NEW ZEALAND
FOREIGN AFFAIRS & TRADE
Manatū Aorere

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OIA 30626

5 February 2026

Sam Brown
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Tēnā koe Sam Brown

Thank you for your email of 5 January 2026, in which you request the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA):

> *"1. Diplomatic concerns or foreign policy considerations related to New Zealand critical communications infrastructure being controlled by private individuals who have publicly intervened in foreign conflicts or demonstrated willingness to influence geopolitical outcomes through control of communications services.*
>
> *2. Any representations made to the United States government, either directly or through diplomatic channels, seeking assurances regarding continuity, reliability, or political neutrality of commercial satellite communications services that New Zealand government agencies, emergency services, or critical infrastructure operators depend upon.*
>
> *3. Analysis of foreign policy or sovereignty risks arising from key infrastructure being controlled by individuals or corporations who have demonstrated willingness to disable or limit services based on personal political positions, including documented examples such as Starlink service limitations during the Ukraine conflict or decisions regarding service provision to Taiwan.*
>
> *4. Any advice provided to Ministers on whether New Zealand's increasing dependency on foreign-controlled satellite communications creates diplomatic constraints, intelligence-sharing complications, or obligations that require management through international agreements or bilateral arrangements.*
>
> *5. Correspondence with Five Eyes partners discussing governance, security standards, or policy coordination regarding commercial satellite communications providers, particularly where those providers have contracts with foreign military or intelligence agencies."*

On 12 January 2026, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (the Ministry) contacted you to discuss the scope of your request, because as parts one, three and four were originally framed, they captured a significant volume of information.

On 12 January 2026, you agreed to refine the scope of your request to be for:

> *"Part 1 - Diplomatic concerns:*
> *I am seeking any briefings, cables, or ministerial advice discussing diplomatic or foreign policy implications of New Zealand's dependency on Starlink/SpaceX satellite communications services controlled by Elon Musk, particularly in the context of:*
> *- His documented intervention in Ukraine conflict (limiting Starlink service for Ukrainian military operations)*
> *- His public statements on Taiwan and refusal to extend Starlink service there His acquisition and control of social media platforms used for geopolitical influence*
> *- Any MFAT assessment of whether reliance on infrastructure controlled by individuals who intervene in foreign conflicts creates foreign policy complications Search terms: "Starlink", "SpaceX", "Elon Musk", "satellite communications", "critical infrastructure", combined with "foreign policy", "diplomatic risk", "sovereignty".*
>
> *Part 3 - Foreign policy/sovereignty risks:*
> *I am seeking any analysis or advice regarding:*
> *- Risks from Starlink/SpaceX being New Zealand's primary rural connectivity provider while the same company's owner has demonstrated willingness to disable or limit services based on geopolitical positions*
> *- Whether documented instances (Ukraine service limitations, Taiwan service refusal) have been assessed as precedents relevant to New Zealand's dependency*
> *- Any assessment of what assurances or commitments New Zealand has (or lacks) regarding service continuity if geopolitical tensions arise Search terms: "Starlink", "service reliability", "geopolitical risk", "Ukraine", "Taiwan", "infrastructure resilience".*
>
> *Part 4 - Diplomatic constraints:*
> *I am seeking any advice to Ministers regarding whether New Zealand's increasing use of Starlink/SpaceX for government agencies, emergency services, schools, or healthcare creates:*
> *- Limitations on New Zealand's foreign policy independence*
> *- Complications for intelligence sharing with Five Eyes partners due to US commercial satellite provider routing NZ traffic*
> *- Requirements for bilateral agreements or diplomatic arrangements to ensure service continuity Search terms: "Starlink", "SpaceX", "government use", "Five Eyes", "intelligence sharing", "diplomatic arrangements", "service agreements".*
>
> *Timeframe: 2020 to present (covering period of Starlink's entry into NZ market)*
>
> *Document types: Ministerial briefings, diplomatic cables, policy advice, threat assessments, correspondence with US government or Five Eyes partners, risk analyses related to critical infrastructure dependencies."*

Following a search of Ministry records, your request is refused in full under section 18(e) of the OIA, as the information does not exist, or despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

Please note that it is our policy to proactively release our responses to official information requests where possible. Therefore, our response to your request (with your personal information removed) may be published on the Ministry website: www.mfat.govt.nz/en/about-us/contact-us/official-information-act-responses/

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

Sarah Corbett
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade