



Headquarters  
New Zealand Defence Force  
Defence House  
Private Bag 39997  
Wellington Mail Centre  
Lower Hutt 5045  
New Zealand

OIA-2025-5267

 March 2025

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

I refer to your requests of 7 February 2025, seeking the following with regard to Operation BIG TALK:

*I would like all information related to advice provided to the Minister of Veterans' Affairs by the NZDF regarding Operation BIG TALK in accordance with the provisions of the Veterans' Support Act 2014.*

*Particularly interested in information relating to its classification as qualifying operational service (Article 8(2)(b) under the Act, specifically in view of the provisions of Article 6 and the existence on Bougainville at the time of Operation BIG TALK of an active Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) who's activities necessitated participating units to operate under Rules of Engagement (ROE)*

*I would like copies of any NZDF reviews of Operation BIG TALK -particularly within the context of the request above.*

and

*I would like all information related to the review by Veteran's Affairs of Operation BIG TALK (2022-2023) to establish whether participation in that operation was eligible to be considered as qualifying operational service (in accordance with provisions of the Veterans' Support Act 2014).*

*I am interested also in information related to how that review was conducted, who participated within that review (and in what capacity) and any recommendations provided to NZDF as a result of that review.*

Your requests have been considered by the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

In 2009, (prior to the introduction of the Veterans' Support Act 2014) advice was provided to the then Minister of Veterans' Affairs on deployments which did not have emergency status under the War Pensions Act 1954. The deployments had varied risk profiles, and the advice outlined the nature of the deployments and made recommendations for each, based on the NZDF Strategic Military Threat Assessment model. The deployments that were recommended for cover under the War Pensions Act were those that fell into the 'medium' to 'very high' threat level categories under this model. Veterans' Affairs prepared this advice in consultation with the NZDF historian and with reference to a wide range of source

material and primary documents. The advice noted that the NZDF Strategic Military Threat Assessment model was a recently developed tool at that time, it had been applied retrospectively in discussion with the NZDF.

From that 2009 document, the following relevant extract is within the scope of your request:

### ***Bougainville***

*The deployment to Bougainville had various phases. There was greater risk associated with some parts of the deployment than others. The recommendation for this deployment reflects the different levels of risk.*

### ***Operation Big Talk***

*29 July 1990 to 5 August 1990*

#### ***NZDF Personnel***

*In mid-1990, following decades of hostility and civil unrest on Bougainville, New Zealand deployed three RNZN ships off the coast of Bougainville at the request of the Papua [SIC] New Guinea government to serve as a neutral venue for peace talks between government and secessionist leaders. The frigates HMNZS Wellington and Waikato accommodated the delegations and the tanker HMNZS Endeavour served as the base of negotiations. An agreement named the 'Endeavour Accord' was signed after eight days of negotiation.*

*In accordance with the NZDF Strategic Military Threat Assessment this operation is deemed to have been low risk.*

### ***Recommendation***

*It is recommended that service with Operation Big Talk is not given emergency status under the War Pensions Act 1954.*

Operation Big Talk did not meet the criteria to be emergency service (the equivalent of qualifying operational service under current legislation). The deployment was given operational service status for the purposes of burial in a services cemetery, in accordance with section 15 of the Burial and Cremation Act 1964.

Information regarding the review of qualifying operational service, undertaken by Veterans' Affairs at the request of the Chief of Defence Force, is available on the Veterans' Affairs website<sup>1</sup>.

Operation BIG TALK was one of the deployments considered during the review, and in July 2022, Veterans' Affairs provided a Minute to the Chief of Defence Force regarding service in Bougainville. A copy of this Minute is provided at Enclosure 1. This Minute includes an error in the third sentence of paragraph 22, which should read *Operation Coracle* not *Operation Big Talk*.

In August 2022, a submission was made to the Minister for Veterans, recommending a declaration of operational service under the Veterans' Support Act, for service in Bougainville. A copy of this submission is provided at Enclosure 2. Where indicated, the contact details of staff members are withheld in accordance with section 9(2)(a) of the OIA, for the protection of privacy.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/news-events/articles/deployment-review-summary/>.

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

**GA Motley**

Brigadier

Chief of Staff HQNZDF

**Enclosures:**

1. VAB 017 21-22, 26 July 2022
2. NTM 2022-204, 18 August 2022

**HEADQUARTERS NEW ZEALAND DEFENCE FORCE**  
Veterans' Affairs New Zealand  
**MINUTE**

VAB 017 21-22

26 July 2022

**CDF**

**FOR INFORMATION:**

CPO

CFO

**DECLARATION OF OPERATIONAL SERVICE – BOUGAINVILLE**

**References:**

- A. Veterans' Support Act 2014
- B. NZDFP-2.0.1.1 Military Threat Assessments 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition
- C. VA 096 14-15 dated 15 Nov 2015

**Background**

1. The Veterans' Support Act 2014 (the Act, Ref A) requires that you provide a report to the Minister for Veterans that assesses the operational and environmental threats posed to members deployed, including for deployments that have ceased. The Act further requires that you notify the Minister if there is a change to the threat that should trigger a change in the declaration of operational service for a deployment.
2. Veterans' Affairs is finalising a review of post-1974 deployments. This minute considers replacing two current declarations and extending coverage to a small number of personnel in a single new declaration for service in Bougainville between late 1997 and mid-2003.
3. The new declaration is expected to have a minor impact on Crown liability for veterans' support entitlements which can be funded within the Non-Departmental baseline (Non-Departmental Other Expense: Service Cost – Veterans' Entitlements).
4. The matters of medallic recognition or the retrospective applications of conditions of service, e.g. operational allowances, are not considered here.

**Declaring operational service**

5. To be declared operational service, the Minister for Veterans must be satisfied that a deployment poses a significant risk of harm to personnel (s 9(3) of the Act). The risk of harm factors associated with deployments as detailed in the Act are:

**environmental threat** means a threat posed by 1 or more of the following:

- (1) water and food quality or availability, or sanitation conditions;
- (2) epidemics and other diseases, including diseases that are endemic;
- (3) insect, plant, and animal hazards;
- (4) roads and associated traffic hazards; and
- (5) any other matter that the Minister considers poses an environmental threat.

a. **operational threat** means a threat posed by 1 or more of the following:

- (1) the activity of individuals, stakeholders and factions, security forces, and other groups, including those conducting military and political activity;
- (2) the local conditions and hazards, including violence connected with crime, civil disturbance, rioting, and protest action;
- (3) the risk associated with mines, unexploded ordnance, and booby traps;
- (4) the risk associated with chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear exposure;
- (5) acts of terrorism, whether or not directed at members of the Defence Force; and
- (6) any other matter that the Minister considers poses an operational threat.

6. When the Minister is satisfied the threat poses a significant risk of harm then the Minister must declare-

- (a) the deployment to be operational service; and
- (b) the area (whether land, sea, or airspace) in which the deployment is to be operational service; and
- (c) the period during which the deployment is to be operational service.

7. CDF must advise the Minister when the deployment ends or the threats posed to members on which the Minister relied in making a declaration under the above criteria, escalate, abate, or cease. The deployments being considered have all concluded.



8. The thresholds linked to “*significant risk of harm*” (s 9(3)) were set at a Medium overall operational and/or health threat level established at Ref C, in accordance with the risk factors described in the Military Threat Assessment (MTA, Ref B); and the factors to be taken into account to determine whether an operation is a *deployment*: that it has been appropriately authorised, and that it fulfils the definition of operational service in Defence Force Order 3.

### **Review of deployments in Bougainville**

9. In the 1980's, a strong separatist movement emerged within Bougainville. By 1988 the attempts of the Papua New Guinea government to put down this movement led to a civil war that was not resolved until 1997. The ensuing 2001 peace agreement was brokered by New Zealand and facilitated by the New Zealand Defence Force. The peace agreement brought about the formation, within Papua New Guinea, of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville under the 2004 constitution of the Autonomous Bougainville Government.<sup>1</sup>

### **Operation Big Talk**

10. In mid-1990, following decades of hostility and civil unrest on Bougainville, New Zealand deployed three naval ships off the coast of Bougainville at the request of the Papua New Guinea government to serve as a neutral venue for peace talks between government and secessionist leaders.<sup>2</sup> The frigates HMNZS Wellington and Waikato provided transport and accommodation for the delegations, whilst Endeavour provided a neutral venue for the negotiations.<sup>3</sup>

11. The MTA in the 2009 Review of Deployments briefing determined that Operation Big Talk was Low risk and that it not be given emergency status under the War Pensions Act 1954.

12. In applying the criteria to be considered operational service under section 9 of the Act, in line with Ref C, Operation Big Talk may meet the definition of a *deployment*. However, information to support a change in the threat level of Low was not established. Accordingly, Operation Big Talk does not meet the agreed factors to be considered operational service under the Act.

13. For noting, Operation Big Talk is operational service for the purposes of the Burial and Cremation Act 1964. This status was given to all deployments reviewed in 2009 that were not given emergency status (equivalent of operational service under the Act) under the War Pensions Act 1954.

14. No further action is proposed.

### **South Pacific Peacekeeping Force**

15. By the early 1990s, fighting had resumed on Bougainville. In September 1994, a new cease-fire agreement was reached between the Papua New Guinea Government and the secessionists. A regional peacekeeping force, the South Pacific Peacekeeping Force (SPPKF), was established from contingents from Fiji, Tonga, Vanuatu, Australia, and New Zealand.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> GNZ-2425-22 Definition and Map of Bougainville 1997-2003, 28 June 2022

<sup>2</sup> 2009 Min Briefing– Review of Deployments with Emergency Status under the War Pensions Act 1954

<sup>3</sup> Torpedo Bay Navy Museum - [www.navymuseum.co.nz](http://www.navymuseum.co.nz)

<sup>4</sup> 2009 Min Briefing – Review of Deployments with Emergency Status under the War Pensions Act 1954

16. Operation Portus involved 13 New Zealand Army personnel serving as part of the South Pacific Peacekeeping Force which supervised and assisted with security during the Bougainville Peace Conference held in Arawa, Bougainville.<sup>5</sup> New Zealanders occupied staff positions at the force's headquarters and provided a search team which was responsible for ensuring that weapons were not brought into the neutral zones controlled by the SPPKF. Peace talks held in early October 1994 were unsuccessful and when the SPPKF was disbanded and withdrawn from Bougainville in mid-October 1994, Bougainville remained a site of serious unrest.<sup>6</sup>

17. Service with the South Pacific Peacekeeping Force (1994) is QOS for the purposes of the Act.

18. No further action is proposed.

### **Operation Coracle**

19. In June 1997, New Zealand Foreign Minister Don McKinnon facilitated a discussion among leaders of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA), its political wing the Bougainville Interim Government (BIG), and the Bougainville Resistance Force (BRF), as well as the Bougainville Transitional Government, created by the BRF.<sup>7</sup>

20. Operation Coracle was the name given to the operation in which the HMNZS Canterbury returned delegates of the Bougainville peace talks, which had been held in Christchurch, to their home islands on Bougainville. Rigid hull inflatable boats were used to ferry the delegates to shore. Operation Coracle also involved negotiation for the release of five Papua New Guinea Defence Force prisoners of war, who had been held by the BRA since September 1996. A detachment of BRA delegates accompanied by the New Zealand Special Envoy and other NZDF personnel effected the release negotiations.<sup>8</sup>

21. The MTA in the 2009 Review of Deployments briefing determined that Operation Coracle was Low risk and that it not be given emergency status under the War Pensions Act 1954.

22. In applying the criteria to be considered operational service under section 9 of the Act, in line with Ref C, Operation Coracle may meet the definition of a *deployment*. However, information to support a change in the threat level of Low was not established. Accordingly, Operation Big Talk does not meet the agreed factors to be considered operational service under the Act.

23. For noting, Operation Coracle is operational service for the purposes of the Burial and Cremation Act 1964. This status was given to all deployments reviewed in 2009 that were not given emergency status (equivalent of operational service under the Act) under the War Pensions Act 1954.

24. No further action is proposed.

### **Truce Monitoring Group (TMG)**

25. The former New Zealand Minister of Foreign Affairs, Don McKinnon, helped negotiate a truce between warring Bougainville factions in 1997. This resulted in a

<sup>5</sup> NZDF Media Release 23 February 2017– Service at Bougainville Peace Talks Qualifies for Medal

<sup>6</sup> 2009 Min Briefing – Review of Deployments with Emergency Status under the War Pensions Act 1954

<sup>7</sup> Bougainville Peace Agreement: The Burnham I and II Dialogues, p.6, [www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org)

<sup>8</sup> 2009 Min Briefing - Review of Deployments with Emergency Status under the War Pensions Act 1954

New Zealand-led Truce Monitoring Group (TMG) deploying to Bougainville in November that year.<sup>9</sup>

26. The TMG was unarmed, the mandate was to monitor the parties' compliance with the terms of the truce agreement, promote and instil confidence in the peace process, and provide to the people of Bougainville information on the truce agreement and peace process. Australia provided a civilian deputy to New Zealand's military commander, strengthening the pattern of close regional collaboration that remained a feature of the peace process.<sup>10</sup>

27. New Zealand's contribution comprised 150 New Zealand Army personnel, a detachment of RNZAF Iroquois helicopters and, for varying periods, HMNZS ships Canterbury, Endeavour, and Manawanui. Australia contributed Defence and civilian personnel, while Fiji and Vanuatu provided military personnel.<sup>11</sup>

28. HMNZS Canterbury, Endeavour, and Manawanui were deployed to assist the insertion of the group. After the arrival of the ships, the initial tensions gradually disappeared and the main task of the ships was to land personnel to get things working after years of neglect and damage. This ranged from such jobs as repairing the power supply and rebuilding the local school.<sup>12</sup>

29. Canterbury's ship's company provided much of the workforce needed to quickly set up the TMG, open roads, and assist with initial administration. In the initial phase of the operation, Endeavour provided all the fuel required ashore. Endeavour was tasked with providing logistics support to the naval task group as well as land and air forces based ashore. This included petrol for NZDF vehicles, diesel for Australian Defence Force vehicles and aviation fuel for the helicopter force. To maintain a supply of aviation fuel during the intensive flying by the helicopter force, Endeavour would replenish at sea from HMAS Success, which was kept out of sight for diplomatic reasons, then return alongside to continue with the provision of aviation fuel. In addition to fuel, Endeavour provided fresh water ashore, and landed her own ship's company to assist with re-establishing infrastructure.<sup>13</sup>

30. The declaration for the TMG, made in 2012, is for "service in the territory of Bougainville". A definition of "territory" was not included in the declaration which was standard process at the time. In considering if coverage under the War Pensions Act 1954 was meant to exclude naval elements offshore, the declaration for East Timor made in 1999 explicitly expressed that service must have been performed on land.<sup>14</sup> Accordingly, it seems unlikely that the intention was to exclude sea based naval personnel, particularly when a precedent for doing so already existed.

31. When the TMG was considered in the 2009 Review of Deployments, the estimated number of NZDF personnel was 500+. This appears consistent with the numbers deployed including NZDF civilians and the complements of Canterbury, Endeavour, and Manawanui.

32. Service in the territory of Bougainville as part of the TMG from October 1997 to April 1998 is QOS for the purposes of the Act. NZDF records indicate personnel may

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<sup>9</sup> NZDF Press Release on Monday, 30 June 2003: Defence Force Task In Bougainville Ends

<sup>10</sup> Partnering for Peace, pp.19,20, Australia Military-Civilian Centre, [www.acmc.gov.au](http://www.acmc.gov.au)

<sup>11</sup> NZDF Press Release on Monday, 30 June 2003: Defence Force Task In Bougainville Ends

<sup>12</sup> Torpedo Bay Navy Museum - [www.navy.museum.co.nz](http://www.navy.museum.co.nz)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> 31 August 1999 Declaration of emergency service for East Timor (superseded in 2019)



have been in Bougainville on or around November 1997, so the start dates as part of the TMG vary.

33. To provide clarity about who is covered and when, a single declaration of operational service that defines Bougainville is proposed.

