

7 July 2022

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I refer to your email of 15 April 2022 in which you request the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA):

I would like to request copies of all Formal Messages between Honiara Post and Wellington, dated since 18 March 2022.

On 26 April 2022, we wrote to you to advise that your request as framed required review of a significant amount of information to locate information potentially in scope, and has captured a significant volume of information in the scoping that has been carried out so far. As such, it was advised that it was likely that your request would be refused under section 18(f) of the OIA, as it would require substantial collation and research.

On 26 April 2022, you agreed to refine your request as below:

[...] my request to be for formal messages only on the topics of:

- 1) The Solomon Islands-China security pact and the Solomon Islands-China relationship generally*
- 2) The Solomon Islands International Assistance Force*

On 24 May 2022, due to responding to your amended request necessitating review of a large quantity of information and further consultation being required, the timeframe for responding to your request was extended by 30 working days, to 7 July 2022.

We have identified 24 formal messages that are in scope of your refined request. We are withholding the information contained in these Formal Messages in full under the following sections of the OIA:

- 6(a): to avoid prejudicing the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the New Zealand Government;
- 6(b)(i): to protect the passing of information from another government on a confidential basis;
- 9(2)(a): to protect individuals' privacy;
- 9(2)(ba): to protect information which is subject to an obligation of confidence; and
- 9(2)(g)(i): to protect the free and frank expression of opinions by departments.

Where the information has been withheld under section 9 of the OIA, we have identified no public interest in releasing the information that would override the reasons for withholding it.

On reviewing these messages, and following consultation with relevant agencies, we have identified material from the messages that is already publicly available and which can be found at the following links:

- 25 March 2022: [Foreign Minister Nanaia Mahuta says China-Solomon Islands security deal will not benefit NZ or Pacific neighbours | Stuff.co.nz](#)
- 28 March 2022: [PM on China-Solomons security deal | RNZ](#)
- 28 March 2022: [Post Cabinet Press Conference](#)
- 29 March 2022: [New Zealand committed to partnership with Solomon Islands | Beehive.govt.nz](#)
- 2 April 2022: [Foreign Minister Nanaia Mahuta says Pacific leaders may need to meet as Solomon Islands prepares to ink China security deal | Stuff.co.nz](#)
- 20 April 2022: [Jacinda Ardern denounces Solomon defence pact with China, but says she can't just 'drop a WhatsApp' to Xi Jinping | Stuff.co.nz](#)
- 20 April 2022: [China-Solomons deal crosses a 'very clear line' - Ardern \(1news.co.nz\)](#)
- 20 April 2022: [China, Solomon Islands security agreement: Jacinda Ardern says 'no need' for deal, expresses concern about 'militarisation' of Pacific | Newshub](#)
- 21 April 2022: [Working with assertive China a must - New Zealand PM Jacinda Ardern - BBC News](#)
- 21 April 2022: [Solomon Islands-China security deal needs scrutiny - Mahuta | RNZ News](#)
- 21 April 2022: [Nanaia Mahuta: Solomons should have respected previous commitments before signing China deal \(newstalkzb.co.nz\)](#)
- 5 May 2022: [New Zealand foreign minister blames 'relationship failure' for China-Solomons security deal | New Zealand | The Guardian](#)
- 11 May 2022: [Nanaia Mahuta expresses interest in travelling to Pacific as reports suggest Chinese Foreign Minister heading to Solomon Islands | Newshub](#)
- 18 May 2022: [Solomon Islands tight-lipped over China security pact - government | RNZ News](#)
- 25 May 2022: [Minister Mahuta meets with Solomon Islands Minister of Foreign Affairs Jeremiah Manele | New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade \(mfat.govt.nz\)](#)
- 25 May 2022: [NZ committed to enduring partnership with Solomon Islands | Beehive.govt.nz](#)
- 30 May 2022: [Nanaia Mahuta says she expects to visit Solomon Islands 'soon' \(1news.co.nz\)](#)

Please note that we may publish this letter (with your personal details redacted) and enclosed documents on the Ministry's website.

If you have any questions about this decision, you can contact us by email at: DM-ESD@mfat.govt.nz. You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision by contacting www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā



Julie-Anne Lee
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade