

AIR FORCE NEWS

Protecting
our Island
Neighbours

End of the
Antarctic
Summer

Doing the
Mahi at
Raoul Island

#234

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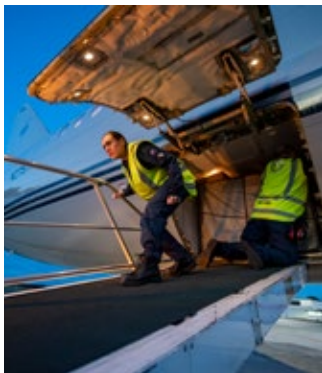


Supporting Operation Vaccinate

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OUR MISSION

The RNZAF will provide New Zealand with relevant, responsive and effective Air Power to meet its security interests.

OUR VISION

An agile and adaptive Air Force with the versatility essential for NZDF operations.

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Supporting Operation Vaccinate

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- writer's name, rank and unit
- photos provided separate from the text – at least 300dpi.

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New Zealand Government

First Word



B | GROUP CAPTAIN
Y | ANDY SCOTT

“In all instances we delivered when asked and we did so safely, managing the Covid-19 risk to both our own people and the risk to those we were tasked to help.”

Kia ora koutou team, I am writing this month's First Word as we approach the one year anniversary of the national level four lockdown, which started at 2359 on 25 March and saw us isolated in our bubbles for the next seven weeks.

For New Zealanders everywhere we needed to get used to new ways of doing everything, it introduced new meaning to terms like bubbles and social distancing which are now the mainstay of our language.

For the RNZAF, we did what we are good at and came up with a new plan where we saw you all apply innovative thinking to figure out new ways to work to keep delivering a critical service for New Zealand and our Pacific neighbours at the times when they needed it most.

During lockdown we responded to search and rescue call outs, provided cyclone relief, delivered critical measles vaccines and helped to repatriate New Zealanders and our Pacific partners when the world's airways closed down.

There was also this other little task we picked up called Op Protect, but I think you all know about that one.

You have all had a critical part to play in achieving what we have in the past 12 months and it has taken us all to work together to serve New Zealand in our war against the virus.

This has not been easy and I know this last year has tested everyone's resilience. Everything has been harder or more complicated to achieve and it is likely to remain so for the year ahead. The light at the end of the tunnel is Op Vaccinate.

This sees our force receive their initial Covid-19 vaccinations, providing increased protection at the border for Op Protect work and allowing us to reduce the risk when deploying our personnel overseas. This will see us getting back into more readiness and training activities as we rebuild our air warfighting ability once more in preparation for our new aircraft fleets.

Many of you know about these achievements and what lies ahead already, but I am reminding you of what we have accomplished in the past 12 months because the circumstances you have achieved them in are extraordinary.

Two years ago, we would not have imagined the world we see today and if we had asked if we could operate under those constraints to deliver all we do, many would not have thought it possible. But you continue to prove those that would doubt your ability wrong and you continue to do extraordinary things which support and protect our community, our nation and our world.

This month's edition of *Air Force News* reads like many others you would see, as it celebrates achievements and milestones, recounts details of exercises and operations completed and provides more information of the future path we are on as a force with the announcement of the Poseidon Transition Unit and the new Commanding Officer. The fact we are managing all this and delivering this safely under Covid-19's shadow is awesome. You all do an amazing job every day. Never lose sight of that.

Protecting our Island neighbours

Air Force aircraft have delivered nearly 10 tonnes of personal protective equipment to Papua New Guinea and Timor Leste as cases of Covid-19 surge in the two nations.



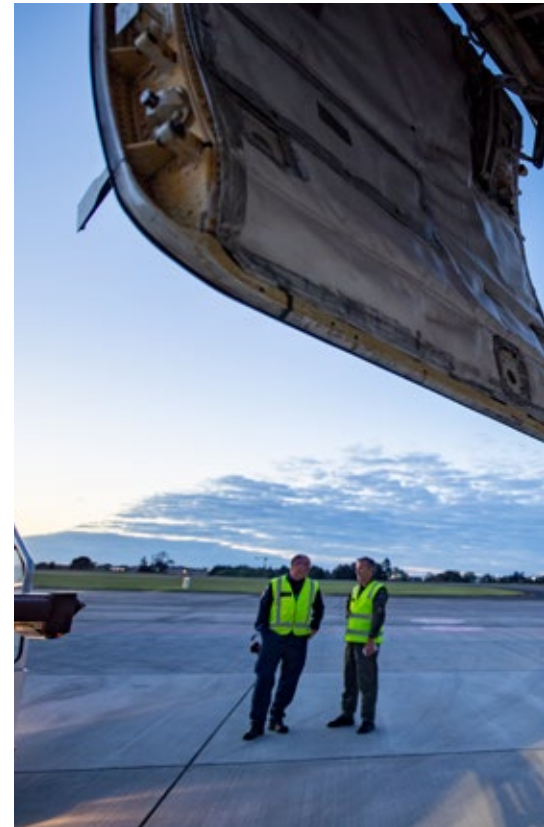


The first flight last month saw crew on the Boeing 757 carry out a contactless delivery of personal protective equipment (PPE) to Port Moresby to help Papua New Guinea (PNG) deal with hundreds of new cases.

The country has implemented a nationwide isolation policy in order to stem the burgeoning community transmission cases that are putting a strain on its health system.

The delivery of the PPE took place shortly after the recent Government's announcement that New Zealand was providing additional support to PNG following the spike in Covid cases there.

The cargo was sanitised in New Zealand before being loaded on to the aircraft. It was offloaded from the aircraft onto the tarmac at Port Moresby International Airport, for collection by PNG workers after Air Force personnel were clear of the site.



The Ministry of Foreign Affairs arranged for 4,400kg of PPE for PNG, which was enough for clinical teams to treat 1,000 Covid cases.

The day after the flight to PNG, a C-130 Hercules delivered 5,500kg of PPE to Dili, in Timor Leste, which is also experiencing a sharp increase in cases.

New Zealand has supplies of PPE in Auckland, ready to deploy to countries in need as required. The deliveries followed requests from the Governments of PNG and Timor Leste for assistance.

In both cases the supplies were delivered to airports, without physical contact with local workers. A second flight to PNG with further PPE supplies is possible, depending on its needs.



