



Headquarters  
New Zealand Defence Force  
Defence House  
Private Bag 39997  
Wellington Mail Centre  
Lower Hutt 5045  
New Zealand

OIA-2022-4506

14 October 2022

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]@rnz.co.nz

Dear [REDACTED]

Further to the response to you of 30 September 2022, enclosed are copies of readily retrievable correspondence following the death of Corporal Abelen. Personal information is withheld in accordance with section 9(2)(a) of the OIA. The public interest in releasing this information does not outweigh the reason to withhold it in this instance.

You retain the right, under section 28(3) of the OIA, to ask an Ombudsman to review this response to your request. Information about how to make a complaint is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that responses to official information requests are proactively released where possible. The responses to your request will be published shortly on the NZDF website, with your personal information removed.

Yours sincerely

**AJ WOODS**  
Air Commodore  
Chief of Staff HQNZDF

**Enclosure:**

1. Readily retrievable emails

## Ministerial Services

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**From:** Berry, Greer  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 24 August 2022 11:18 a.m.  
**To:** s. 9(2)(a)  
**Cc:** Woods, Andy, AIRCDRE; Taylor, Kevin; Vale, Tony  
**Subject:** FW: Today FM request Unclassified

Kia ora,  
Please see below media request. Talking points will be with your office shortly and we are drafting a statement.

Cheers,  
Greer

**Greer Berry** (she/her)  
Principal Advisor Media - DPA, Defence Public Affairs  
Te Ope Kātua o Aotearoa | New Zealand Defence Force

M: 021806926  
[www.nzdf.mil.nz](http://www.nzdf.mil.nz)



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**From:** s. 9(2)(a) [redacted]@mediaworks.co.nz]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 24 August 2022 11:11 a.m.  
**To:** @Media <Media@nzdf.mil.nz>  
**Subject:** Today FM request

Morena,

We have had reports a soldier who was on leave without pay has been killed on the frontline in Ukraine. It is believed they are based at Burnham.

I am just hoping to confirm this if possible.

Kind regards,

s. 9(2)(a)

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s. 9(2)(a) [redacted] SENIOR REPORTER

NEWS MEDIAWORKS MOBILE s. 9(2)(a) [redacted]

## Ministerial Services

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**From:** Berry, Greer  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 24 August 2022 12:50 p.m.  
**To:** s. 9(2)(a)  
**Cc:** Woods, Andy, AIRCDRE; Taylor, Kevin; Vale, Tony; Alexander, Mitchell  
**Subject:** Unclassified - TPs on UKR incident

Kia ora koutou,

Please be advised of the below talking points. At this stage, immediate family members are still being advised of the death so no further details have yet been approved by family for release however we are working closely with them on this.

We currently have one media enquiry (Today FM) with regards to this incident.

MINDEF Talking points:

- I am aware of reports a New Zealand soldier who was on leave has been killed in Ukraine.
- If reports are accurate, this will be a tragedy for the soldier's family and friends, along with their colleagues in the NZDF.
- There is still more information to be gathered in order to understand the circumstances fully.

Any questions, sing out.

Many thanks,  
Greer

**Greer Berry** (she/her)  
Principal Advisor Media - DPA, Defence Public Affairs  
Te Ope Kātua o Aotearoa | New Zealand Defence Force

M: 021806926  
[www.nzdf.mil.nz](http://www.nzdf.mil.nz)



## Ministerial Services

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**From:** Berry, Greer  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 24 August 2022 3:40 p.m.  
**To:** s. 9(2)(a) Woods,  
Andy, AIRCDRE; s. 9(2)(a) LTCOL; Vale, Tony; Berry, Greer; Stevenson,  
Samantha; Williams, David; Eden, Sue; s. 9(2)(a); Taylor, Kevin; s. 9(2)(a)  
[Redacted]  
**Subject:** Media release: STATEMENT ON REPORTS OF DEATH OF NEW ZEALAND SOLDIER  
- Unclassified

Kia ora koutou,

Please see the below media release intended to be sent at **1700 today**.



## Media Release

24 August 2022

### STATEMENT ON REPORTS OF DEATH OF NEW ZEALAND SOLDIER

The New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) has received reports that a soldier who was on leave has been killed in an incident in Ukraine.

At this early stage, there is still more information to be gathered in order to understand the circumstances fully.

The New Zealand Army will work closely with the family of the soldier to offer support at this deeply sad time.