### ***Peace Monitoring Group (PMG)***

34. Following further political talks, a permanent cease-fire was agreed in February 1998 which came into effect at the end of April 1998. The TMG led by Australia was transformed into the Peace Monitoring Group in May 1998.<sup>15</sup>

35. The PMG and the TMG were relatively small and limited in scope to confidence building, verification, and logistical support; these operations were tailored to support the locally led, locally controlled peace process. This approach worked, responding to the strong assertion of local leadership in the peace process. The combatants themselves articulated the principles on which any international mission should operate and remained in leadership roles throughout the peace process. The unarmed posture of each mission was supported by the armed Bougainville groups, who were concerned that the presence of armed outsiders could provoke potential spoilers. In practice, the arrangements under which local parties would provide security to unarmed monitors worked well.<sup>16</sup>

36. As with the TMG, the declaration for the PMG made in 2012, is for “service in the territory of Bougainville”. A definition of “territory” was not included in the declaration which was standard process at the time. In considering if coverage under the War Pensions Act 1954 was meant to exclude naval elements offshore, the declaration for East Timor made in 1999 explicitly expressed that service must have been performed on land.<sup>17</sup> Accordingly, it seems unlikely that the intention was to exclude sea based naval personnel, particularly when a precedent for doing so already existed.

37. During the 2009 Review of Deployments, it was estimated that 30 NZDF personnel were involved with the PMG between mid-1998 and mid-2003. Information considered during this review estimates that approximately 400 personnel from all three services, as well as NZDF civilians deployed as part of the PMG.

38. Service in the territory of Bougainville as part of the Peace Monitoring Group from 1 May 1998 to 30 June 2003 is QOS for the purposes of the Act. Despite the underestimate, this should not have impacted anyone whose service record indicated service with the PMG from applying for, and getting, support from Veterans' Affairs, if the relationship between that service and a claimed condition was established.

39. To provide clarity about who is covered and when, a single declaration of operational service that defines Bougainville is proposed.

### ***Operation Concat***

40. On 4 May 1999, a new initiative to assist the Bougainville peace process was announced by Foreign Minister Don McKinnon. Five Army engineers from Linton Army Camp left for Bougainville the weekend before to supervise construction work for the small community of Waikunai on the east coast of Bougainville. The initiative

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<sup>15</sup> 2009 Min Briefing – Review of Deployments with Emergency Status under the War Pensions Act 1954

<sup>16</sup> Partnering for Peace, p.34, Australia Military-Civilian Centre, [www.acmc.gov.au](http://www.acmc.gov.au)

<sup>17</sup> 31 August 1999 Declaration of emergency service for East Timor (superseded in 2019)

was funded by the New Zealand Official Development Assistance. The concept was to assist with the rebuilding of infrastructure lost during the conflict.<sup>18</sup>

41. Service with Operation Concat was not considered during the 2009 Review of Deployments. In applying the criteria to be considered operational service under section 9 of the Act, service with Operation Concat qualifies for the NZGSM with clasp "BOUGAINVILLE" (non-warlike) and was appropriately authorised, so meets the agreed definition of deployment. As it occurred at the same time as the PMG where the threat level was assessed as Medium, it would meet the agreed threshold for significant risk of harm.

42. A proposed new declaration of operational service for service in Bougainville will ensure this group has appropriate cover under the Act.

### **New Zealand (GNZ)**

43. In a bid to improve the accuracy of declarations, GNZ has provided a geographical description which will be used in the declaration and a map has been developed which will be published on the VA website.

### **Previously Declined Applications**

44. When new declarations are made, the Act allows for the reconsideration of claims declined on the basis of not having QOS. Applications that require reconsideration will be administered in accordance with current processes. The earliest date an application can be reconsidered is 7 December 2015, the date Scheme Two of the Act began.

### **Burial and Cremation Act 1964**

45. Section 15 of the B&CA1964 allows members of Her Majesty's Forces who have been on operational service and their spouse or partner to be buried in any part of a cemetery set aside as a service cemetery by the relevant local authority. While there is some existing coverage under the B&CA1964; coverage does not align with when NZDF personnel were actually deployed and the deployments are by operation name rather than geographical location. Accordingly, I would recommend that you seek approval from the Minister to begin the process of consulting with the Minister of Defence and the RNZRSA.

### **Fiscal Implications**

46. Service as part of Op Concat is understood to be five Army engineers. The estimated impact on the liability ("service cost") would be \$0.2760 million, which can be funded within the Non-Departmental baseline (Non-Departmental Other Expense: Service Cost – Veterans' Entitlements), and no additional funding is required.

47. There should be no new liability for the TMG and PMG as both deployments already have existing coverage under the Act. Removing the operational names and including a geographical descriptor in the declaration will ensure all NZDF personnel who served in support of peace initiatives and operations in Bougainville from late 1997 to mid-2003 are provided with appropriate coverage under the Act.

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<sup>18</sup> Mckinnon Announces New Bougainville Initiatives 4 May 1999 - [www.beehive.govt.nz/release/mckinnon-announces-new-bougainville-initiatives](http://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/mckinnon-announces-new-bougainville-initiatives)

### Publication in the New Zealand Gazette no longer required

48. Gazetting is no longer a requirement under the Veterans' Support Act. However, any declaration made must be published on an internet site maintained by, or on behalf of Veterans' Affairs; and in any other manner that VA thinks appropriate to bring to the attention of claimants and the public. Gazetting will however continue for the purposes of the B&CA1964.

### Recommendations

49. It is recommended that you:

- a. **Note** that retrospective declarations can be made as a result of the Veterans' Support Amendment Act 2019;

NOTED

- b. **Agree** to recommend that the Minister for Veterans declare service in Bougainville, as defined in Annex A, from 1 October 1997 up to and including 30 June 2003, to be operational service for the purposes of the Veterans' Support Act 2014;

AGREED / ~~DISAGREED~~

- c. **Agree** to recommend to the Minister for Veterans that the current declarations for service with the Truce Monitoring Group from October 1997 to April 1998; and the Peace Monitoring Group from 1 May 1998 to 30 June 2003, be superseded by the new declaration for service set out in Recommendation b;

AGREED / ~~DISAGREED~~

- d. **Note** that Operation Concat in Bougainville in 1999 does not appear to have been considered in past review of deployments work undertaken by VA;

NOTED

- e. **Agree** to note to the Minister for Veterans that service with Operation Concat will be included in the new declaration proposed in Recommendation b;

AGREED / ~~DISAGREED~~

- f. **Note** that the declaration proposed in Recommendation b will provide first time coverage for a small number of personnel who served in Bougainville in 1999 under a different operational authority;

NOTED

- g. **Note** that the impact on Crown liability is likely to be minor and could be funded from within the Non-Departmental baseline (Non-Departmental Other Expense: Service Cost – Veterans' Entitlements):

NOTED

- h. **Note** that the review of earlier operations in Bougainville, specifically Operation Big Talk, the South Pacific Peace Keeping Force, and Operation Coracle, concluded that no further action was required.