“We’re pleased we can help our friends and communities in the region by taking these supplies of PPE to help them in their fight against the virus,” Air Component Commander Air Commodore (AIRCDRE) Shaun Sexton said.

The supplies will enable clinical teams to care for patients with the virus. The PPE includes hand sanitiser, goggles, biohazard bags, sterilising tablets, shoe covers, thermometers, gloves, gowns, surgical face masks and face shields.

Aircrew on the aircraft successfully completed the contactless delivery, AIRCDRE Sexton said.

“Our personnel have robust Covid prevention procedures in place and we are well versed in contactless delivery of essential equipment, including when taking emergency relief supplies to Pacific countries following tropical cyclones.”

Aircrew on RNZAF flights undergo a range of measures to prevent any potential spread of Covid including health screening prior to departure, Covid swab testing, hand washing/ hand sanitising, wearing face masks and gloves, and physical distancing.

“The NZDF always stands ready to assist our Pacific neighbours in times of need.”

– Air Commodore Shaun Sexton

LEFT
PPE gear loaded onto the Boeing 757

MIDDLE
Supplies are loaded onto the Boeing 757 at Base Auckland

RIGHT
Health checks are carried out on the crew before taking off for PNG

End of the Antarctic Summer

A busy air movements team at the Harewood Terminal in Christchurch has assisted with the last cargo flights of the summer season to Antarctica, having overseen the movements of more than a million kilos of cargo and about 500 passengers to and from the ice.



The use of an air bridge meant the amount of cargo moved was much higher this season compared to last season.

The 26-strong team at Harewood provided support to all aircraft going to Antarctica, including for the US Antarctic Program.

This season, fewer passengers went to and from the ice due to reduced Antarctica programmes following the global Covid-19 pandemic. For comparison, the air movements team at Harewood helped move 503 passengers to the ice during the 2020/21 season, compared to 2,417 in 2019.

However, the use of an air bridge meant the amount of cargo moved was much higher this season compared to last season.

In total, 1,108,770 kilograms (2,444,420lbs) of cargo was overseen by the team at Harewood compared to 887,269kg (1,956,095lbs) in the 2019/20 season. This included 195,044kg (430,000lbs) in the last week of the scheduled flight window.

The Senior National Officer for the Defence Force's Op Antarctica, Major Andrew Thornton, said there had been plans initially for a cargo ship to go to Antarctica for re-supply, but weather conditions meant an ice pier couldn't be completed.

Options like a causeway system or a floating pier were considered, but these would have required greater numbers of staff to operate and maintain.

With Antarctica programmes reducing their footprint on the ice this season due to Covid considerations, decisions were made for greater use of a United States Air Force C-17 and to close out the season with an air bridge.

As part of the Defence Force's Op Antarctica commitments, No. 40 Squadron provided C-130 Hercules cargo and passenger support in to Phoenix Runway (supporting the US Antarctic Program) and Terra Nova Bay (Italian programme). Aircrew carried out five successful missions, with additional flights hampered by runway and weather conditions on the ice.

In total, 80 personnel had been part of the operation this summer, Major Thornton said.

Fourteen NZDF personnel were deployed to Antarctica this season, including a team of five who worked out of Scott Base. A senior cargo handler, two plant operators, and two communications officers were in that group.

Six personnel from the Royal New Zealand Navy dive and hydrography unit HMNZS Matataua went to Antarctica to carry out an underwater survey for Antarctica NZ, to assist with logistical planning for the organisation's Scott Base redevelopment project.

"This was the first time the NZDF had deployed a team of military hydrographers to the ice."

The data gathered by the hydrography team provided Antarctica NZ with information they needed to further develop their business case for the redevelopment project. More data will be needed, however, the hydrography team's work had demonstrated that Antarctica NZ's logistical concept for the delivery of the new base to Scott Base was feasible.

Doing the mahi at Raoul Island

An NH90 and an SH-2G(I) Seasprite helicopter were recently embarked on the Royal New Zealand Navy's vessel HMNZS Canterbury for Raoul Island. The trip was to support MetService and GNS Science staff who carried out essential tasks, including maintenance of critical weather and tsunami warning systems.



Maritime Component Commander Commodore (CDRE) Mat Williams said the mission, to carry out critical re-supply and maintenance tasks, was delayed a week and scaled back after Auckland went into Covid-19 alert level three.

Last month's 8.1 magnitude earthquake and tsunami warnings were a reminder of how important these early warning systems were, he said.

"We will continue to monitor the situation in the Kermadec Islands, including consulting with our colleagues in GNS Science."

A BLAKE Expedition, comprising young people and teachers scheduled to go on the ship, was cancelled following the change in alert levels.

The trip was to have been the first major resupply mission since March 2020 when Department of Conservation staff left the island.

Instead, small teams from MetService and GNS undertook critical tasks only and returned with the ship to New Zealand.

A No. 3 Squadron NH90 helicopter and a No. 6 Squadron Seasprite helicopter flew staff, equipment and provisions to shore.

Following the earthquake, a P-3K2 Orion flew over Raoul Island, allowing crew to check for damage from the jolt. They saw landslips and water discolouration but no significant damage to equipment or structures.



GNS Science Remote Infrastructure Operations Coordinator Kris O'Brien said GeoNet technicians carried out critical repairs to GNS equipment and improved power systems.

"Raoul Island's strategic location makes it one of New Zealand's most integral sites for monitoring earthquakes and tsunamis. The two tsunami gauges located on Raoul will give us information about any tsunami caused by an earthquake and act as an early warning system."

Steve Knowles, MetService's Network Observations Manager, said MetService staff carried out routine maintenance work on the automatic weather station and replaced a 60-year-old weather balloon launching facility.

"It will improve safety for Raoul Island Department of Conservation staff who launch meteorological balloons on behalf of MetService. The balloon data contributes to global weather models and adds another layer of data to help in the tracking of tropical cyclones.

"MetService's Raoul Island Automatic Weather Station, which measures atmospheric pressure, rain fall, solar radiation, bright sunshine hours, temperature, wind speed and direction, will also be checked and serviced to ensure continued trouble-free operation and transmission of data back to our Wellington HQ."

Two meteorological buoys recovered from Northland beaches were also redeployed en route. The free-drifting buoys provide atmospheric pressure, sea surface temperature and ocean current data.

The trip was to have been the first major resupply mission since March 2020 when Department of Conservation staff left the island.

Countering Terrorism

B | EDITOR
Y | REBECCA QUILLIAM



Waikato and Auckland set the scene recently for Air Force helicopter crews to practice vital counter-terrorism training.

No. 3 Squadron's A109 and NH90 crews worked alongside the NZ Police and Special Forces troops in urban and rural environments, mostly on night flights, using night vision equipment.

A109 pilot Flight Lieutenant (FLTTL) Corey Fothergill said the exercise helped with interoperability between the services. Its goal was also to keep crews current in counter-terrorism skills and qualify personnel who hadn't done the training before.

The A109 carried snipers on board and provided a watch for the NH90s, which fast roped people to the ground.

"Our sorties take place in a mix of both urban and rural areas. In the city there is a lot going on with bright lights and high buildings, so there is a lot to think about. But a rural environment can also have its difficulties – it's in the middle of nowhere and spotting targets in the terrain can be difficult.

"The training is designed to keep everyone on their toes and each day there is an overall scenario, which evolves and keeps everyone guessing," FLTTL Fothergill said.

"The beauty of it is we are planning only a couple of hours ahead of time. That's what it would be like in a real life scenario if there was a terrorism callout."

The A109s lead the helicopter formations and one of the goals for the pilots is to be at the target within 10 seconds of the time they are given.

"You're flying to a place you've probably never seen until we're shown some photos a couple of hours beforehand.

NH90 pilot FLTTL Glenn Blay said his role was to fly personnel to an area where they fast rope down to carry out a ground assault.



"We went down to Hamilton last night and fast roped troops onto the shopping mall car park there. We don't know where we're going tonight – that will be in the brief once we turn up."

A lot of the training involves planning the sorties, which include a fast turn-around emergency plan, followed by a "deliberate" planning stage that could take place over five or six hours, FLTLT Blay said.

"The longer you have the more detailed it gets – it's just about having that response timing and we just need to practice both."

The night flying poses some challenges, including losing a wide field of vision with the night vision goggles.

"The flying becomes harder and the fatigue levels are increased – you're

working hard and your eyes are straining.

"The weather becomes a big player because our minimum vision is reduced – we can't fly in as poor weather as you can in daytime," he said.

"The moon can also play a part by providing too much light and that blooms out your goggles. There's also the lights from the cities and the cars that can make things really difficult."

The counter-terrorism response training means the Air Force can fulfil one of its main priorities to help look after New Zealand's security interests, FLTLT Blay said.

"So it's highly important that crews are current and highly qualified to be able to go on the appropriate standbys. We have a responsibility to the government to provide a certain number of crews and aircraft at any given time for this response, so we need to be able to supply that."

"You're flying in the middle of the night, wearing night vision goggles, to a place you've never really seen before. I think that's a pretty big challenge."

- Flight Lieutenant Corey Fothergill

Confidence comes with Vaccination

B | EDITOR
Y | REBECCA QUILLIAM

Exactly one year to the day since Covid-19 was announced as a global pandemic, vaccinations for the virus were being injected into the arms of New Zealand Defence Force personnel. Working in Managed Isolation Quarantine Facilities and at the borders mean these frontline staff need early protection in order to continue to safely deploy.



LEFT
Personnel watch an information video

MIDDLE
A vaccinator talks with FLTLT Jordan Clark about the procedure

RIGHT
LAC Kate Te Wano receives her vaccination



Base Auckland's gym is home to Whenuapai's vaccination operation. The tri-service and civilian medical team set up a streamlined system where personnel are given a series of information briefs so they can make an informed decision about getting the Pfizer vaccine.

The Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine has been determined to be safe and effective and has been approved as a vaccine that can be given to New Zealanders.

Arriving in groups of 25, the personnel first watch a short video providing answers to commonly asked questions about the vaccine. They then listen to a pre-recorded transcript giving more information. As personnel line up waiting to be called to vaccination stations, there is further information available they can read. Finally, they talk with qualified vaccinators, ask questions and give health information before deciding on being vaccinated.

"It's all centred around informed consent," nursing officer Captain (CAPT) David Barber said.

The vaccines arrive at the base in packets of five. Each vial contains six doses and the medical team has to calculate the measurements precisely.

They are kept in a chiller at between 2°C and 18°C and the ambient temperature in the gym is required to stay below 30°C.

Once the vaccine has been removed from the "super freezer", they must be used within five days, CAPT Barber said.

"We don't want to waste a single drop. If someone turns up who can't medically have the vaccine that means there is an extra dose and we have a list of people who can come in at the last minute."

Flight Lieutenant Jordan Clark said he is supportive of the programme because of the ongoing NZDF Commitment to the Managed Isolation Quarantine Facilities (MIQF).

"I see the vaccine as an extra layer of protection for ourselves and the wider community with the ongoing battle against Covid. Once I've got the second vaccination I'll be more confident to work in an environment that could expose me to people with potential symptoms such as in Managed Isolation.



“I’m really happy that I got it and now I feel protected when I go into the MIFS – my rotation is coming up. So this is like a safety net.”

**– Leading Aircraftman
Kate Te Wano**

“Overall, I think New Zealand as a whole has been pretty lucky, and I am really looking forward to being able to travel overseas again, hopefully in the near future.”

Aircraftman James Hieatt-Corbett also felt safer after receiving his first dose of the vaccine.

“I feel lucky and more confident by getting it so early. If I am deployed again to a Managed Isolation Facility I feel better now, knowing it’s a high risk environment.”

Aircraftman Thomas Baeg said the process went a lot faster than he was expecting.

“Once it was administered it was all done and now I’ll be hopefully resistant to Covid. It’s just an ease of mind, especially going into town now I’ll have an extra sense of confidence knowing I’ll be protected.

“We’re going to be dealing with a lot of people who come in from overseas who potentially have Covid, so it’s about protecting us and protecting New Zealand.”

Sergeant Kyle Meyer said he felt like he’d “done something good for the country” and he had done his part to fight the virus.

“I’m just glad to help. It just gives me an assurance that I’ve done the right thing and I’ve got the support base from my colleagues, the RNZAF as well as the NZDF. We’re setting the standard and I hope everybody follows suit.”

Leading Aircraftman Kate Te Wano said the whole procedure was over in seconds.

“I’ve had a really easy time with it, everything was laid out really well. I fully support it and I hope everyone takes the opportunity to get their vaccine.”

Aircraftman Sophie Cooper is a medic under training and fulfilling some of the administration roles during the process.

“I can’t do the vaccinations yet, so I do all the other admin jobs.”

Part of her job is to enter data in the system so the Ministry of Health and the military are getting real time information.

“It’s very cool being here, especially being under training. You never really see this type of operation and it’s great to be a part of it, especially because it means so much – being able to help put a stop to the virus. That’s why you join as a medic, to help.”



The journey to vaccinations

On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organisation declared SARS CoV-2 Coronavirus a Pandemic. The first NZDF personnel were diagnosed with Covid-19 a few days after the pandemic was declared.

LEFT
Captain Dave Barber holding a vial of the Pfizer/BioN Tech vaccine

RIGHT
Vaccinations are prepared to give to personnel

Squadron Leader (SQNLDR) Dr Kit Boyes recalls doing his first Covid swabs in March 2020. He visited the homes of four people with upper respiratory tract symptoms. Two of the four came back positive for the virus.

“One of them only had a runny nose. If you have a symptom, it is important to get swabbed, even if you don’t think it’s Covid.

“If you are working at the border you must get swabbed regularly. Early on in an infection you don’t have any symptoms, and up to a third of people spreading Covid have no symptoms at all.”

New Zealand has been lucky – for foreign nations the impact has been huge.

“If similar death rates happened here as some other nations with high rates, we would have well over 10,000 people dead, not 26, and many, many more with long term complications,” SQNLDR Boyes said.

Coronavirus first entered New Zealand on an aircraft. Almost all cases since have come in by air. So far, none have been on NZDF aircraft. New Zealand’s first line of defence is the border, with Managed Isolation and Quarantine facilities an important back stop. This keeps the number of cases that reach the community small enough to be controlled by lockdowns.

Stopping Covid spreading throughout New Zealand depends upon the hygiene, screening and quarantine measures at our border.

Whenuapai is the border. For the past year hygiene, screening and quarantine have been the day to day job of medics; screening aircrew and passengers before they leave or enter NZ, educating staff, swabbing border workers, transporting unwell patients from overseas in cumbersome PPE.

Now there is another job. We have a vaccine. A valuable, and somewhat unusual vaccine – it uses RNA, which is unstable, and so has to be kept very cold until shortly before use. Very small doses – just 0.3ml – have to be managed carefully.



With limited supplies, the Government decides the priority of who gets vaccinated, and the Ministry of Health controls the supply. All health staff who vaccinate have special training. All vaccinations must be entered and accounted for on a specially developed civilian software programme.

Delivery of the vaccine has added to Health's workload. The tri-service Defence Health Centre has meant access to more resources than Air alone could have, with Navy medics and Army nurses assisting. Virtually all health command and governance is Army or civilian.

Due to the design of vials, syringes and the difficult storage and drawing up process, the Ministry of Health estimated that 1/6th of the vaccine would usually be unusable. Thanks to the expertise and careful planning of medics and nurses, hardly any vaccines have been lost, SQNLDR Boyes said.

Although the vast majority of people are keen to be vaccinated, everyone is free to say no. The team has been careful to try to avoid putting pressure on people, and have carefully arranged the process so others waiting before and after vaccination need not know if someone declines.

The vaccine is a very important step in adding an additional layer of protection from the effects of Covid. Fortunately it is a very simple vaccine with few ingredients to cause adverse reactions, and the experience of other nations who have been conducting mass vaccinations for several months now is reassuring, he said.

"By far the most common issues are a sore arm or a bit of fatigue – gone in a couple of days. I didn't have any side effects at all."

Results from vaccinations overseas seem very promising, with rates of infection, serious illness and death falling as people are vaccinated.

"For New Zealand, vaccination means we may be able to reopen borders with much less risk of a large scale outbreak. For the NZDF it means looking after our staff – the border workers – and ultimately the rest of NZDF who may need to deploy to areas where Coronavirus is still circulating."

The vaccine will initially protect individuals from severe illness. However, once large proportions of the population have been vaccinated it will protect the country and population as a whole and reduce the overall health threat to New Zealand.

Once people have had the vaccine, they still need to remain vigilant in their hygiene and practice health protective measures. Vaccinated people may not have any symptoms of Covid, but may still transmit the virus unknowingly, so being very careful with hygiene and health protection measures will help reduce any spread.

Together, we can defeat Coronavirus.



Chasing goals and being a mum

B | EDITOR
Y | REBECCA QUILLIAM

The Air Force's family-friendly policies were what attracted Corporal Jade Forman to join the service and they are a big part of why she wants to stay.

The logistics specialist works at Base Ohakea as the repair manager for NH90 helicopters, after moving from Base Auckland.

"I recently moved from Auckland and I was on my own with my daughter and the amount of people who came around and helped me move and clean my house – I didn't ask anyone, they were just there.

"I don't think you would get that anywhere else, it's like a family. So that and the balance with mum life is what keeps me here, makes me love it and makes me want to encourage other females to join."

Corporal (CPL) Forman joined in 2015 when she was 23 when she realised she wasn't pushing herself to her full potential and wanted a career rather than a job.

"I heard about the good work/life balance in the Air Force, so I looked into it and joined up. I knew very little about it – I'm not from a military family or anything like that.

"When I got pregnant with my daughter I wondered if that meant an end to my career. I was about five months into maternity leave and work approached me to see if I wanted to work from home a couple of days a week. I was shocked, because I didn't know that could be an option, but they set me up and trained me on the equipment."

Since then, CPL Forman has seen other women taking on that same option and she believes the flexible working arrangements is one of the best things the NZDF offers to its personnel.



As well as working full time, CPL Forman is also able to fit in time to study, “you can still do it all in the Air Force”.

“I was never disadvantaged after having a child. I am able to be a career woman, chase goals and be a mum.

“My proudest achievement in life is being a mum to my two-year-old daughter Scarlett and every day that I put my uniform on she knows I am going to work. I think as women in this uniform, we are very strong role models for our daughters and we should be really proud and passionate about that.”

Working at No. 3 Squadron is also rewarding and CPL Forman said she sees how her work directly impacts on the fleet.

“When a helicopter part breaks and comes off the frame, that’s when my job kicks in. I liaise with the vendors and finance and sign off the amount we want it repaired for. It then gets sent out to vendors where it becomes serviceable and able to go back onto the aircraft.”

Last year, while working in the propulsion team, CPL Forman was part of the team fixing a major problem with one of the Boeing aircraft.

