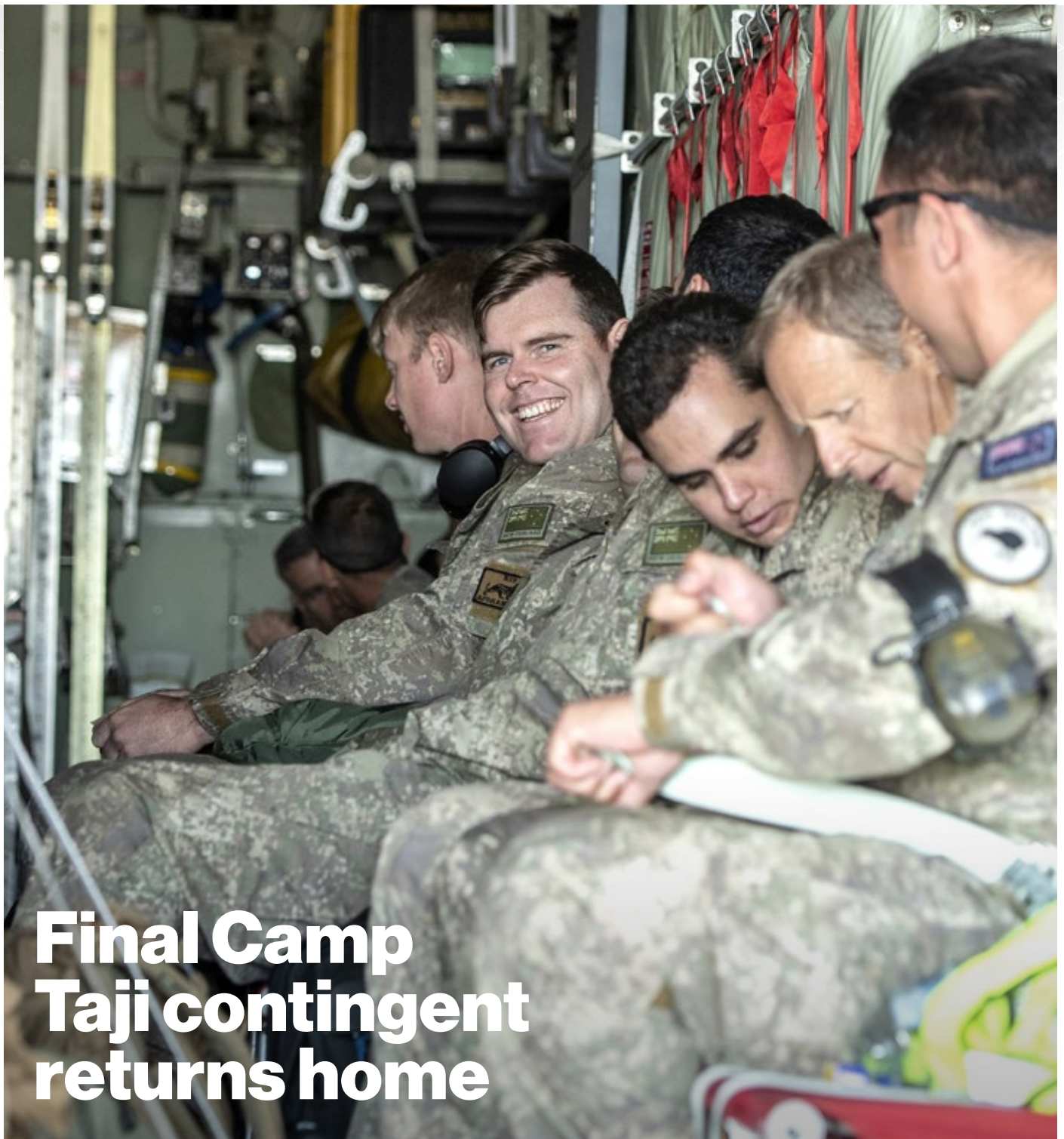


WINTER 2020



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## About VA News


VA News is published four times a year by Veterans' Affairs New Zealand—Te Tira Ahu Ika a Whiro.

Our team takes care in writing great content and—to the best of our knowledge—has sourced accurate information.


The views expressed in VA News are not necessarily those of Veterans' Affairs or the New Zealand Defence Force.

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Please note our Hamilton PO Box is now closed.

