODS
Air Commodore
Chief of Staff HQNZDF