The soldier was on a period of leave without pay at the time and was not on active duty with the NZDF.

The NZDF is currently consolidating information and will look to release further information when possible, and as such will not be able to provide someone for interviews at this time.

ENDS

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#### FOR INTERVIEWS AND MORE INFORMATION:

Contact Defence Public Affairs:  
021 487 980 or [media@nzdf.mil.nz](mailto:media@nzdf.mil.nz)

## Ministerial Services

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**From:** Berry, Greer  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 24 August 2022 7:08 p.m.  
**To:** s. 9(2)(a)  
**Cc:** Woods, Andy, AIRCDRE; Taylor, Kevin; Vale, Tony  
**Subject:** Background info – UKR casualty - Unclassified

Kia ora s. 9(2)(a)

Please see the below update. With regards to the background information, please note that these points are for your background use only, not for publication.  
We anticipate we will use the below information in future comms to wider media questions around the situation.

Any questions, let me know.

### Background:

The NZ Army are engaged with the next-of-kin of the soldier. They will determine when they are comfortable on any announcement of their loved one's name and photo. We will be guided by them on timing however at this stage it appears they are OK with releasing his name in the coming days (subject to change, of course).

### Talking points:

- I send my condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of the New Zealand soldier who has died in Ukraine.
- I have been advised the New Zealand Army will work closely with the family of the soldier to offer support at this deeply sad time.
- The New Zealand Defence Force has received reports that a soldier who was on leave has been killed in Ukraine.
- The soldier was on a period of leave without pay at the time and was not on active duty with the NZDF.
- At this early stage, there is still more information to be gathered in order to understand the circumstances fully.
- The NZDF is currently consolidating information and will look to release further information when possible, and as such will not be able to provide someone for interviews at this time.

### Background information – *not for publication*

Why can NZDF not confirm one of their personnel has died?

The NZDF is currently working through how the soldier can be positively identified, noting the very challenging circumstances that are presented by this occurring in a conflict zone.

What does LWOP mean – is this person still legally serving in NZDF?

'LWOP' means 'leave without pay'. The NZDF has Defence Force Orders pertaining to LWOP. A member of the Regular Force who is on LWOP remains a serving member of the NZDF and is subject to the Armed Forces Discipline Act (AFDA) at all times.

What regulations is someone on LWOP or Reserve Force subject to?

The NZDF has Defence Force Orders pertaining to the entitlement to LWOP and obligations while on LWOP. Regular Force members and officers of the Reserves remain subject to the AFDA at all times. Non-commissioned members of the Reserve are not subject to the AFDA while they are on LWOP.

- Note: This individual is a Regular Force soldier

Does NZDF keep track of where personnel on LWOP travel to?

Members of the Armed Forces are required to notify their chain of command of international travel plans when taking leave, however are not required to check in routinely.

Do personnel on LWOP have access to NZDF systems/equipment/uniform?

Members of the armed forces do not undertake duties while on LWOP, so do not have access to NZDF equipment or NZDF weapons during that time. A member on LWOP might access NZDF IT systems to maintain communications with their chain of command.

Can NZDF personnel go to countries such as Ukraine?

All members of the Armed Forces are required to communicate to their chain of command to seek approval to travel to any country that presents a security risk. Approval to travel to countries where there is an active armed conflict will generally not be approved.

Have any NZDF active service personnel gone into Ukraine?

No

How many NZDF LWOP/Reserve personnel is NZDF aware of serving in Ukraine?

TBC

Was NZDF aware this person was in Ukraine?

The NZDF is still inquiring into the circumstances of this, including whether he communicated his leave plans.

Will NZDF be checking to see if others who have gone on LWOP have travelled to UKR?

TBC

Will NZDF change policy for LWOP pers travelling overseas?

TBC

Have any NZDF personnel advised when leaving service that they plan to travel to Ukraine?

TBC

Will NZDF be involved in the repatriation of the individual?

TBC

**Greer Berry** (she/her)

Principal Advisor Media - DPA, Defence Public Affairs  
Te Ope Kātua o Aotearoa | New Zealand Defence Force

M: 021806926

[www.nzdf.mil.nz](http://www.nzdf.mil.nz)

## Ministerial Services

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**From:** Berry, Greer  
**Sent:** Thursday, 25 August 2022 9:36 a.m.  
**To:** s. 9(2)(a)  
**Cc:** Woods, Andy, AIRCDRE; Taylor, Kevin; Vale, Tony; Alexander, Mitchell  
**Subject:** Talking points - UKR casualty - Unclassified  
**Importance:** High

Kia ora koutou,  
Please find the below talking points.

Let me know if there are any further questions.

### Talking points:

- I send my condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of the New Zealand soldier who has reportedly died in Ukraine.
- I have been advised the New Zealand Army are working closely with the family of the soldier to offer support at this deeply sad time.
- The soldier's family will decide on when further information about their loved one will be released so I am unable to comment on specifics at this time.
- The New Zealand Defence Force has received reports that a soldier who was on leave has been killed in Ukraine.
- The NZDF is working with consular officials in respect of possible options regarding formal identification and repatriation, noting the difficult circumstances of doing so in a conflict zone.
- The soldier was on a period of leave without pay at the time and was not on active duty with the NZDF.
- Uniformed personnel are required to notify their chain of command of international travel plans when taking leave without pay, however are not required to check in routinely.
- The NZDF is still inquiring into the circumstances of this particular case, including whether the soldier communicated his leave plans.
- When a uniformed member of NZDF takes leave without pay, they are still considered to be serving, and are subject to various Defence Force Orders. They are able to go and pursue other employment opportunities during this time and travel, with approval required to enter some countries.
- No NZDF personnel on active service have entered Ukraine since this conflict began.
- The soldier who has reportedly been killed was not a member of any contingent who deployed as part of NZDF's support to the efforts in Ukraine.
- The NZDF does not know how many ex-serving personnel may have travelled to Ukraine. When a person leaves the Defence Force, the NZDF does not track their movements.

- It is not known how many NZDF personnel on leave without pay may be in Ukraine. No personnel have been approved by NZDF to enter the country.

Many thanks,  
Greer

**Greer Berry** (she/her)  
Principal Advisor Media - DPA, Defence Public Affairs  
Te Ope Kātua o Aotearoa | New Zealand Defence Force

M: 021806926  
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## Ministerial Services

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**From:** Berry, Greer  
**Sent:** Thursday, 25 August 2022 12:48 p.m.  
**To:** s. 9(2)(a)  
**Cc:** Woods, Andy, AIRCDRE; Taylor, Kevin; Vale, Tony; Alexander, Mitchell  
**Subject:** RE: FOR REVIEW: Media Release - FURTHER DETAILS RELEASED ON NZDF SOLDIER REPORTEDLY KILLED IN UKRAINE - Unclassified

FYI, nil change from MFAT.  
Below is final version

Many thanks,  
Greer

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**From:** Berry, Greer  
**Sent:** Thursday, 25 August 2022 12:35 p.m.  
**To:** s. 9(2)(a)

**Cc:** Woods, Andy, AIRCDRE s. 9(2)(a); Taylor, Kevin s. 9(2)(a); Vale, Tony <TONY.VALE@nzdf.mil.nz>; Alexander, Mitchell <Mitchell.Alexander@nzdf.mil.nz>  
**Subject:** FOR REVIEW: Media Release - FURTHER DETAILS RELEASED ON NZDF SOLDIER REPORTEDLY KILLED IN UKRAINE - Unclassified  
**Importance:** High

Kia ora koutou,

Please see the below media release – planned for release at **1300 today**.  
The highlighted line is currently with MFAT for confirmation so I will let you know if that changes or not.

Updated TPs for after the media release goes:

- We can confirm the soldier who was reportedly killed in Ukraine while on leave was Corporal Dominic Abelen. **(Note: pronunciation is ABBA-LIN)**
- Corporal Abelen was aged 30 and served with 2/1 Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment (RNZIR) based in Burnham, and had served with the NZDF for 10 years.
- He was on a period of leave without pay at the time of his death and was not on active duty with the NZDF.
- Corporal Abelen has been described as a quality junior non-commissioned officer, and someone who genuinely cared for his soldiers and friends.
- Uniformed personnel are required to notify their chain of command of international travel plans when taking leave without pay, however are not required to check in routinely.

- The NZDF is still inquiring into the circumstances of this particular case. Corporal Abelen's leave request did not include plans to travel to Ukraine.
- When a uniformed member of NZDF takes leave without pay, they are still considered to be serving, and are subject to various Defence Force Orders. They are able to go and pursue other employment opportunities during this time and travel, with approval required to enter some countries (including Ukraine).
- The NZDF does not know how many ex-serving personnel may have travelled to Ukraine. When a person leaves the Defence Force, the NZDF does not track their movements.
- It is not known how many NZDF personnel on leave without pay may be in Ukraine. No personnel have been approved by NZDF to enter the country.
- No NZDF personnel on active service have entered Ukraine since this conflict began.
- The soldier who has reportedly been killed was not a member of any contingent who deployed as part of NZDF's support to the efforts in Ukraine.

<< File: Corporal Dominic Abelen.jpeg >>

<< OLE Object: Picture (Device Independent Bitmap) >>

25 August 2022

#### **FURTHER DETAILS RELEASED ON NZDF SOLDIER REPORTEDLY KILLED IN UKRAINE**

The New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) can confirm the soldier who was reportedly killed in Ukraine while on leave was Corporal Dominic Abelen.

Corporal Abelen, 30, served with 2/1 Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment (RNZIR) based in Burnham, and had served with the NZDF for 10 years.

He was on a period of leave without pay at the time of his death and was not on active duty with the NZDF.

Acting Chief of Army Brigadier Rose King said the New Zealand Army's thoughts were with Corporal Abelen's whānau, friends and colleagues at this difficult time.

"Any loss of one of our whānau is deeply felt across the New Zealand Defence Force. We are concentrating our efforts on supporting Corporal Abelen's loved ones and our personnel as they grieve," she said.

The NZDF is supporting consular officials in respect of possible options regarding formal identification and repatriation, noting the very difficult circumstances of doing so in a conflict zone.

Commanding Officer of 2/1 RNZIR Lieutenant Colonel Cory Neale said Corporal Abelen was a well-liked and respected soldier who had deployed to Iraq during his time in service.

"Corporal Abelen was a quality junior non-commissioned officer, a trusted go-to member of his company

and an absolute character who genuinely cared for his soldiers and friends. He will be missed, but also remembered long into the future.”

The NZDF is unable to comment on the circumstances of the incident itself as Corporal Abelen was not on active duty and as such the NZDF will not be fronting anyone for an interview.

Background information regarding some frequently asked questions can be found below.

ENDS

**Statement from Corporal Abelen’s father Bryce Abelen:**

A voice recording of the family’s statement will be made available in the NZDF Media Dropbox:

<http://bit.ly/nzdfmedia>

They respectfully request not to be approached for interview.

*Dominic was in the NZ Army for 10 years but never got to fight for his country.*

*He didn't tell us he was going to Ukraine until he was there. He knew we would talk him out of it. He also knew the risks of going there but still went to fight for them.*

*That is Dominic, always thinking of helping others.*

*We understand why he went and hold no grudge against the NZ or Ukraine Army and fully support what he did.*

*Dominic loved being in the army, the life-long friends he made there.*

*There has been relentless support from half the Burnham Military Camp that knew him, as well as personnel from overseas.*

*A kind, gentle man with the most infectious smile that you couldn't help but smile back.*

*He had a love of the outdoors and did a lot of tramping. He spent his holidays traveling around New Zealand and the world.*

*I'm extremely proud of my children and especially Dominic for standing up and doing what he thought was right. He leaves a massive hole in all our hearts.*

Below are a collection of statements from his sister and brothers who thought the world of him:

*“The most amazing human being and the buffest Abelen with the biggest heart to match. Makes everyone he knew immensely proud. The embodiment of drive and power”*

*“I am so proud to call you my brother, I knew you always wanted to risk your life for what you believe in. You proved that so I won't be sad that you are gone but proud that you lived the life of a hero.”*

*“Dominic, my brother is more than just another soldier, he is the most bold, brave and beautiful human with the quickest wit and freely given laugh. Our hearts are broken. He sacrificed his life for others to have a life.”*

*“He was a standard high achiever in all aspects of life. Not only was he my big brother, my role model, my support, but he was for many others too. He took the army brotherhood to a new level, showing it's not about how hard you are but how hard you work. Actions speak louder than words and Dom had said more than enough.”*

*“He was a career driven man, a reliable brother who always had our backs, a favourite and very much loved uncle to a nephew who is waiting for him to come home...”*

**Background information:**

- Uniformed personnel are required to notify their chain of command of international travel plans when taking leave without pay, however are not required to check in routinely.
- The NZDF is still inquiring into the circumstances of this particular case. Corporal Abelen's leave request did not include plans to travel to Ukraine.
- When a uniformed member of NZDF takes leave without pay, they are still considered to be serving, and are subject to various Defence Force Orders. They are able to go and pursue other employment opportunities during this time and travel, with approval required to enter some countries (including Ukraine).
- The NZDF does not know how many ex-serving personnel may have travelled to Ukraine. When a person leaves the Defence Force, the NZDF does not track their movements.
- It is not known how many NZDF personnel on leave without pay may be in Ukraine. No personnel have been approved by NZDF to enter the country.
- No NZDF personnel on active service have entered Ukraine since this conflict began.
- The soldier who has reportedly been killed was not a member of any contingent who deployed as part of NZDF's support to the efforts in Ukraine.

**Note to editors:**

Pronunciation of the surname Abelen is: Abba-lin

ENDS

<< OLE Object: Picture (Device Independent Bitmap) >>

## Ministerial Services

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**From:** Berry, Greer  
**Sent:** Friday, 26 August 2022 4:04 p.m.  
**To:** s. 9(2)(a); Woods, Andy, AIRCDRE; s. 9(2)(a) LTCOL; Vale, Tony; Berry, Greer; Stevenson, Samantha; Williams, David; Eden, Sue; s. 9(2)(a); Taylor, Kevin; s. 9(2)(a)  
s. 9(2)(a)  
**Subject:** UKR media responses - Unclassified

Kia ora koutou,

Please see the below media questions from RNZ, Stuff, Newstalk ZB and Newshub that we are looking to send this afternoon.

All responses have been seen by MFAT who have no concerns.

Let me know if there are any issues,

Many thanks,

Greer

### **Reactive: If asked about former NZDF pers in Ukraine:**

The NZDF does not collect information regarding an individual's subsequent employment on leaving the armed forces, with the exception of formal transfer of security clearances. The NZDF does not know how many ex-serving NZDF personnel may have travelled to Ukraine. When a person leaves the Defence Force, the NZDF does not track their movements.

s. 9(2)(a) (RNZ)

What are you doing to check how many current NZDF soldiers or any other serving personnel in the defence force are fighting (or providing support) in Ukraine. These could be people on leave without pay (or paid leave).

The NZDF has begun contacting personnel who are on Leave Without Pay (LWOP) to remind them of their obligations under the conditions of LWOP.

Are you doing anything to check the whereabouts of any defence force staff on annual leave overseas to ensure they are not in Ukraine without permission.

The NZDF are considering a range of options to check in with all personnel to remind them of their obligations as well as restrictions on travel to countries that present a security risk.

### **What are you going to do to stop this happening again?**

Members of the Armed Forces are afforded the rights applicable to all New Zealanders. These include those rights contained in the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act (including the right to freedom of movement, travel, and freedom of association). The only limitations to those rights would be where it can be demonstrably justified in relation to the efficient and disciplined operation of the Armed Forces. As such, the NZDF are seeking to do what is practicably possible to reach out to personnel who are on leave without pay to advise of their obligations, however this process relies on the individual in being forthcoming with accurate information.

### **Are you currently checking:**

... how many soldiers are on annual leave (or leave without pay)? As at 25 August 2022 there are 94 personnel across all three Services were on leave without pay. It is not known how many NZDF personnel on leave without pay may be in Ukraine. No personnel have been approved by the NZDF to enter the country. NZDF personnel are required through orders to inform us of any intent to enter a country that represents a security risk (including Ukraine). The NZDF does not independently track the movements of personnel on leave without pay.

... how many are overseas? TBC

... how many have sought approval to travel to Ukraine? None

... how many been declined? N/A

... how many soldiers have been in Ukraine and informed/notified you (while there)? **None**

... how many soldiers have returned from being in or fighting in Ukraine and then informed/notified you (after the fact)? **None**

Also:

- What is the penalty for fighting in other countries without permission?

Regular force members on leave without pay remain subject to the Armed Forces Discipline Act at all times, and therefore also remain subject to applicable military orders. How contraventions are dealt with under the AFDA will be dependent on the particular circumstances of the case.

- What does the rules or soldiers contracts say about this type of thing (fighting overseas)?

Defence Act 1990, s 22, provides for the transfer of members of the Armed Forces for employment with other forces. S 22 requires that a transfer order is to be authorised by a New Zealand authority.

Corporal Abelen did not have authority to transfer.

