



29 November 2021

Sebastian

By email: fyi-request-15138-2112bc5b@requests.fyi.org.nz

Ref: OIA-2020/21-0676

Dear Sebastian

Official Information Act request for documents relating to Counter-Terrorism and the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Terrorist Attack on Christchurch Mosques

I refer to your request made under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), received by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) on 17 June 2021. You requested:

“...I would like to renew my request for a copy of the Counter-Terrorism Handbook. For clarity, my request is for the document referred to in the CT/CVE Capability Review as “Counter-Terrorism Handbook, DPMC, October 2019, RESTRICTED,” as opposed to the unclassified one-page summary that is accessible on the DPMC website.

Further, the Counter-Terrorism Strategy Implementation Plan 2020 refers to “policy and operational frameworks” for managing New Zealand foreign terrorist fighters and their repatriation. I request copies of these frameworks.

I would also like to request copies of these documents referred to in the Royal Commission report:

ONE: *“In June 2019, the CTCC agreed that information access and sharing were vital to understanding the threat. It suggested removing legislative barriers, leveraging open-source intelligence capability, developing online platforms for agencies to collaborate and enhancing information sharing mechanisms between Public sector agencies and selected private organisations.”*

I request a copy of this report

TWO: *“A 20 June 2019 report to the Security and Intelligence Board noted that work had not yet commenced on measuring or assessing its own governance and coordination performance...”*

I request a copy of this report, if it is different to the June 2019 report referred to above.

THREE: *“In July 2016, the Security and Intelligence Board recognised the “urgent need for agencies to [sort out] New Zealand’s counter-terrorism arrangements in line with ministerial expectations” and noted the continuing absence of an overarching strategy for counter-terrorism.”*

I request a copy of the document containing these observations.

FOUR: *“In 2017, [DPMC]... advised the Security and Intelligence Board that there were still no measures to demonstrate impact. It noted that one of the factors “stopping intelligence and assessment about the national intelligence priorities from informing decision-making and policy-making to the fullest extent” was that “current priority descriptions are not clear enough...”*

I request a copy of the document containing these observations.

FIVE: *“The last national-level counter-terrorism exercise before the 15 March 2019 terrorist attack was in 2014. Comprehensive evaluation reports are prepared after each exercise, which include lessons identified and corrective action plans to address those.”*

I request a copy of the evaluation report and corrective action plan for the national-level counter-terrorism exercise conducted in 2014.

SIX: *“In 2016, the Security and Intelligence Board was told that a CT operation identified that “the system overall appears under-prepared to facilitate effectively the sharing of highly sensitive, [compartmented] intelligence to those who need it, when they need it”. The CTCC was asked to address this, along with other matters identified in a corrective action plan following that operation.”*

I request a copy of the report to the Security Intelligence Board that contains these observations. I also request a copy of this operation’s corrective action plan.

SEVEN: *“In mid-2018 the Specialist Coordinator... directed a National Assessments Bureau analyst to conduct a stocktake of Public sector agencies’ online activity to counter extremism.”*

I request a copy of this stocktake...”

On 12 August 2021, we wrote to you advising that we required further time to consider our response in relation to the part of your request for copies of the “*policy and operational frameworks*” regarding “*managing New Zealand foreign terrorist fighters and their repatriation*”. I apologise for the delay in our provision of a further response.

It remains necessary to continue to withhold most of this information under section 6(a) of the Act, as the making available of that information would be likely to “prejudice the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the Government of New Zealand”. However, on review and following consultation, I have decided to release to you a copy of the Cabinet Minute: Managing Foreign Terrorist Fighters (ERS-19-MIN-0002).

You have the right to ask the Ombudsman to investigate and review my decision under section 28(3) of the Act.

This response will be published on DPMC’s website during our regular publication cycle. Typically, information is released monthly, or as otherwise determined. Your personal information including name and contact details will be removed for publication.

Yours sincerely

Tony Lynch
**Deputy Chief Executive
National Security Group**