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OIA-2022-4588

15 December 2022

[REDACTED]  
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Dear [REDACTED]

I refer to your emails of 8 December 2022 to Veterans' Affairs New Zealand and the Ministry of Defence requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), information about the involvement of New Zealand Armed Forces in Peninsular Malaysia.

- *Were any NZ troops or personnel deployed operationally in Peninsular Malaysia or along the Thai/Malaysia border between May and December 1976?*
- *Were any NZ troops or personnel wounded in the same locality (Peninsular Malaysia or along the Thai/Malaysia) during the same time frame (May and December 1976)?*
- *If so, how many and where did they recuperate?*

New Zealand Armed Forces personnel did not deploy operationally in the Malay Peninsula or along the Thai/Malaysia border after 31 January 1974. The role of New Zealand Armed Forces from 1 February 1974 was to train and exercise with the Malaysian Armed Forces. Training exercises were held in various locations in the Malay Peninsula. Any operational deployment would have required the explicit approval of the New Zealand Government and no such approval was given. The New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) is not aware of any New Zealand Armed Forces personnel being wounded between May and December 1976.

*and looking at the below link, we'd also like to ask questions and be provided information as follows:*

<https://www.nzdf.mil.nz/assets/Uploads/DocumentLibrary/2021-Background-Information-and-Historical-Notes-South-East-Asia-medallic-recognition.pdf>

*- Why did the MRJWG not have access to some "potentially critical information", which included documents from Malaysia and Australia (as per the 4th paragraph on the 1st page of the document in the above link), when doing the 2021 reassessment of medallic recognition?*

- *Who restricted this access and why was it restricted?*
- *Is this information available now? If not, when will it be available, if at all?*

A range of potentially critical material was still classified in 2013 when the Medallic Recognition Joint Working Group (MRJWG) undertook its review. This material was classified for security reasons when it was written from the 1960s to the 1980s by the relevant government agencies, and it had not been declassified. A search of the historical records to locate the classified intelligence and threat assessments was not undertaken

during the MRJWG review. This was out of scope for the initial work of the independent historian because he lacked the appropriate clearances and it was determined by NZDF staff that this was not needed. The MRJWG subsequently decided that research in the classified historical records was unlikely to add any significant new information, and chose not to delay its report by undertaking this research. The Malaysian and Australian information, and most of the New Zealand material, is publicly available. The references are listed in the Bibliography to the March 2021 NZDF report 'Reassessment of the Recommendations of The Medallic Recognition Joint Working Group on New Zealand Military Service in South East Asia 1955 to 1989'. The report is available via the following link: <https://www.nzdf.mil.nz/assets/Uploads/DocumentLibrary/South-East-Asia-Report-2021.pdf>. The remaining New Zealand material, which remains classified, does not contain any crucial information, except for duplicates of documents which are available in unclassified files.

- *In the last paragraph of the document in the above link, we would like more information please relating to the statement "...nor were personnel exposed to operational threats apart from in fleeting circumstances". In what year and in what location were personnel exposed to operational threats in the fleeting circumstances mentioned? How many personnel? Were any personnel injured, or killed, as a result? If any personnel were injured, where did they recuperate?*

The March 2021 NZDF report, page 35, paragraph 147, states: 'Submissions to the MRJWG highlighted a number of incidents [after 31 January 1974] including one as late as 1983, where there was potential for NZDF personnel to come in contact with insurgent groups.'

The submissions stated the year and location of these incidents as 1983 near Ipoh and 1985 in a location not specified. No New Zealand Armed Forces personnel were injured or killed in these incidents.

You have 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. This response 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