Defence Force Order (DFO) 3 provides orders for 'paramilitary employment' (PE). PE is widely defined and means "any employment, engagement, or involvement in an enterprise within any area of operations that is organised along military lines, or appearing to be of a military nature, outside of the auspices of the New Zealand Government". DFO 3 also provides that "The NZDF will not approve paramilitary employment of a security or law enforcement nature".

- Can you supply me with a copy of the rules/contract with sections pertaining to it?

This can be provided (DFO 3)

s. 9(2)(a) (Stuff)

Does NZDF know how many current serving (including on unpaid leave etc) staff are in Ukraine? **NZDF has not been made aware of any serving personnel (including those on leave without pay) in Ukraine.**

And how many is this? Is it known how many are in combat roles and if so how many? **n/a**

- What is the advice to serving NZDF staff about heading to Ukraine? Is it encouraged or considered permissible?

The NZDF would not seek to approve any NZDF personnel requests to enter Ukraine at this current time. Personnel are advised to not enter the country.

- What are the requirements and rules around NZDF soldiers fighting in conflicts abroad? **Defence Act 1990, s 22, provides for the transfer of members of the Armed Forces for employment with other forces. S 22 requires that a transfer order is to be authorised by a New Zealand authority.**

Corporal Abelen did not have authority to transfer.

Defence Force Order (DFO) 3 provides orders for 'paramilitary employment' (PE). PE is widely defined and means "any employment, engagement, or involvement in an enterprise within any area of operations that is organised along military lines, or appearing to be of a military nature, outside of the auspices of the New Zealand Government". DFO 3 also provides that "The NZDF will not approve paramilitary employment of a security or law enforcement nature".

- If a soldier takes leave to do other work, must NZDF be informed and/or approve of this? **Yes**

- In the case of Mr Abelen, was the NZDF aware he was in Ukraine? Did Abelen inform NZDF of this? **As per previous information released, the NZDF was not aware Corporal Abelen was in Ukraine.**

- If a soldier was to travel to Ukraine, what if any support does NZDF provide them? **None.**

- Has the NZDF confirmed whether any other serving personnel on leave without pay are in Ukraine? If so, how many?

The NZDF has begun contacting personnel who are on Leave Without Pay (LWOP) to remind them of their obligations under the conditions of LWOP.

As at 25 August 2022 there are 94 personnel across all three Services were on leave without pay. It is not known how many NZDF personnel on leave without pay may be in Ukraine. No personnel have been approved by the NZDF to enter the country. NZDF personnel are required through orders to inform us of any intent to enter a country that represents a security risk (including Ukraine). The NZDF does not independently track the movements of personnel on leave without pay.

- Will the NZDF be "checking in" or confirming the whereabouts of serving soldiers on leave without pay, in order to establish if any others, or how many may be in Ukraine?

See as above.

- If so, when will this be done and how long could it be expected to take? What action will be taken if soldiers have travelled to Ukraine?

It is unclear how long it will take to contact all personnel on leave without pay as the NZDF does not independently track the movements of personnel on leave without pay.

Members of the Armed Forces who are involved in any operations appearing to be of a military nature that is outside the auspices of the New Zealand Government may have a range of outcomes. Examples could be that they are subject to a change of circumstances report provided to the Directorate of Defence Security, have their retention in service reviewed immediately or be subject to investigation and potentially disciplinary action.

- If not, why not? Does the NZDF not want to know if serving personnel have entered Ukraine?

N/A

s. 9(2)(a) [\(Newstalk ZB\)](#)

Does the NZDF know how many NZ soldiers, not associated with the training programme, are in Ukraine while not on active duty?

No NZDF soldiers associated with the training programme are currently in Ukraine, nor do they plan to be. NZDF personnel deployed in support of Ukraine have been deployed to the United Kingdom and Europe. They do not enter Ukraine. The NZDF is unaware at this time of any NZDF personnel not on active duty in Ukraine, however is working to confirm information around this.

s. 9(2)(a) [\(Newshub\)](#)

- are you please able to provide the number of NZDF staff who have taken leave to go to Ukraine? Including a breakdown of their roles?

The NZDF has not been made aware of any personnel who have taken leave to go to Ukraine, as disclosed by the individual.