Cover image: Recently returned Operation Taji personnel on an RNZAF aircraft at RNZAF Base Auckland at Whenuapai.



New Zealand Government

# From the Head of Veterans' Affairs

## Tēnā koutou katoa

Welcome to the Winter Edition of VA News. In the last issue I mentioned the impact of Covid-19 and how everything was changing around us, and globally. In the weeks since New Zealand went in to lockdown at Alert Level 4, through until the slight easing of restrictions now at Alert Level 2, Veterans' Affairs has continued to operate, albeit the majority of staff are continuing to work from home. It will be a gradual and safe return to the workplace for us but our focus remains on providing services and support to you and your whānau.

Whilst in our bubbles, we discovered the many different ways of communicating remotely with each other and I know that for many of you, catching up with family and friends via Zoom, Skype, Facebook and by telephone, remains an important part of everyday life. Social isolation is something we are very conscious of in the current environment, especially for our older veterans. As such, we rolled out our 'Veteran Connect' project during lockdown and there is a bit more about this project further on under 'Sharon's Corner'.

Lockdown also meant the cancellation of the traditional Anzac Day services, replaced instead by #StandAtDawn, a wonderful collaboration between the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) and the Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association (RNZRSA). I know for you and your families, this meant a different way of commemorating and honouring all those who have served and continue to serve today, but one that was no less important to each and every one of you as you reflected on the sacrifices made.

The Veterans' Support Amendment Bill No. 2, which would amend the Veterans' Support Act 2014, had its First Reading in Parliament on 28 May. The bill addresses a number of the recommendations of the 2018 report into the operation of the Act by Professor Ron Paterson. The Social Services and Community is now considering the Bill and they are due to report back to the House by 21 July 2020.



Bernadine Mackenzie,  
Head of Veterans' Affairs

I would like to thank our e-mail subscribers who completed the very quick Covid-19 survey which helped us gather some immediate information to help us plan the next phase of our Level 2 response. 96 percent of respondents rated our communication regarding the pandemic as average/above average or excellent with 93 percent rating our support as average/above average or excellent. We will be making the survey results available on our website in due course.

By now you should have received our annual satisfaction survey. As always, we welcome your feedback on how we are doing, and how we can improve the services we provide to you.

Whilst New Zealand moves through the different Alert Levels as a result of Covid-19, we will continue to keep you updated on how VA is operating through our information hub. You can find this by visiting our website at [www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz](http://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz).

Stay safe, be kind, and please let us know if there is anything we can do to help.



# Tauranga RSA answers the call to help those in need

**When New Zealand entered Covid-19 Alert Level 4, Tauranga social service Te Tuinga Whānau Support Services was inundated with requests for housing for the homeless.**

Te Tuinga Whānau, who provide wrap-around support services, saw a 100% increase in need during Alert Level 4 so they approached the Tauranga RSA about using their facilities. The Tauranga RSA has 22 motel rooms which would normally be full of truck drivers and others on their way through Tauranga, but when Alert Level 4 was announced all of these bookings were cancelled for the foreseeable future.

The Tauranga RSA executive met with Te Tuinga Whānau representatives remotely on 2 April and the first tenants arrived on 17 April. Funding for the housing is provided by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development's emergency housing scheme. It only took three weeks for the rooms to be at full capacity and Te Tuinga Whānau expect more people to need help with housing as the global pandemic continues.

Fred Milligan, President of the Tauranga RSA and an Indonesian Confrontation veteran, said that the conversion of their accommodation into housing for the homeless "is a big achievement". "Not only are we getting an income, but we're also able to help people in our community," he said.

The initial lease for the Tauranga RSA rooms was for three months with a right of renewal. In May the executive decided to extend the lease so that tenants would have warm and secure housing through winter.

The Tauranga RSA committee continue to meet weekly and are currently working out what the future of the premises will be. In the meantime, Mr Milligan is glad that the Tauranga RSA is being used by people who need it most.





# Lockdown in Egypt

**Royal New Zealand Air Force Corporal Jo Uncles is experiencing the Covid-19 pandemic in a different way to the rest of New Zealand, as part of the New Zealand Defence Force contingent in the Sinai, Egypt.**

Corporal Uncles is a Passport Clerk for the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO). Thanks to an early introduction of lockdown procedures and isolation of the camps on 10 March, there have been no cases of Covid-19 within the MFO and life has been able to continue relatively normally. Work carries on for the Kiwis, and has kept Corporal Uncles busy.

