



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

OIA-2024-5147

29 October 2024

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]@nzme.co.nz

Dear [REDACTED]

I refer to your email of 2 October 2024 requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), the following information:

*Could you please provide a breakdown of the costs involved in negotiating and arranging the release of Phillip Mehrtens from West Papua?*

*Could you please detail the recipients of any payments - and the date and time these were made?*

*Could you please also provide all correspondence between the Defence Force and Defence Minister Judith Collins regarding Mehrtens' release?*

On 3 October 2024 you were advised that the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) transferred the first two points of your request to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. This was in accordance with section 14 of the OIA. I understand that you have also made a similar request to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. This response will address information that the NZDF holds.

There is no correspondence between the NZDF and the Minister of Defence on the release of Phillip Mehrtens. However, on 22 July 2024 the NZDF provided the Minister of Defence an oral update regarding this matter at the Defence Officials Meeting. Details on this update are withheld in accordance with section 6(a) of the OIA to avoid prejudice to the security or defence of New Zealand and the international relations of the Government of New Zealand. There were no further verbal updates provided to the Minister of Defence by the NZDF.

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