**Greer Berry** (she/her)

Principal Advisor Media - DPA, Defence Public Affairs  
Te Ope Kātua o Aotearoa | New Zealand Defence Force

M: 021806926

[www.nzdf.mil.nz](http://www.nzdf.mil.nz)

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**From:** Taylor, Kevin

**Sent:** Monday, 29 August 2022 2:31 p.m.

**To:** s. 9(2)(a)

Woods, Andy, AIRCDRE s. 9(2)(a); s. 9(2)(a) LTCOL s. 9(2)(a);  
Vale, Tony <[TONY.VALE@nzdf.mil.nz](mailto:TONY.VALE@nzdf.mil.nz)>; Berry, Greer <[Greer.Berry@nzdf.mil.nz](mailto:Greer.Berry@nzdf.mil.nz)>; Williams, David  
<[David.Williams@nzdf.mil.nz](mailto:David.Williams@nzdf.mil.nz)>; Stevenson, Samantha <[Samantha.Stevenson@nzdf.mil.nz](mailto:Samantha.Stevenson@nzdf.mil.nz)>; Eden, Sue  
<[SUE.EDEN@nzdf.mil.nz](mailto:SUE.EDEN@nzdf.mil.nz)>; Hall, Tracy <[Tracy.Hall@nzdf.mil.nz](mailto:Tracy.Hall@nzdf.mil.nz)>; Porteous, Katie <[Katie.Porteous@nzdf.mil.nz](mailto:Katie.Porteous@nzdf.mil.nz)>;  
Mason, Alex <[Alexandra.Mason@nzdf.mil.nz](mailto:Alexandra.Mason@nzdf.mil.nz)>; s. 9(2)(a)

**Subject:** Newshub request - Latest update on recovery of Dominic Abelen unclassified

Fyi, gone to Newshub.

Kevin

Hello s. 9(2)(a)

Your questions are best directed to MFAT.

Regards

**From:** s. 9(2)(a) <[s.9\(2\)\(a\)@discovery.com](mailto:s.9(2)(a)@discovery.com)>

**Sent:** Monday, 29 August 2022 2:25 p.m.

**To:** @Media <[Media@nzdf.mil.nz](mailto:Media@nzdf.mil.nz)>

**Subject:** Newshub request - Latest update on recovery of Dominic Abelen

Good afternoon,

Sorry for the late in the day request. Have just been assigned this story.

Please can I have the latest NZDF info on Abelen.

Has his body been located?

If so what, are the next steps in the repatriation?

Thank you

s. 9(2)(a)

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s. 9(2)(a)

POLITICAL REPORTER / CLIMATE CORRESPONDENT

s. 9(2)(a)

NEWSHUB DISCOVERY NZ [NEWSHUB.CO.NZ](http://NEWSHUB.CO.NZ)



## Ministerial Services

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**From:** Berry, Greer  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 31 August 2022 11:04 a.m.  
**To:** s. 9(2)(a)  
**Subject:** RE: line for Defence approval SEEMAIL

Kia ora s. 9(2)(a)

Looks fine to me. Will obviously kick up further questions but you have the answers to that.  
Cheers  
Greer

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**From:** s. 9(2)(a)  
**Date:** Wednesday, 31 Aug 2022, 10:59 AM  
**To:** Berry, Greer <[Greer.Berry@nzdf.mil.nz](mailto:Greer.Berry@nzdf.mil.nz)>  
**Subject:** FW: line for Defence approval SEEMAIL

Hi Greer, are you happy if the Minister uses the following in case the Minister is asked today about the two reserve personnel: "We have received unconfirmed reports of a very small number of non-regular force or former personnel who may have travelled to or be in Ukraine. To be clear, we are not aware of any active service personnel in Ukraine."

Ngā Mihi/ Thanks,

s. 9(2)(a)



s. 9(2)(a)  
Military Secretary to the Minister of Defence | Office of Hon Peeni Henare  
Minister of Defence | Minister for Whānau Ora  
Associate Minister of Health | Associate Minister of Tourism | Associate Minister of Housing (Māori Housing) |  
s. 9(2)(a) Private Bag 18041, Parliament Buildings, Wellington 6160, New Zealand

## Ministerial Services

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**From:** Berry, Greer  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 31 August 2022 2:13 p.m.  
**To:** s. 9(2)(a); Woods, Andy, AIRCDRE; s. 9(2)(a) LTCOL; Vale, Tony; Berry, Greer; Stevenson, Samantha; Williams, David; Eden, Sue; s. 9(2)(a); Taylor, Kevin; s. 9(2)(a)  
**Subject:** Media response - s. 9(2)(a) - Unclassified

Gone to Stuff

Kia ora s. 9(2)(a)

Thanks for your email. In answer to your questions:

- How many soldiers on leave without pay have informed NZDF of their circumstances in response to NZDF efforts to contact soldiers on leave?