“Although we have no incoming or outgoing contingents requiring ID and Visa documentation, a lot of personnel who are unable to go home due to border restrictions are requiring renewals to their official documentation.”

Corporal Uncles came from a military background and joined the RNZAF at the age of 45.

“My parents and most of my siblings all spent time in the military. I found myself in a job which I was not particularly happy in. I decided to

try for the military and have never regretted my decision.”

Having previously deployed for six weeks to Antarctica, Corporal Uncles has been in the Sinai for six months. NZDF personnel normally rotate out of missions every six to 12 months, depending on the nature of the deployment. Because of border closures, travel restrictions, and other measures imposed to restrict the spread of Covid-19, the Kiwis in the Sinai are waiting to hear when they’ll be able to return to New Zealand.

“I’m glad that the NZDF gave me this opportunity to deploy, there are not many grandmothers who would be presented with such a chance. I have really enjoyed the deployment but I do miss my family and we appreciate all the work everyone is putting in to try and get us home as soon as possible.

**Above: Corporal Jo Uncles at the Multinational Force and Observers in Egypt.**



# Message from the Minister

## Tēnā koutou katoa

I want to thank each and every one of you for doing your bit during what has been an unprecedented time in New Zealand's history. The Covid-19 pandemic has seen us come together as one team, ensuring we keep each other, our friends and family and those we hold dear, safe. As veterans, we have drawn on those common bonds of comradeship to protect each other. The sacrifices made have been for the good of our country – thank you for the sacrifices you have made, and for checking in on your mates.

Earlier in the year, I asked the Veterans' Advisory Board to find out if New Zealanders thought we should do more for the military personnel who serve our country. A survey was launched in May for public consultation, asking New Zealanders about recognition and support for service personnel, and what they thought about establishing a formal agreement – a Kawenata or Covenant – between the government and the people of New Zealand and military personnel and their families.

The response to the survey has been overwhelming and I want to thank all those who took part. The Veterans' Advisory Board will report

back to me in early August on the result of the engagement with the New Zealand public. The report will describe the approach taken to the national conversation, describe what they found out through the survey and recommend possible next steps in relation to the Kawenata.

I also welcomed last month the First Reading of a Bill that will make legislative changes to further improve the veteran's support system. The Veterans' Support Amendment Bill No 2, addresses a number of the recommendations of the 2018 report into the operation of the Act by Professor Ron Paterson. The changes being made will have an immediate impact on the wellbeing of you – our veterans, and your families. Increased access to mental health services is also being proposed, and the amendment bill will also be an opportunity to make the Act fairer. For those of you who have engaged with the Social Services and Community Committee by way of a submission to the committee, thank you. The Bill will be reported back to the House by 21 July 2020.

The 25<sup>th</sup> of June will mark the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Outbreak of War in Korea. On this day we will pay



tribute to the service and sacrifice of all who fought in the Korean War. Our Korean veterans answered the call to serve their country in a nation they had never visited, to defend people they did not know. New Zealand's commitment to the United Nations Command has continued for almost 70 years. This year more than ever, global events have shown the need for comradeship and unity in the face of a crisis. On the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary I know we will all look back and take lessons from our shared past, to light our pathway forward.

**Ka maumahara tonu tātou ki a rātou.  
We will remember them.  
Lest we forget.**

## Republic of Korea Embassy donates masks to veterans

### The Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Wellington provided free masks to New Zealand Korean War veterans and their spouses to help prevent the spread of Covid-19.

"We have prepared a token of appreciation for Korean War Veterans amid Covid-19 pandemic situation. We all remember Korean War Veterans who dedicated their youth to protect

the Republic of Korea" said First Secretary, Sangho Lee. "We wish the veterans good health in this challenging time."

The masks were an initiative of the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Korean War Commemoration Committee based in South Korea, who gifted the masks as an expression of gratitude for the veterans' service during the war. Korean War veterans and spouses living in 22 countries were gifted masks.