“It was really cool, we stood there and watched the Boeing take off and you knew you’d played a part in making that happen.”

“It’s not really so much what made me join up, but what’s made me stay in the Air Force that is more important to me.”

– Corporal Jade Forman

A Texan Milestone

B | EDITOR
Y | REBECCA QUILLIAM



After a challenging year with the global pandemic disrupting many Air Force activities, the T-6C Texan fleet has reached the impressive achievement of 20,000 flying hours after nearly six years in service.

LEFT
SQNLDR Matt Alcock in a T-6C Texan after the fleet reached 20,000 flying hours

The figure was reached following an increase in flights over the past year to 24 per day and 120 per week.

Texan pilot Squadron Leader (SQNLDR) Matt Alcock piloted the Texan that marked the fleet's 20,000th flying hour.

"I wouldn't say I took it up for that purpose, it just happened to be me," he said.

There were three others flying at the same time and whoever flew enough hours and brought the aircraft back first, was the pilot credited with the milestone.

"I completed the training I needed to do, landed and there was the boss to greet me. When I was landing I thought I was a little bit short on the timing, but because of the way the aircraft works its timings out, I found I actually had flown the required amount.

"It's a really good achievement for the fleet. It shows the team effort that goes on in the hangar to get the aircraft moving and going."

The Texan is a very good aircraft for its purpose, SQNLDR Alcock said.

"It's unusual to train new pilots on something that has such high performance, but what you get out of that are efficiencies for the instructors and the students. It was a fairly bold move on behalf of the Air Force, but I think it's proven to be right."

Flying Training Wing Commanding Officer Wing Commander (WGCDR) Tim Costley said for the fleet of 11, the flying hours meant each aircraft had flown almost 2,000 hours.





“They are lots of fun to fly - you’ve got a little sports car strapped to your back, so every day you get to fly it is a privilege.”

- Squadron Leader Matt Alcock



“There have been a number of challenges in the past year along the way, particularly with Covid,” he said.

“To be able to hit this flying rate despite everything else is fantastic.”

Almost all staff and all students in the flying training wing had been deployed to work in Managed Isolation Quarantine Facilities, but despite that, they still managed to fly for more hours than in any other previous year, WGCDR Costley said.

“It really shows how well the contract is working now and how well the relationship is between the Air Force, Beechcraft NZ, TA Defence Airbus, and CAE.

“We’ve got three courses on the go at the moment, with a fourth just graduated. People on the RNZAF Officer’s Course are forming up to start another course. So we’ve got more courses on than ever before. On top of that we’ve got our flying instructors course also flying the Texan.

“We have a really positive future and the Texan is really starting to show its value to the NZDF in training pilots and flying instructors.”

It was a whole team effort, including the maintainers who worked really hard behind the scenes, WGCDR Costley said.

He also pointed to the safety and surface technicians, who supported the customised and personalised equipment.

“It’s not like the Airtrainer where everyone throws on an identical parachute and there you go. It’s a very involved process and they do a great job to keep all of that running – that’s all part of what keeps those aeroplanes flying.”

Air warfare officer training comes home

For the first time in nearly 30 years, air warfare officers have trained and graduated in New Zealand rather than needing to do the training across the ditch in Australia. The first two personnel to graduate, Pilot Officers Jasmine Eyley and Carter Bland tell *Air Force News* how it feels to have the course up and running at Base Ohakea.



How do you feel about being one of the first to graduate as an air warfare officer in New Zealand in decades?

J: It's a pretty surreal feeling to complete such a demanding course and all four of us are looking forward to enjoying graduation day together, it's great to be a result of a new training system.

C: It's quite an awesome feeling knowing that we are the first ones trained back in New Zealand! There's a bit of history behind it and it's definitely special being the first air warfare officers trained back home.

What advantages were there to doing the training in New Zealand?

J: There were a lot of advantages compared to training in Aussie. It means once we start flying on operational squadrons we will already know the New Zealand aviation environment. Outside of work it meant that we could be near to our families and support networks while going through training.

C: It was quite nice to be close to home, well closer than living in Australia. Being able to get away some weekends for special occasions or just to see family really helped while being on course, where it seems like your whole life revolves around it.

How did it feel to be the first ones to train in a KA350? What is it like to train in the new aircraft?

J: The new aircraft was great to train in – although it was pretty cramped down the back! The ground-based training systems were borderline identical to those on the aircraft, and these allowed us to practice flights to a high level of fidelity prior to going up in the aircraft, really helping to cement our training and for the front right-hand seat flying it was great.

C: The King Air was a great aircraft to train on. It was awesome seeing what it was like training on the console down the back and then training up the front in the cockpit.

LEFT
PLTOFF Jasmine Eyley

RIGHT
PLTOFF Carter Bland



Why did you choose to become an air warfare officer?

J: A career in flying really was the only thing I wanted to do. The tactical side of the air warfare officer role really took my interest and was why I chose that career path.

C: My dad was a navigator on the C-130 Hercules, so initially I wanted to follow in his footsteps. Once I learnt more about the role, the aspects of the whole job really drew me in. After completing training, I knew that I had made the right choice.

What is the best aspect of the role?

J: So far, the highlight of my career (on course), was the tactical navigation phase of flying in the front right hand seat. Having to take up some co-pilot duties as well as our original duties whilst managing a tactical threat scenario to hit a time-on-target was some of the more difficult but most enjoyable and rewarding flying I've done.

C: I would say that being part of the whole crew, working together to achieve the mission is the best part.

What do you hope to achieve in your career?

J: I'm looking forward to being an integral part of a wider team, doing things that will impact people's lives, both at home and overseas. It is quite exciting and I'm incredibly privileged to be in this position. At this stage I'd like to master my profession and see where it takes me, both in the physical sense (ie around the world), and within the RNZAF.

C: I'd like to travel the world with No. 40 Squadron, partaking in international exercises, providing humanitarian aid is something I've always wanted to do and hopefully I can contribute something back.

Work ramping up for P-8A delivery

B | EDITOR
Y | REBECCA QUILLIAM

The coming year will see some exciting developments for the P-8A Poseidon transition unit, including a start to the new aircraft hangar at Base Ohakea and more personnel travelling overseas for training.



The unit's new Commanding Officer Wing Commander (WGCDR) Mark Whiteside said 2022 was the year the Air Force would see some pretty big changes.