NOTED

- i. **Note** that a new declaration under the Burial and Cremation Act 1964 will be made to align with the proposed new declaration made under the Veterans' Support Act 2014;

NOTED

- j. **Note** that if approved, the new declaration will be published on Veterans' Affairs website.

NOTED



**Bernadine Mackenzie**  
HEAD OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

**Annex:**

- A. Declaration of operational service for the purposes of the Veterans' Support Act 2014 – Bougainville.

ANNEX A

**DECLARATION OF OPERATIONAL SERVICE FOR THE PURPOSES OF THE  
VETERANS' SUPPORT ACT 2014**

In accordance with section 9 of the Veterans' Support Act 2014 ("the Act"), I hereby give the following notice.

**Notice**

1. I declare service:

- in Bougainville as defined, from 1 October 1997 up to and including 30 June 2003, to be operational service for the purposes of the Act.

***Bougainville** - The Autonomous Region of Bougainville was formerly a province of, and is now a self-governing region of, the nation of Papua New Guinea. The Autonomous Region of Bougainville is located at the most eastern extent of archipelagic waters claimed by the nation of Papua New Guinea. The Autonomous Region of Bougainville includes the islands of Bougainville, Buka and several small outlying islands and atolls, and internal jurisdiction extends three nautical miles from those islands.*

2. I declare that the declaration for service in Bougainville will supersede the previous declarations for:

- Service in the territory of Bougainville as part of the Truce Monitoring Group, from October 1997 to April 1998, made on 25 June 2012 by Hon Nathan Guy, Minister of Veterans' Affairs;
- Service in the territory of Bougainville as part of the Peace Monitoring Group, from May 1998 to June 2003, made on 25 June 2012 by Hon Nathan Guy, Minister of Veterans' Affairs.

3. This declaration covers:

- members of the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) serving with the NZDF;
- members of the NZDF on secondment with the armed forces of other nations; and
- any person seconded to the NZDF with the permission of the Chief of Defence Force.

4. The persons covered by this declaration shall have access to the entitlements and services specified in the Act and the Veterans' Support Regulations 2014.

5. I am satisfied that there was a significant risk of harm to those that undertook this service, as required by the Act.

Dated this     day of August 2022  
**Hon MEKA WHAITIRI**, Minister for Veterans






NEW ZEALAND DEFENCE FORCE /  
VETERANS' AFFAIRS



SUBMISSION TO MINISTER  
COVER SHEET

<b>Title</b>	<b>DECLARATION OF OPERATIONAL SERVICE - BOUGAINVILLE</b>				
<b>Tracking No</b>	NZDF Tracking # 2022-204			Minister's Tracking #	
<b>Importance of the Issue</b>	High		Moderate		Routine ✓
<b>Urgency for Attention/Sign-off</b>	<b>NON-URGENT</b>		Request ministerial response by: Please return signed briefing to VA by Friday 26 August 2022. — <i>Extended</i>		
<b>Contacts</b>	Corina Herewini		Tel: s. 9(2)(a)		
	Eric Harris		Tel: s. 9(2)(a)		
<b>Purpose</b>	To recommend that you issue a declaration of operational service under section 9 of the Veterans' Support Act 2014 for service in Bougainville, and that you start the process for issuing a similar declaration for the purposes of the Burial and Cremation Act 1964.				
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p>It is recommended that you:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Agree</b> to declare service in Bougainville, as defined in Annex A, from 1 October 1997 up to and including 30 June 2003, to be operational service for the purposes of the Veterans' Support Act 2014.</li> <li><b>Agree</b> that the current declarations for service in the territory of Bougainville as part of the Truce Monitoring Group from October 1997 to April 1998, and the Peace Monitoring Group from May 1998 to June 2003, be superseded by the new declaration proposed in Recommendation a.</li> <li><b>Note</b> that the declaration proposed in Recommendation a. will provide first time coverage for a small number of personnel who served as part of Operation CONCAT in Bougainville in 1999 under a different operational authority.</li> <li><b>Note</b> that the impact on Crown liability from the new declaration is likely to be minor and could be funded from within the Non-Departmental baseline (Non-Departmental Other Expense: Service Cost – Veterans' Entitlements).</li> <li><b>Note</b> that Veterans' Affairs reviewed earlier operations in Bougainville, specifically Operation BIG TALK, the South Pacific Peace Keeping Force, and Operation CORACLE, and determined no further action was required.</li> <li><b>Note</b> that coverage already exists under the Burial and Cremation Act 1964 for deployments with the Peace Monitoring Group and the Truce Monitoring Group but that a new declaration will be made to align with the declaration made under the Veterans' Support Act 2014.</li> <li><b>Agree</b> to sign and forward the enclosed letter to the President of the Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association seeking the Association's views on the proposed declaration of operational service for the purposes of the Burial and Cremation Act 1964.</li> <li><b>Agree</b> to sign and forward the enclosed letter to the Minister of Defence seeking the Minister's views on the proposed declaration of operational service for the purposes of the Burial and Cremation Act 1964.</li> <li><b>Agree</b> to sign and date the enclosed declaration notice for publishing on the Veterans' Affairs website.</li> </ol>				

	j. <b>Note</b> that, following responses by the Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association, and the Minister of Defence, a further briefing for the purposes of issuing a declaration under the Burial and Cremation Act 1964 will be made.	
<b>NZDF/VA Consultation</b>	Chief Financial Officer, Chief People Officer, DLS	
<b>Minister's Comments</b>		
<b>Minister's Action</b>	Signed/Noted/Agreed/Approved/Declined/Discussion required	
	Referred to:	
<b>Minister's Signature</b>		<b>Date:</b> <b>05 SEP 2022</b>