"We are very pleased to know the South Korean government has not forgotten and still deeply appreciates the service of New Zealand veterans

who fought in the Korean War at this difficult time" said Michael Stephens of the Korean Veterans' Memorial Trust. "The Trust greatly appreciates this gesture of goodwill and concern for the health and welfare of those"

To distribute the masks, the Embassy of the Republic of Korea reached out to Korean War veteran associations in each region. Embassy staff delivered masks to veterans living in the Wellington region and followed government guidelines around social distancing.

# Our Vietnam fallen: Private Kenneth Horomia Harding

*We would like to thank Major (Retired) Richard Shepherd and Private Harding's whānau for graciously allowing us to share this story.*

**On 24 June 1971 Private Kenneth Horomia Harding (Ngāpuhi, Te Māhurehure) became the last New Zealand soldier to be killed in action in Vietnam. He was 23-years-old when he died.**

Born on 26 February 1948, Private Harding was raised in Waima and was descended from Mohi Tawhai, a signatory of the Declaration of Independence in 1835 and the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840. He served in Vietnam as a forward scout with Victor 6 Company which was attached to the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment. Though Private Harding was trained in other operational areas, he preferred to serve as a cover scout alongside his close friend Private John Tairea.

On 24 June 1971 Victor 6 Company was on a track that showed footmarks, so the support section moved down to see if they were recent. The section commander, Corporal Manu Lee, saw movement and opened fire at an enemy soldier. Other enemy soldiers then returned fire and Private Harding sustained a gunshot wound to the head. He died on his way to hospital and his body was returned to New Zealand and he was laid to rest in Waima.



Private Kenneth Horomia Harding



Private Harding's portrait was carried down Lambton Quay and placed at Parliament as part of the Whakanoa Ceremony during Tribute 08, the national tribute to Vietnam veterans held in June 2008.





Hamai Thompson with the Waka Wairua at the Tribute 08 Whakanoa Ceremony.

Private Harding was posthumously awarded the New Zealand Operational Service Medal on 27 November 2003. His mother, Mrs Annie Harding and his sister, Mrs Susan Mokaraka received the medal on his behalf.

“Moe mai te rangatira nau nei i whakamana ta matau uanga i te mura o te ahi. Noho marika i te taha o te rungarawa maana koe e okioki mo ake tonu. Rest in peace Horo, you served your country well and have taken your place alongside those who made the supreme sacrifice. We salute you all.”  
– Major (retired) Richard Shepherd.  
As part of Tribute 08, the national

tribute for Vietnam veterans held in June 2008, New Zealand soldiers who died in Vietnam were the focus of a Whakanoa Ceremony held at Parliament. The ceremony was to lift the burden of the families who had lost loved ones and to acknowledge those who had died by taking care of their wairua.

Portraits of Private Harding and the 36 other Vietnam fallen were carried down Lambton Quay and were met at Parliament with a pōwhiri and Waka Wairua which collected their wairua. The portraits were placed in the main hall of Parliament for a week so that

families and members of the public could pay their respects.

After a week, the families removed the portraits in a ceremony and three Tohunga drove the Waka Wairua to Mount Ruapehu. They climbed to Paretetaitonga and laid the waka at the peak, releasing the wairua of the fallen.

## Calling Malaya veterans

The Malaya Veterans Association have a free monthly newsletter, Satu, which is available for all Malayan Emergency and Indonesian Confrontation veterans.

To sign up for the newsletter email  
[nzmalayvets@gmail.com](mailto:nzmalayvets@gmail.com)

*Photograph courtesy of the Air Force Museum of New Zealand.*



# Sharon's Corner

**VA News sat down with Sharon Cavanagh, Manager of Veterans' Services, to talk about what has been happening at Veterans' Affairs over the last few months.**

**VA News:** So Sharon, what have you been up to since we last heard from you?

**Sharon:** No surprises here! Like for everyone else in New Zealand, Covid-19 has been dominating our thinking here in VA. When the government decided New Zealand would go into Alert Level 4 Lockdown, VA senior leadership launched what we called our "Veteran Connect" project. We knew it was going to be a very stressful time, so our aim was to contact as many clients as we could to check on their health and wellbeing. All of VA got involved – staff who usually process and pay the invoices, staff who usually answer our phones on the enquiry line, those in our rehabilitation team – and we even had some NZDF chaplains joining case managers to make the calls! All in all

we contacted over 8,000 veterans during Alert Levels 4 and 3.

**VA News:** That's a lot of phone calls! What sort of things did you learn from them?

**Sharon:** We learned that overwhelmingly veterans really liked having people get in touch to just have a chat and make sure they were doing OK. What was really useful was when we learned that for some veterans, their circumstances had changed since we last spoke to them. So we were able to get a number of them set up with new services – including, for some, newly introduced government assistance. For younger veterans, our rehabilitation team were able to talk with them about how to stay in touch with their healthcare and vocational providers via video chat and telemedicine.


**VA News:** What were some of the more specific queries you received from our clients during the Veteran Connect programme?

**Sharon:** From some of our clients nearing 65, they really wanted to know about how to apply for the Veterans' Pension. This is a pension that is administered by the Veterans' Pension Centre, which is part of the

Ministry of Social Development. It's available to those aged 65 and over with Qualifying Operational Service, who are New Zealand residents, and are normally living here. It's really important to remember that you can apply for the Veterans' Pension eight weeks before you turn 65. I encourage anyone wanting to apply for Veterans' Pension to give the Veterans' Pension Centre a call on Freephone 0800 650 656.

**VA News:** It certainly sounds like it has been busy few months! Is there anything else you would like to mention?

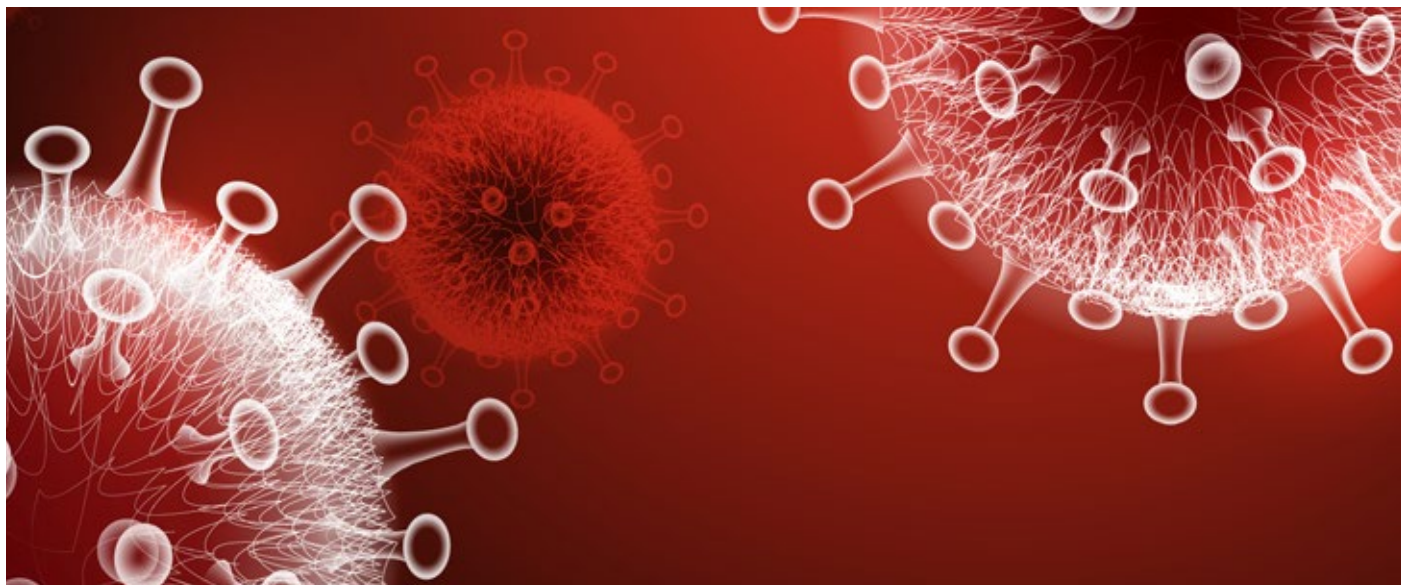
**Sharon:** Recently we developed a brochure for our New Zealand veterans living in Australia. It has some really good information including how to get support from us if you are returning to New Zealand for a visit or to retire, and the support available whilst living in Australia. A copy of the brochure is enclosed with this edition of our VA News, for our Australian-based veterans only. If they have any queries, they can call us from Australia on Freephone 1800 483 837 or email us at [veterans@nzdf.mil.nz](mailto:veterans@nzdf.mil.nz).

 0800 483 8372

 [www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz](http://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz)







# How we are operating under Alert Level 1

At Covid-19 Alert Level 1 (Prepare) we are back to business as usual.

Our inbound phone lines are open between 8am and 5pm. If you call outside of these hours you can leave a message and we will call you back. You can email us at any time at [veterans@nzdf.mil.nz](mailto:veterans@nzdf.mil.nz).

## At Alert Level 1:

- Our inbound phone lines are open.
- All VIP services have resumed.
- All staff have returned to the workplace to business as usual.

## Income compensation

If you receive income compensation you need to obtain a new medical certificate when your current certificate expires.

## Some of our non-essential work resumes under Level 1

Applications for the Veteran's Pin and Certificate of Appreciation are

open under Level 1. Our staff are busy working through applications made before Alert Level 4.

Applications for the Commemorative Travel Contribution will be considered on a case by case basis noting that due to the ongoing global Covid-19 pandemic, the New Zealand government advises against all non-essential international travel.

## 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Outbreak of the Korean War

Korean War veterans and their families are welcome to attend the national commemoration for the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Outbreak of the Korean War.

JUL

01

Wednesday 1 July 2020

11:00am, attendees must be seated by 10:45am



Pukeahu National War Memorial

Recently returned Operation Taji personnel depart RNZAF Base Auckland at Whenuapai after 14 days in self isolation.



# Final Camp Taji contingent returns home

**The 10<sup>th</sup> and final New Zealand Defence Force contingent to serve at Camp Taji, Iraq arrived home in March and April, marking the end of the NZDF's five year mission at Camp Taji.**

Two groups, who had been part of the Building Partner Capacity mission in Iraq with the Australian Defence Force, arrived back in New Zealand, where they immediately went into self-isolation at a facility within Royal New Zealand Air Force Base Auckland at Whenuapai, in line with Covid-19 requirements. To cheer up those in self-isolation over Easter, Veterans' Affairs provided morale items including hot cross buns and chocolate bunnies.

"On behalf of the personnel who served in the 10<sup>th</sup> rotation, I can say that we are all extremely glad to

have returned home to New Zealand following the completion of our mission in Camp Taji, Iraq," Senior National Officer Lieutenant Colonel Hill said. "Our five months overseas spanned a period of significant change in the Middle East and we faced some unprecedented challenges, including a significant escalation in tensions and the threat faced within Iraq."

The NZDF deployment to Camp Taji began in May 2015, following the decision of the New Zealand Government to join the Coalition to Defeat ISIS. Since then more than





New Zealand, Australian, and Iraqi personnel in 2015.

**“We faced some unprecedented challenges, including a significant escalation in tensions and the threat faced within Iraq.”**

– Senior National Officer  
Lieutenant Colonel Hill



New Zealand personnel training members of the Iraqi Armed Forces in 2015.

900 New Zealand personnel have deployed to Camp Taji and over 47,000 Iraqi Security Forces personnel have been trained there by the joint Building Partner Capacity mission with the Australian Defence Force.

The purpose of the Building Partner Capacity mission was to prepare Iraqi Security Forces units for combat and stabilisation operations. Training included individual soldier skills, such as weapons handling and marksmanship at close quarters and longer ranges, combat first aid, obstacle-breaching techniques,

as well as counter improvised explosive device and explosive hazard awareness training. NZDF personnel also instructed Iraqi Armed Forces units in international human rights law and the Law of Armed Conflict.

Nine New Zealand personnel remain deployed to the Coalition, including four to Coalition Headquarters in Iraq and Kuwait and five in operational support roles in Qatar. New Zealand personnel will continue to support the Coalition until June 2022.

# Anzac Day 2020



With traditional Anzac Day services cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the New Zealand Defence Force and RNZRSA encouraged people who would normally take part in dawn services to instead stand together, while social distancing, on Anzac Day morning. Thousands of New Zealanders stood at dawn in their driveways and homes to recognise the service and sacrifice of those who have served New Zealand.



Clockwise from top:  
RNZAF personnel stand at dawn outside Vincent barracks, at RNZAF Base Auckland at Whenuapai; NZDF personnel stand at dawn in Bulls; A soldier and his family pay their respects at their home in Christchurch; Major (retired) Tony Williams wearing the medals of his grandfather and his father at his home on Anzac Day.