"This year we have five maintenance instructors and two aircrew start training in Australia – that will grow to 15 in the middle of the year. And we still have the eight over in Jacksonville and a few others will join them for some mission support training as well."

The P-8A command team will be housed in Base Ohakea's historic 3 Squadron hangar where it will conduct initial flying operations until its own hangar is completed in 2023. The team's first home is significant in that it has previously housed No. 75 Squadron when it received the Skyhawks, as well as No. 3 Squadron, WGCDR Whiteside said.

Last year the sod was broken at the site where a newly built hangar will home the new aircraft, offices, training, logistics and maintenance facilities.

"For a while now we've had the horizontal works underway with Fulton Hogan, which is preparing the apron, taxiways and the air side facilities, including bird baths – the water used for washing planes after it's returned from flying at low-levels over the ocean.

"That's all part of the ongoing groundworks and they have made good progress over the summer."

In December the team signed the contract with Hawkins for the vertical works, which is the facility itself, who are now on site at Ohakea, he said.

"Last month the concrete foundations were poured for that. What that means is that Ohakea will start to see that building come out of the ground over the year. There's still a long way to go – a little over two years before it's complete."

In October 2022, just before the aircraft are due to arrive in New Zealand, all the personnel training in Australia and the United States will return, WGCDR Whiteside said.

During it all the Covid-19 pandemic remains a challenge.

"It's created a lot of challenges because it's pretty dynamic. But at this stage of the project we've still been able to get our people to overseas training spots, with risk-mitigated procedures, which has meant we're still on track.

"Next year will be the interesting year for us when we will need to send a lot of people overseas. If we still have managed isolation facilities in 2022, getting 110 people home will be tricky. We'll have to make sure we're well on top of that challenge."

Meeting the maternity market

B | SENIOR COMMUNICATIONS ADVISOR
Y | CHARLENE WILLIAMSON

A business born out of hard times was the inspiration for Flight Lieutenant Natalie Pitts to launch Go Mama.

Flight Lieutenant (FLTLT) Pitts joined the Air Force in 2001 as an Admin Clerk and has spent 20 years in a variety of roles, including as Flight Steward with No. 40 Squadron for 10 years. She commissioned at the end of 2016 and is now Adjutant at Base Auckland.

The Go Mama business was born through her journey of post-natal depression with her first child.

"I made a conscious effort of being more active when I became pregnant with my second child. I wanted to give myself the best chances of feeling well, and used exercise as a management tool to help my mental health," FLTLT Pitts said.



But she found a gap in the market, so decided to give it a go herself.

"I found there was a gap in budget-friendly maternity activewear that was comfortable, supportive and functional for pregnancy and breastfeeding.

"Pregnancy and being a new mum can be really hard physically and mentally, so I wanted to create a range that made it easier to bridge the link between physical exercise and mental wellbeing," she said.

FLTLT Pitts has big aspirations for Go Mama and hopes the range is something that militaries will consider for their personnel.

"There is a lot of progression in the NZDF maternity uniform space, and I would love to see the momentum continue by providing maternity activewear options that align with the existing active wear scale already available.

"My dream would be to become a preferred supplier of maternity activewear within the New Zealand Defence Force, and other nations' Defence Forces."

Her main focus is her Air Force career, but is passionate about both the RNZAF and Go Mama and is working on finding a balance.

"Go Mama is a home-based business so I get pretty productive over the weekends to make it easier on the juggle during the week."

FLTLT Pitts said planning and organisation have been integral to the roles she has done within the Air Force and are transferable to her new business.

"I think these skills have been a big contributor to transitioning Go Mama from just a concept through to design and the procurement stage, to an active website and brand launch.

"The brand is all about supporting and empowering women, regardless of their fitness level, to feel inspired to move and do so in comfort, style and practicality."

FLTLT Pitts is in discussions with the RNZAF Clothing Manager to look at a submission for Go Mama to become a preferred supplier of maternity fitness wear in the RNZAF.

“Unflinching courage” Victoria Cross now on display

B | AIR FORCE MUSEUM OF NEW ZEALAND
Y | MICHELLE SIM



In the lead-up to Anzac Day this year the Air Force Museum of New Zealand will be displaying, for the first time, one of the three Victoria Crosses (VC) awarded to Air Force airmen during World War II.

The VC is of course the highest British Commonwealth military decoration for ‘valour in the face of the enemy’. Established by Queen Victoria after the Crimean War in 1856, it has since been awarded to 1,358 people, including 22 New Zealanders.

Among these Kiwi recipients are three airmen, each with their own incredible story of bravery in World War II: James ‘Jimmy’ Ward, Lloyd Trigg and Leonard ‘Len’ Trent. Sadly, only Trent survived the war. His VC and other medals were donated to the Air Force Museum by his family, following his death in 1986. It is the only one in the museum’s collection.

Nelson-born Len Trent joined the Air Force in January 1937. He completed his pilot training at Wigram in May 1938, before embarking for Great Britain on an exchange attachment with the RAF. While he was in England, war broke out with Germany, and Len was soon flying Bristol Blenheim aircraft in the Battle of France. Over the next couple of years, he served in various posts, including Commander of ‘B’ Flight of 487 (NZ) Squadron RAF, flying Lockheed Ventura bombers.



“On this, his 24th sortie, Squadron Leader Trent showed outstanding leadership. Such was the trust placed in this gallant officer that the other pilots followed him unwaveringly. His cool, unflinching courage and devotion to duty in the face of overwhelming odds rank with the finest examples of these virtues.”

- The London Gazette, 1 March 1946

On 3 May 1943, Len led 11 aircraft from 487 Squadron in a daylight bombing raid on a power station in enemy-occupied Amsterdam. As they neared the target, they were met by a massed formation of German Messerschmitt fighters.

Trent ordered the Ventura crews to close their formation and continue on to the target, as the enemy relentlessly attacked. By the time he approached the power station, under heavy anti-aircraft fire from the ground as well as the German fighters, there was only one other aircraft behind him.

Trent pushed on with his attack, and within moments of releasing his bombs over the target, his aircraft had also been badly hit. He ordered his crew to bail out as he fought to control the spiralling aeroplane, but the Ventura broke up in mid-air.

Incredibly, both Trent and his navigator were thrown clear and parachuted to the ground, where they were captured as prisoners of war. It was not until after he was liberated at the end of the war that Trent learned his actions had earned him the VC. The medal was presented to him by King George VI in an investiture at Buckingham Palace on 26 March 1946.

The Museum is inviting visitors to come and see the only VC in the collection, and, as part of wider Anzac Day commemorations, reflect on the stories of courage and sacrifice that it represents. Trent's VC will be on display from 14 April to 10 May, in the Museum's 'Horizon to Horizon' gallery. Admission is free.

LEFT

The Victoria Cross displayed at the Air Force Museum of New Zealand

MIDDLE

Then Squadron Leader Leonard Trent DFC with Mr William Jordan (New Zealand High Commissioner to London) and Air Commodore Arthur de Terrotte Nevill (New Zealand Air Officer Commanding), in front of a No. 487 (NZ) Squadron Ventura at RAF Feltwell, 1943

RIGHT

Group Captain Leonard Trent's Victoria Cross

Cadets fly high with the Air Force

B | NZ CADET FORCES
Y | SQUADRON LEADER RENEE MATTHEWS



While most teenagers relax over the holiday break, 67 air cadets took to the skies during the summer and enjoyed aviation courses available through the New Zealand Cadet Forces.

First to take off was the National Gliding Course, held annually at Piako Gliding Club in Matamata. Nineteen cadets spent six days in small teams, being assigned a glider and instructor and building on their skills and knowledge with feedback from their instructor after each flight.

Cadet Sergeant James McGowan from No. 30 (Hobsonville) Squadron was one of the students to go solo on the course.

"National Gliding gave all of us a lot of experience in general glider handling, stalls, take-offs and landings. A few of us also got the opportunity to fly solo. It was a very rewarding experience and the majority of us would love to attend again this coming year."

As we rolled into the New Year, the 10-day National Aviation Course began at Base Woodbourne with students enjoying flying above the Marlborough Sounds and Kaikoura.

National Aviation is two separate courses run in conjunction with each other – Power Flying and Navigation – and have been held at Base Woodbourne for the past 30 years.

The 16 navigation students were taught how to interpret aeronautical charts, calculate distance and flight times, construct a flight plan and identify features on the ground from the aircraft.

The cadets were given the opportunity to go on several flights in the local area, putting their flight planning and navigation skills to use by directing their pilot through the flight plan they had constructed.

Over at power flying, the 28 students learned how to handle and pilot aircraft. They learned everything from pre-flight inspections of the aircraft, weather appreciation to handling the aircraft in the sky. Once proficient in those procedures, they flew the Woodbourne circuit until their instructor deemed them safe to fly the aircraft solo.

Cadet Flight Sergeant (CDTF/S) Daisy Hagon was a returning student from No. 6 (North Shore) Squadron. She completed the Navigation Course in 2018, Power Flying in 2019 and returned this year with the hope of achieving her solo.



"The highlight of the training over the three years so far has been the wing drop stalls but going solo would top that for sure," she said.

From her time in Cadet Forces CDTF/S Hagon has gained a love for aviation and hopes to be selected for the Air Force. The National Aviation Course played a big part in helping her to realise her love of aviation, she said.

The chance to spend two weeks staying at Base Woodbourne and learning to fly gave her an insight into Air Force life. By the end of the course CDTF/S Hagon achieved her solo flight and on the day she held her nerves and it was a success.

The premier course for the summer has to be the 20-day RNZAF Flying Immersion Course, which this year saw CDTF/S Erik Burns from No. 41 (City of Porirua) Squadron, Cadet Sergeant (CDTSGT) Morgan Fannin from No. 13 (City of Napier) Squadron and CDTSGT Jaydyn Fowler-Reynolds from No. 37 (Thames) Squadron enjoy the best of what the Air Force has to offer.



CDTSGT Fowler-Reynolds said over the course of the first week they had the opportunity to fly five sorties in the A109 helicopter simulator, learning the basic effects of control, taxiing, take-off, transitions, circuits, square handling and hovering.

"Between our sorties we've been offered various flights on NH90 and A109 helicopters. We've talked to various people around No. 3 Squadron about what their role is and how they got to where they are now. The people here have been amazingly friendly to us."

Over the course the cadets completed an A109 flight over the Ruahine Range, where they practiced upper aircraft handling, circuits and hovering. Later in the week they were given NH90 flights over Napier and the Tararua Range where they were given a display of tactical winching onto a ship.

CDTF/S Burns' highlight was being winched out of an NH90 from 40ft onto a small sandbar between two lakes.



The RNZAF Flying Immersion Course provides ATC cadets, who have expressed significant interest in joining the Air Force as aircrew and met all the pre-requisites, with an opportunity to experience what service life is like for aircrew.

NATIONAL AVIATION COURSE BY THE NUMBERS

44 cadets

9 volunteer instructors

278 flying hours

324 flights



Air Force Mentoring – Find Your Athena

B | CORPORAL
Y | BOB HELA

Around the 8th century BCE, the Greek poet Homer wrote the epic story of The Odyssey. Buried within the book is the story of King Odysseus' son, Telemachus, whom he left to fight in the Trojan War. In the absence of his father, Telemachus did not have a role model and was doomed to lose his father's kingdom. Fortunately, he found favour in the eyes of Athena – the Greek goddess of wisdom.

The goddess, disguised as an old man named Mentor, educated and guided the young man. And thus, the term mentor evolved to mean someone who gives guidance and direction. I, just like Telemachus, am very grateful that I found myself an "Athena" – a mentor.

I had just completed my Technicians course and was very excited to be posted to a squadron for the first time. However, my excitement withered when I found myself struggling to navigate my way towards progressing my career and was unable to effectively position and prepare myself for promotion.

If you are interested in learning more about the Air Force Mentoring Programme, find us on the Air Force intranet page or email RNZAF.Mentoring@nzdf.mil.nz.

It was then that I heard of Air Force Mentoring, which provides training and opportunities for personnel to help them unlock their potential so they can move forward towards their goals.

I attended a day-long workshop and was matched with a mentor. From our first meeting, I knew straight away that Air Force Mentoring was going to benefit me in many ways. Within a year, I was cleared for promotion and subsequently granted the rank of a Corporal. Moreover, other areas of my life also improved as well.

The experience was so valuable to me that I became an advocate of Air Force Mentoring and encouraged others to join the programme. It inspired me to become a mentor and pay the value I had received forward to another mentee – something I find even more rewarding.

I became a part of the Base Auckland Mentoring Advisory Team (MAT) and had the privilege to be trained as one of the workshop facilitators to assist in delivering mentoring workshops and professional development. It has become very clear to me that mentoring benefits everyone, mentors and mentee, and it is something that everyone should consider as a way to support their career progression within the Air Force and for life outside the service.

Last year, as part of my induction plan as facilitator and to ensure that I receive the next level of training and meet a higher standard for taking the workshop for our international accreditation, the Air Force

Mentoring gave me the opportunity to attend a Professional Mentoring and Workplace Coaching Skills course. It is run in conjunction with UNITEC and delivered by NZ Coaching and Mentoring Centre.

The month-long course deepened my understanding and knowledge of the different ways that mentorship can be employed.

I learned different ways and techniques for how to be an effective mentor and become more effective in bringing out the best out of a mentee - which is the whole purpose of mentoring.

The experience also gave me an appreciation of how the Air Force leads in the arena of workplace mentoring. It is the only organisation in New Zealand and the only military service in the world that holds an International Gold Level Standard Accreditation for Mentoring.

Mentoring and coaching approaches are being incorporated by organisations from different industries in their progression strategies and advocacy for the benefits and advantages is rapidly growing. Air Force Mentoring, being an international leader, is a gem of innovation within the Air Force that is delivering now and has potential to deliver more.



SAFETY EVENT MANAGEMENT TOOL

The new Safety Event Management Tool (SEMT) to report ground safety events is now live and you should no longer use SRS.

We will start to record new or updated Safety Risk Assessments, Risk Management Plans and Safety Assurance activities in the SEMT from now on as well.

We will keep you informed on further SEMT developments for flight safety events.

Safety personnel at every base have had specialised SEMT training and are available to answer any questions you have.

Additionally, there is help available from within the tool itself: form fields with a symbol provide guidance on how to fill in that field; and the 'Training & Support' tab in the top right-hand corner leads to short video demonstrations and guides on specific functions within the SEMT.

Work is also underway to create an updated LMS module about safety and safety reporting within the NZDF. Keep an eye out for publicity about this.

While the tool is new, the importance of safety reporting and safety management isn't. It shouldn't take long to get familiar with the SEMT and it will quickly become a routine part of how we manage ground safety in the Air Force. Concurrently, we will also soon be able to take advantage of the SEMT's reporting functionality, allowing us to make continuous improvements in the way we keep our people safe.

If you need any help using the SEMT, speak to your commander/manager, local safety advisor, or visit the SEMT Help and Support page (click on the SAFETY button from the ILP).



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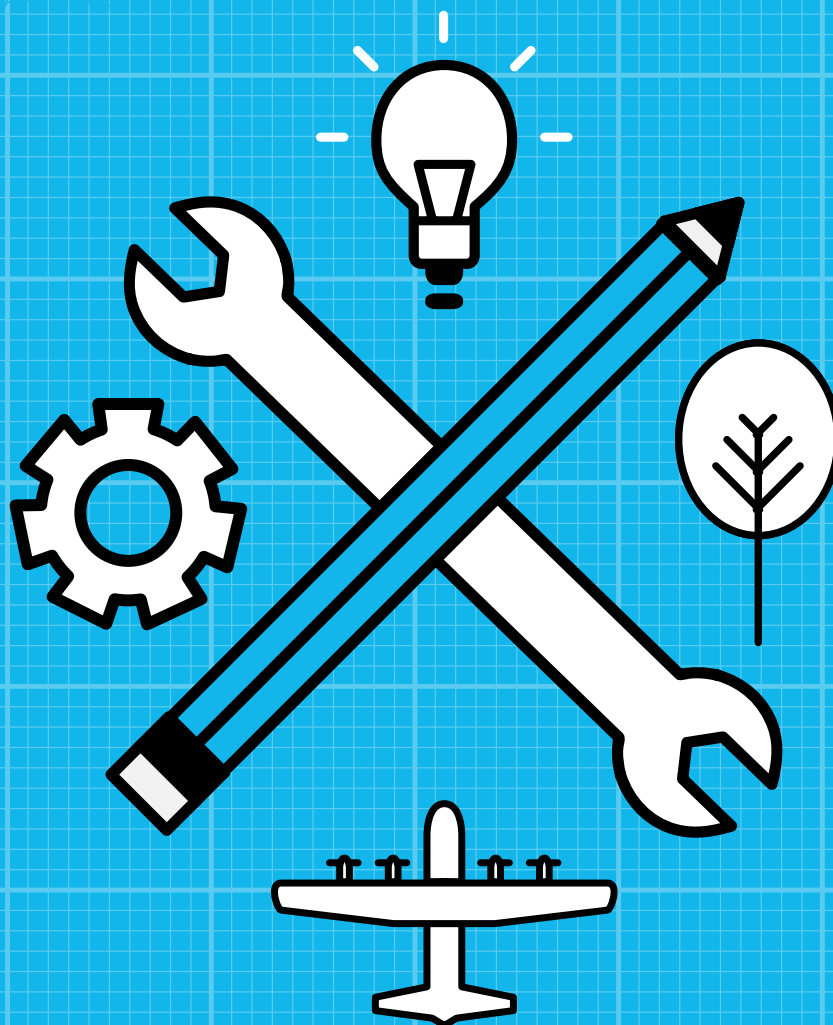




B | CORPORAL
Y | VANESSA PARKER

Staring down an NH90 while standing alone on a mountain peak must surely be a tick on the bucket list! While capturing footage of helicopter pilots conducting their annual mountain flying currencies in the Awatere Valley, one of the pilots asked if I would take a photo of the NH90 and capture the majestic grandeur of the range behind. Using nothing but hand signals to the pilot to compose the image, this was the final result.

R N Z A F	20 21
Innovation Challenge	
A DRAGONS' DEN TYPE EVENT	



Ideas need to be new to the RNZAF and developed in line with the four main themes; Operational, Technical, Welfare, Sustainability & Miscellaneous.

SUBMISSIONS CLOSE	22 April 2021	DRAGONS' DEN EVENT	May 2021
FOR ENTRY FORM, FURTHER DETAILS & CONTACT INFO	Access the Air Force Innovation pages at http://orgs/sites/armint/I-0003/default.aspx#/Air-Force-Innovation or email: Air.Innovation@nzdf.mil.nz Subject: RNZAF Innovation Challenge 2021		