  
**KR SHORT**  
 Air Marshal  
 Chief of Defence Force

18 August 2022





Headquarters NZDF  
Defence House  
Private Bag 39997  
Wellington Mail Centre  
Wellington 5045  
NEW ZEALAND



BRI 030 2022  
NTM 2022-204

18 August 2022

Minister for Veterans

## DECLARATION OF OPERATIONAL SERVICE – BOUGAINVILLE

### Reference:

A. Note to Minister VA 096 15-16 / NZDF 2015-494 dated 15 November 2015

### Purpose

1. The purpose of this brief is to recommend that you issue a declaration of operational service under section 9 of the Veterans' Support Act 2014 (the Act) for service in Bougainville, and that you start the process for issuing a similar declaration for the purposes of the Burial and Cremation Act 1964.

### Introduction

2. The proposed declaration is the result of Veterans' Affairs nearing the end of a review of deployments. The review process has considered whether deployments that are not covered by declarations of operational service should be. This review was initiated to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Act and consistency in how declarations are made.

### Determining which Deployments are Declared Operational Service

3. Reference A provides a foundation upon which assessments of deployments for declarations of operational service are to be considered. It provides that while you are the arbiter of what "significant risk of harm" is, agreed factors should be taken into account when considering what a deployment is and how "significant risk of harm" should be defined. The recommendations do not fetter your authority, but allow consistent recommendations to be made.

### Deployments

4. In Reference A, it was agreed that two factors be taken into account to determine whether an operation is a deployment: that it has been appropriately authorised, and that it fulfils the definition of operational service in Defence Force Order 3.

### Significant Risk of Harm

5. In Reference A, it was also agreed that "significant risk of harm" is when the overall operational or health threat level reached at least the threat level definition of Medium. In accordance with the Military Threat Assessment tool used, this was the point at which the threat posed to members of the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) was considered beyond that associated with peacetime activities.



### **Deployment background**

6. In the 1980s, a strong separatist movement emerged within Bougainville. By 1988, the attempts of the Papua New Guinea Government to put down this movement led to a civil war that was not resolved until 1997. The ensuing 2001 peace agreement was brokered by New Zealand and facilitated by the NZDF. The peace agreement brought about the formation, within Papua New Guinea, of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville under the 2004 constitution of the Autonomous Bougainville Government.

7. **Deployments to Bougainville as part of the Truce Monitoring Group and the Peace Monitoring Group met the previous thresholds to be declared emergency service under the repealed War Pensions Act 1954 and are operational service under the Act.** Operation CONCAT in Bougainville, which occurred in the period of coverage for the Peace Monitoring Group, appears to have met the previous thresholds but was not considered.

8. **Service in Bougainville as part of Operation CONCAT.** In early May 1999, a new initiative to assist the Bougainville peace process was announced by Foreign Minister Don McKinnon. Five Army engineers from Linton Military Camp left for Bougainville the weekend before to supervise construction work for the small community of Waikunai on the east coast of Bougainville. The initiative was funded by New Zealand Official Development Assistance. The concept was to assist with the rebuilding of infrastructure lost during the conflict.

9. **Service with Operation CONCAT was not considered during the Veterans' Affairs 2009 Review of Deployments.** Operation CONCAT in Bougainville occurred in 1999 and meets the agreed definition of deployment and the agreed threshold for significant risk of harm as set out in Reference A.

### **Refining Current Declarations**

10. Service in the territory of Bougainville as part of the Truce Monitoring Group is from October 1997 to April 1998. The official dates for the Truce Monitoring Group are 27 November 1997 to 30 April 1998. Posting records indicate NZDF personnel may have been in Bougainville a few weeks prior to the official start date.

11. Service in the territory of Bougainville as part of the Peace Monitoring Group is from May 1998 to June 2003. The dates NZDF personnel deployed as part of the Peace Monitoring Group are 1 May 1998 to 30 June 2003.

12. It is proposed that a single declaration of operational service be made for service in Bougainville from 1 October 1997 to 30 June 2003 as detailed in Annex A.

13. The proposed actions will ensure all NZDF personnel who served in Bougainville from late 1997 to mid-2003 are provided with appropriate coverage under the Act.

### **Geographical Descriptor**

14. In a bid to improve the accuracy of declarations and to provide certainty about the area covered, a definition and geographical description is included in the declaration and a map has also been developed and will be published on the Veterans' Affairs website.

### **Other NZDF Operations in Support of Peace in Bougainville**

15. Service as part of **Operation BIG TALK (1990)** is not operational service for the purposes of the Act. Veterans' Affairs reviewed that service against the agreed factors in Reference A and concluded no further action was required.



16. Service with the South Pacific Peace Keeping Force (1994) is operational service for the purposes of the Act. Veterans' Affairs has considered that no change to the existing declaration is required.

17. Service as part of Operation CORACLE (1997) is not operational service for the purposes of the Act. Veterans' Affairs reviewed that service against the agreed factors in Reference A and concluded that no further action was required.

