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New Zealand Defence Force
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New Zealand

OIA-2025-5534

25th September 2025

[REDACTED]@rnz.co.nz

Dear [REDACTED]

I refer to your email of 29 August 2025 seeking the following information:

Pls advise if VA is aware of any veterans of Bosnia peacekeeping who have either

- *Died*
- *Or are sick or have health condition*

That VA has accepted are linked to/caused by their time in Bosnia.

If so, pls comment on why this has occurred, including what it was they were exposed to that caused this.

Pls provide numbers of veterans in each category, full details of VA's interactions over this, and any advice or comment VA wishes to make.

Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

The client management system currently used by Veterans' Affairs (VA), the Veteran Support System (VSS), was designed for case management of veterans and their claims as individuals, and the accurate maintenance of their records. While VSS is capable of some level of reporting, the system and processes associated with its day to day use were not designed for this purpose, and there are limitations which impact what can be reported, and how accurate or representative any reporting is.

Of approximately 1,000 members of the New Zealand armed forces deployed over the 15-year history of this deployment, 212 veterans who served in the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia have registered with VA (prior to 2024, registration with VA was on an opt-in basis).

Of the 212 veterans registered with VA, 16 have passed away. Because of the relatively low number, investigation of the 16 individual files has been undertaken. Three of the deaths were considered to be service-related in terms of the Veterans' Support Act 2014, but those three had all served on other operational deployments (including Timor Leste and Afghanistan). As a result, their deaths could not be definitively attributed to just their service in the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (the causative exposures were either not specific to a particular operational service, or were attributed to specific exposures present in another operational theatre where they had served).

With respect to your request for a breakdown of health conditions, any decision to accept a condition as service-related is supported by advice from an appropriately qualified medical professional. How they are recorded in VSS is sometimes inconsistent, and cannot be attributed to a particular deployment without manual investigation, if at all. This is because of limitations to VSS as noted earlier. This part of your request is therefore declined in accordance with section 18(f) of the OIA as a manual search of the 212 individual files would be required.

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 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

GA Motley

Brigadier

Chief of Staff HQNZDF