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New Zealand Defence Force
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OIA-2022-4495

15 September 2022

Richard Wang
fyi-request-20344-a7c1868c@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Richard Wang

I refer to your request of 25 August 2022 seeking, under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), the following:

1. *How many NZDF personnel have taken leave without pay in the year to date?*
2. *Did the deceased mercenary Dominic Abelen indicate that he intended to travel overseas? If so, to which countries?*
3. *How many NZDF personnel took leave without pay in the previous year? How many indicated that they intended to travel to Europe? If Abelen indicated that he intended to travel to countries in Europe adjoining the Ukraine, how many others taking leave without pay indicated that they intended to travel to the same countries?*

For the period 1 January 2022 to 31 August 2022, there were 99 instances of New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) Regular Force personnel and civilian staff starting leave without pay. For calendar year 2021, there were 115 instances of NZDF Regular Force personnel and civilian staff starting leave without pay. Corporal Abelen stated that he intended to visit Central Asia while on leave.

Members of the NZDF are not required to identify all countries they may be travelling to while on leave; however, if members are intending to travel to certain countries then they are obliged to notify their command accordingly. This information is not readily retrievable, therefore your request for how many of the 115 individuals who started leave without pay in 2021 travelled to Europe is declined in accordance with section 18(f) of the OIA.

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.

Yours sincerely

AJ WOODS
Air Commodore
Chief of Staff HQNZDF