#### Previously Declined Applications

18. When new declarations are made, the Act allows for the reconsideration of claims declined on the basis of not having qualifying operational service. Applications that require reconsideration will be administered in accordance with current processes. The earliest date an application can be reconsidered is 7 December 2015; the date Scheme Two of the Act began.

#### Burial and Cremation Act 1964

19. Section 15 of the Burial and Cremation Act allows members of Her Majesty's Forces who have been on operational service and their spouse or partner to be buried in any part of a cemetery set aside as a Service cemetery by the relevant local authority. While there is some existing coverage under the Burial and Cremation Act, coverage should mirror coverage under the Act. Accordingly, I would recommend that you begin the process of consulting with the Minister of Defence and the Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association, seeking their comment on new declarations made under the Burial and Cremation Act. Letters to the Minister of Defence and Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association are enclosed for your signature (Enclosures 1 and 2).

#### Publication of Declarations to be made by Veterans' Affairs

20. Declarations must be published by Veterans' Affairs on an internet site maintained by or on behalf of Veterans' Affairs and in any other manner it thinks appropriate to bring the matter to the attention of claimants and the general public. The declarations will come into effect the day after they are published. Gazetting will continue for the purposes of the Burial and Cremation Act. A declaration notice is enclosed for your signature (Enclosure 3).

#### Impact on the Veterans' Entitlements Liability

21. Service as part of Operation CONCAT is understood to be five Army engineers. The estimated impact on the liability ("service cost") would be \$0.2760 million, which can be funded within the Non-Departmental baseline (Non-Departmental Other Expense: Service Cost – Veterans' Entitlements), and no additional funding is required.

#### Recommendations

22. It is recommended that you:

- a. Agree to declare service in Bougainville, as defined in Annex A, from 1 October 1997 up to and including 30 June 2003, to be operational service for the purposes of the Veterans' Support Act 2014.

 **AGREED / DISAGREED**



- b. **Agree** that the current declarations for service in the territory of Bougainville as part of the Truce Monitoring Group from October 1997 to April 1998, and the Peace Monitoring Group from May 1998 to June 2003, be superseded by the new declaration proposed in Recommendation a.

AGREED / DISAGREED

- c. **Note** that the declaration proposed in Recommendation a. will provide first time coverage for a small number of personnel who served as part of Operation CONCAT in Bougainville in 1999 under a different operational authority.

NOTED

- d. **Note** that the impact on Crown liability from the new declaration is likely to be minor and could be funded from within the Non-Departmental baseline (Non-Departmental Other Expense: Service Cost – Veterans' Entitlements).

NOTED

- e. **Note** that Veterans' Affairs reviewed earlier operations in Bougainville, specifically Operation BIG TALK, the South Pacific Peace Keeping Force, and Operation CORACLE, and determined no further action was required.

NOTED

- f. **Note** that coverage already exists under the Burial and Cremation Act 1964 for deployments with the Peace Monitoring Group and the Truce Monitoring Group but that a new declaration will be made to align with the declaration made under the Veterans' Support Act 2014.

NOTED

- g. **Agree** to sign and forward the enclosed letter to the President of the Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association seeking the Association's views on the proposed declaration of operational service for the purposes of the Burial and Cremation Act 1964.

AGREED / DISAGREED

- h. **Agree** to sign and forward the enclosed letter to the Minister of Defence seeking the Minister's views on the proposed declaration of operational service for the purposes of the Burial and Cremation Act 1964.

AGREED / DISAGREED

- i. **Agree** to sign and date the enclosed declaration notice for publishing on the Veterans' Affairs website.

AGREED / DISAGREED

- j. **Note that, following responses by the Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association, and the Minister of Defence, a further briefing for the purposes of issuing a declaration under the Burial and Cremation Act 1964 will be made.**

NOTED



**KR SHORT**  
Air Marshal  
Chief of Defence Force

Date: 18 AUG 22



**HON MEKA WHAITIRI**  
Minister for Veterans

Date: 5/9/2022

**Annex:**

- A. Declaration of operational service for the purposes of the Veterans' Support Act 2014  
– Bougainville

**Enclosures:**

1. Letter to the Minister of Defence – for signature
2. Letter to the Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association – for signature
3. Declaration of operational service for the purposes of the Veterans' Support Act 2014  
– Bougainville for signature

**PROPOSED DECLARATION OF OPERATIONAL SERVICE**

In accordance with section 9 of the Veterans' Support Act 2014 ("the Act"), the following is proposed to be declared as operational service:

1. **Service.** Service in Bougainville as defined, from 1 October 1997 up to and including 30 June 2003, to be operational service for the purposes of the Act.

***Bougainville** - The Autonomous Region of Bougainville was formerly a province of, and is now a self-governing region of, the nation of Papua New Guinea. The Autonomous Region of Bougainville is located at the most eastern extent of archipelagic waters claimed by the nation of Papua New Guinea. The Autonomous Region of Bougainville includes the islands of Bougainville, Buka and several small outlying islands and atolls, and internal jurisdiction extends three nautical miles from those islands.*

2. **Previous Declarations to be Superseded.** The proposed declaration for service in Bougainville will supersede the previous declarations for:
  - a. Service in the territory of Bougainville as part of the Truce Monitoring Group, from October 1997 to April 1998, made on 25 June 2012 by Hon Nathan Guy, Minister of Veterans' Affairs; and
  - b. Service in the territory of Bougainville as part of the Peace Monitoring Group, from May 1998 to June 2003, made on 25 June 2012 by Hon Nathan Guy, Minister of Veterans' Affairs.
3. **Who is Covered.** The following would be covered by the proposed declaration:
  - a. members of the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) serving with the NZDF;
  - b. members of the NZDF on secondment with the armed forces of other nations; and
  - c. any person seconded to the NZDF with the permission of the Chief of Defence Force

