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**MANATŪ KAUPAPA
WAONGA**
NEW ZEALAND
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

26 February 2026

RESPONSE TO YOUR OFFICIAL INFORMATION REQUESTS

On 28 January 2026 you made the following requests for information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Defence:

It is regarding information from the 2025 Defence Capability plan. For your reference, here is a link to the plan document:

<https://www.nzdf.mil.nz/assets/Uploads/DocumentLibrary/24-0253-NZDF-Defence-Capability-Plan-Single.pdf>

On page 20 of the document, this is stated:

"In the short and medium term there will be a greater focus on uncrewed technology. This includes long range uncrewed aerial vehicles to provide more persistent maritime surveillance; uncrewed vertical take-off and landing aircraft to replace some maritime helicopter tasks; and uncrewed surface and subsurface vessels to help monitor and protect our Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), and support our Pacific partners."

Please state who New Zealand's "Pacific partners" are.

Please state what consultations you have had with partner nations over uncrewed technology.

For each instance of consultation, please show:

- *When it occurred*
- *Who was involved and where the representatives and/or officials are from*
- *How the interaction occurred (i.e face to face meeting, phone call, email exchange).*

Please also provide:

- *Any briefings provided for the consultation instance*
- *Any agenda set out for the interaction*
- *Any documents and/or briefings produced following the interaction*

On 29 January and 3 February, respectively, the Offices of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Office of the Minister of Defence transferred your request to the Ministry of Defence, which is best-placed to respond.

When referring to Pacific partners, the New Zealand government generally means those Pacific Island countries and territories who are members of the Pacific Islands Forum.

Given the broad scope of our Pacific interactions, you would need to identify a timeframe and which countries you are specifically interested in for us to be able to respond to your request. As it stands, the remainder of your request is declined, pursuant to section 18(f) of Act, as it would constitute substantial collation and research.

For your awareness, maritime domain awareness (MDA) is commonly discussed when we interact with our Pacific partners. As indicated in the *2025 Defence Capability Plan*, Defence is looking to achieve MDA through low-cost, uncrewed technology and this is something we discuss broadly with our Pacific partners regularly as part of the broader conversation on MDA. As an example of this in practice, the New Zealand Defence Force recently worked with the Republic of Fiji Military Forces utilising uncrewed surface vessels to help identify and track vessels operating suspiciously in Fiji's exclusive economic zone. You can find more information on that deployment from this page on the Defence Force website: <https://www.nzdf.mil.nz/navy/navy-news/hmnzs-canterbury-delivers-leading-edge-technology-to-support-regional-security-tasks-in-fiji/>.

As a further example of the types of engagement Defence has, MDA, and the uses of new technologies, featured in the New Zealand hosted South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting in 2024. You can find more information about our work hosting these Pacific leaders in the Minister's release here: <https://beehive.govt.nz/release/south-pacific-defence-ministers-meet-auckland> and the Ministerial briefing pack available on the Ministry's website here: <https://www.defence.govt.nz/publications/south-pacific-defence-ministers-meeting-2024-briefings/>.

Under section 28(3) of the Act you have the right to request the Ombudsman to investigate and review this response.

Yours sincerely

PP

Richard Schmidt
Deputy Secretary Policy and Planning