As at 25 August 2022 there were 94 personnel across all three Services were on leave without pay (LWOP) however this number is dynamic and is subject to change as some may return from LWOP and some may go on LWOP. The NZDF is unable to confirm this exact number for the reasons mentioned above, but also because the NZDF does not independently track the movements of personnel on leave without pay. It would be accurate to say the majority of those on LWOP have been contacted by NZDF.

The NZDF are seeking to do what is practicably possible to reach out to personnel who are on leave without pay to advise of their obligations, however this process relies on the individual in being forthcoming with accurate information.

Currently, no personnel on LWOP who have been contacted by NZDF have indicated they are either in Ukraine or seek to travel there.

- How many have reported being in Ukraine?

No NZDF personnel currently on leave without pay who have been contacted by the NZDF have reported being in Ukraine.

- What action, if any, has been taken in response?

n/a

**From:** s. 9(2)(a) [mailto:s.9(2)(a)@stuff.co.nz]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 31 August 2022 11:30 a.m.  
**To:** @Media <Media@nzdf.mil.nz>  
**Subject:** Regarding: soldiers in Ukraine

Hello NZDF media team

I'm seeking any further update on the effort to identify if any soldiers are in Ukraine currently.

Questions being:

- How many soldiers on leave without pay have informed NZDF of their circumstances in response to NZDF efforts to contact soldiers on leave?
- How many have reported being in Ukraine?
- What action, if any, has been taken in response?

Thanks

s. 9(2)(a)

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s. 9(2)(a)

Political reporter

s. 9(2)(a)

Press Gallery, room G-045

Parliament Buildings

1 Museum St,

Wellington 6160

## Ministerial Services

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**From:** Berry, Greer  
**Sent:** Thursday, 1 September 2022 1:17 p.m.  
**To:** s. 9(2)(a) Woods, Andy, AIRCDRE; s. 9(2)(a) LTCOL; Vale, Tony; Berry, Greer; Stevenson, Samantha; Williams, David; Eden, Sue; s. 9(2)(a); Taylor, Kevin; s. 9(2)(a)  
**Subject:** FW: Newstalk ZB request - unclassified

Going soon to Newstalk ZB

Kia ora s. 9(2)(a)

In answer to your questions:

Has the Defence Force followed up with all officers who are currently on leave without pay?

*It would be accurate to say the majority of those on Leave Without Pay (LWOP) have been contacted by NZDF.*

How many are currently on leave without pay?

*As at 25 August 2022 there were 94 personnel across all three Services on leave without pay however this number is dynamic and is subject to change as some may return from LWOP and some may go on LWOP.*

Are any of them situated in Ukraine?

*Currently, no personnel on LWOP who have been contacted by NZDF have indicated they are either in Ukraine or seek to travel there.*

Are there any that you cannot get a hold of?

*The NZDF does not independently track the movements of personnel on leave without pay. The NZDF are seeking to do what is practicably possible to reach out to personnel who are on leave without pay to advise of their obligations, however this process relies on the individual in being forthcoming with accurate information.*

Is there any update on the whereabouts of New Zealand soldier Dominic Abelen's body?

*As previously indicated, please contact MFAT with regards to this question.*

Reports from the ground suggest the Russian military may have his remains, is this the case?

*See above*

**From:** s. 9(2)(a) [redacted]@nzme.co.nz

**Sent:** Thursday, 1 September 2022 11:48 a.m.

**To:** @Media <Media@nzdf.mil.nz>

**Subject:** Newstalk ZB request

Hi there,

Has the Defence Force followed up with all officers who are currently on leave without pay?

How many are currently on leave without pay?

Are any of them situated in Ukraine?

Are there any that you cannot get a hold of?

Is there any update on the whereabouts of New Zealand soldier Dominic Abelen's body?

Reports from the ground suggest the Russian military may have his remains, is this the case?


Any more information you can provide would be great.

Thanks,

s. 9(2)(a)

Senior Reporter/News Director | Newstalk ZB

s. 9(2)(a)

: s. 9(2)(a)