## Hon Meka Whaitiri

MP for Ikaroa-Rāwhiti

Minister of Customs

Minister for Veterans

Associate Minister of Agriculture (Animal Welfare)

Associate Minister of Statistics



Hon Peeni Henare  
Minister of Defence  
Parliament Buildings  
WELLINGTON 6160

Dear Minister

I intend to make a new declaration of operational service for the purposes of the Veterans' Support Act 2014. For your noting, the new declaration is expected to increase the veterans' entitlements liability by a maximum of \$0.2760 million. This cost can be met from within the existing unallocated baseline for Vote Defence Force Non-Departmental Other Expenses appropriation: Service Cost – Veterans' Entitlements, no additional funding is required.

I also intend to issue a mirroring declaration for the purposes of the Burial and Cremation Act 1964 (the Act). The Act requires that I consult with you as Minister of Defence.

It is therefore my intention to declare operational service for the purposes of the Act:

- in Bougainville, from 1 October 1997 up to and including 30 June 2003, to be operational service for the purposes of the Act.

Accordingly, I also intend to supersede the declarations for service in the territory of Bougainville as part of the Truce Monitoring Group from October 1997 to April 1998, and for service in the territory of Bougainville as part of the Peace Monitoring Group from May 1998 to June 2003, both made on 25 June 2012 by Hon Nathan Guy, Minister for Veterans' Affairs, with the new declaration proposed above.

Any member of New Zealand's Armed Forces or the New Zealand Defence Force covered by these declarations (and their spouse, civil union or de facto partner) will be entitled to be buried in the part of any New Zealand cemetery set aside by a local authority for that purpose.

Please provide your comments about this matter to me no later than 26 August 2022.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Meka Whaitiri'.

Hon Meka Whaitiri  
Minister for Veterans



## Hon Meka Whaitiri

MP for Ikaroa-Rāwhiti  
Minister of Customs  
Minister for Veterans  
Associate Minister of Agriculture (Animal Welfare)  
Associate Minister of Statistics



Mr B.J. Clark, QSM JP  
President of the Royal New Zealand Returned  
and Services' Association  
ANZAC House  
181 Willis Street  
WELLINGTON 6011

Dear Mr Clark

I intend to make a new declaration of operational service for the purposes of the Veterans' Support Act 2014.

I also intend to issue a mirroring declaration for the purposes of the Burial and Cremation Act 1964 (the Act) which requires me to consult with the Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association.

It is therefore my intention to declare operational service for the purposes of the Act:

- in Bougainville, from 1 October 1997 up to and including 30 June 2003, to be operational service for the purposes of the Act.

Accordingly, I also intend to supersede the declarations for service in the territory of Bougainville as part of the Truce Monitoring Group from October 1997 to April 1998, and for service in the territory of Bougainville as part of the Peace Monitoring Group from May 1998 to June 2003, both made on 25 June 2012 by Hon Nathan Guy, Minister for Veterans' Affairs, with the new declaration proposed above.

Any member of New Zealand's Armed Forces or the New Zealand Defence Force covered by these declarations (and their spouse, civil union or de facto partner) will be entitled to be buried in the part of any New Zealand cemetery set aside by a local authority for that purpose.

Please provide your comments about this matter to me no later than 26 August 2022.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Whaitiri'.

Hon Meka Whaitiri  
Minister for Veterans



**DECLARATION OF OPERATIONAL SERVICE FOR THE PURPOSES OF THE  
VETERANS' SUPPORT ACT 2014**

In accordance with section 9 of the Veterans' Support Act 2014 ("the Act"), I hereby give the following notice.

**Notice**

1. I declare service:

- in Bougainville as defined, from 1 October 1997 up to and including 30 June 2003, to be operational service for the purposes of the Act.

***Bougainville** - The Autonomous Region of Bougainville was formerly a province of, and is now a self-governing region of, the nation of Papua New Guinea. The Autonomous Region of Bougainville is located at the most eastern extent of archipelagic waters claimed by the nation of Papua New Guinea. The Autonomous Region of Bougainville includes the islands of Bougainville, Buka and several small outlying islands and atolls, and internal jurisdiction extends three nautical miles from those islands.*

2. I declare that the declaration for service in Bougainville will supersede the previous declarations for:

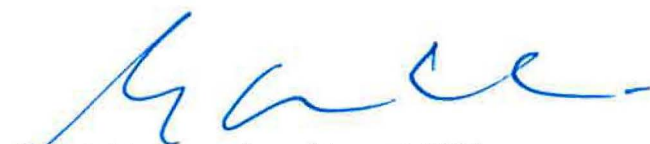
- Service in the territory of Bougainville as part of the Truce Monitoring Group, from October 1997 to April 1998, made on 25 June 2012 by Hon Nathan Guy, Minister of Veterans' Affairs; and
- Service in the territory of Bougainville as part of the Peace Monitoring Group, from May 1998 to June 2003, made on 25 June 2012 by Hon Nathan Guy, Minister of Veterans' Affairs.

3. This declaration covers:

- Members of the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) serving with the NZDF;
- Members of the NZDF on secondment with the armed forces of other nations; and
- Any person seconded to the NZDF with the permission of the Chief of Defence Force.

4. The persons covered by this declaration shall have access to the entitlements and services specified in the Act and the Veterans' Support Regulations 2014.

5. I am satisfied that there was a significant risk of harm to those that undertook this service, as required by the Act.



Dated this            day of August 2022

Hon MEKA WHAITIRI, Minister for Veterans