

20 March 2025

195 Lambton Quay  
Private Bag 18-901  
Wellington 6160  
New Zealand

T +64 4 439 8000  
F +64 4 472 9596

Personal details  
removed for proactive  
release.

OIA 29892

Personal details removed for proactive release.

Thank you for your email of 14 January 2025 in which you request the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA):

- 1. All correspondence sent and received from the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Cook Islands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration, regarding Finnish authorities' seizure of Eagle S on December 25, 2024, including emails and phone call minutes, dated from December 25, 2024 to January 14, 2025*
- 2. All correspondence sent and received from the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Maritime Cook Islands regarding Finnish authorities' seizure of Eagle S on December 25, 2024, including emails and phone call minutes, from December 25, 2024 to January 14, 2025*
- 3. All New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs reports and meeting minutes regarding the vessel Eagle S from December 25, 2024 to January 14, 2025*

We have numbered your request for administrative convenience.

On 13 February 2025, the timeframes for responding to your request were extended by an additional 25 working days because responding to your request necessitated the review of a large quantity of information, and due to the consultations necessary to make a decision on your request (section 15A(1)(a) and (b) of the OIA refers).

### **Part one**

There are two email chains in scope of this part of your request:

1. RNZ media inquiry re Eagle 2 [27 December 2024 to 6 January 2025]
2. Meeting on Eagle S and shadow fleet [10 January 2025 to 13 January 2025]

Some parts of these email chains have been withheld 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;
- 7(b)(i) and 7(b)(ii): to avoid prejudicing relations between any of the Governments of New Zealand and the Cook Islands; and

- 9(2)(a): to protect individuals' privacy; and
- 9(2)(g)(ii): to protect officers and employees from improper pressure or harassment.

### Part two

The Ministry has neither sent nor received correspondence with Maritime Cook Islands regarding the Finnish authorities' seizure of Eagle S on 25 December 2024. Accordingly, this part of your request is refused under section 18(e) of the OIA, as the information you requested does not exist.

### Part three

Attached are the following documents in scope of this part of your request:

#	Title	Date	Decision
1.	FORMAL MESSAGE: FINLAND: UNDERSEA CABLE DAMAGE: COOK ISLANDS LINK	27 December 2024	6(a); 6(b)(i); 7(b)(i); 7(b)(ii); 9(2)(g)(ii)
2.	FORMAL MESSAGE: COOK ISLANDS SHIPPING REGISTRY - TASKING FOR POSTS	10 January 2025	6(a); 7(a)(i); 7(b)(i); 7(b)(ii); 7(c)(i); 9(2)(ba)(i); 9(2)(f)(iv); 9(2)(g)(i)
3.	FORMAL MESSAGE: BALTIC SEA: UNDERSEA INFRASTRUCTURE: ANCHOR ME	11 January 2025	6(a); 6(b)(i)
4.	RE: [Due 9:30AM Mon 13 Jan] PDG Issues/Updates for OMC 13 January	[8 Jan 2025 to 10 Jan 2025]	6(a); 7(b)(i); 7(b)(ii); 9(2)(a); 9(2)(g)(i); 9(2)(g)(ii)
5.	RE: Cooks - points for call with [redacted] please	[9 Jan 2025 to 10 Jan 2025]	6(a); 7(b)(i); 7(b)(ii)
6.	FW: Media Inquiry- Seized Cook Islands Registered Vessel	28 December 2024	9(2)(a); 9(2)(g)(ii)

Some information is withheld 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;
- 7(a)(i): to prejudice the security or defence of the self-governing State of the Cook Islands;
- 7(b)(i) and 7(b)(ii): to prejudice relations between any of the Governments of New Zealand and the self-governing State of the Cook Islands;
- 7(c)(i): to prejudice the international relations of the Governments of the self-governing State of the Cook Islands;

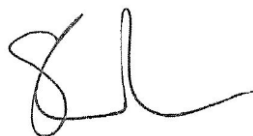
- 9(2)(a): to protect individuals' privacy;
- 9(2)(ba)(i): to protect the supply of confidential information by a third party;
- 9(2)(f)(iv): to protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials;
- 9(2)(g)(i): to protect the free and frank expression of opinions by departments; and
- 9(2)(g)(ii): to protect officers and employees from improper pressure or harassment.

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

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/](http://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](mailto: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](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or freephone 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā



Sarah Corbett  
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Out of scope

s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

Released under the Official Information Act

s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

---

**From:** s9(2)(g)(ii)

**Sent:** Friday, December 27, 2024 2:52:09 PM

**To:** s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

**cc:** s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

s9(2)(g)(ii)

**Subject:** RNZ media inquiry re Eagle 2

[UNCLASSIFIED]

Kia orana tatou

Hope you are all enjoying well-deserved holidays. I'm writing today to let you know that MFA Peters will be responding to a media inquiry this afternoon from RNZ on the Eagle 2 situation (CI flagged vessel implicated in damage to Finland Estonia power cable on Christmas Day).

**s6(a)**

In due course we would be interested in understanding the CI government's position on this incident.

Meitaki e Kia manuia

s9(2)(g)(ii)

---

"The information contained in this email message is intended only for the addressee and is not necessarily the official view or communication of the Ministry. It may be legally privileged. If you are not the intended recipient you must not use, disclose, copy or distribute this message or the information in it as this may be unlawful. If you have received this message in error, please email or telephone the sender immediately."

Released under the Official Information Act

Out of scope

Released under the Official Information Act

s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

---

**From:** s9(2)(g)(ii)

**Sent:** Friday, 10 January 2025 16:24

**To:** s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

**Cc:** s9(2)(g)(ii)

s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

s6(a)

**Subject:** Meeting on Eagle S and shadow fleet

[UNCLASSIFIED]

Kia orana <sup>s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)</sup>

Hope you've had a wonderful break.

I'm conscious that you're away on leave until Monday, but I'm getting in touch now as we have received some high priority tasking from Wellington that we would like to discuss with MFAI, MoT, and MCI.

You will be aware of New Zealand's serious and ongoing concerns regarding shadow fleet vessels linked to the Cook Islands and, more recently, about the Eagle S incident. With these things in mind, Wellington has instructed us to demarche the Cook Islands on the issue of the shadow fleet, to reemphasise our concerns, seek assurances, and offer support to the Cook Islands.

We are therefore seeking a meeting with you, s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii) and – if appropriate – the relevant representative from Maritime Cook Islands so we can meet and discuss this question. s6(a)

We would be grateful for a meeting on Monday if possible. However, we are aware that this will be the first day back in the office for some, so we would be fine to meet on Tuesday also.

Let me know what would work best for you and your colleagues.

Meitaki ma'ata,

s9(2)(a)(

**Second Secretary, Political**

New Zealand High Commission Rarotonga | Te Aka Aorere  
PO Box 21, Avarua, Rarotonga, Cook Islands

s9(2)(a)

Es9(2)(g)(ii)

---

[www.mfat.govt.nz](http://www.mfat.govt.nz) | [www.safetravel.govt.nz](http://www.safetravel.govt.nz)



---

"The information contained in this email message is intended only for the addressee and is not necessarily the official view or communication of the Ministry. It may be legally privileged. If you are not the intended recipient you must not use, disclose, copy or distribute this message or the information in it as this may be unlawful. If you have received this message in error, please email or telephone the sender immediately."

Released under the Official Information Act



**From:** [STOCKHOLM](#)  
**To:** [EUR; ISED; s9\(2\)\(g\)\(ii\)](#) [s9\(2\)\(g\)\(ii\)](#) ; [RAROTONGA](#)  
**Cc:** [FM,Defence \(Seemail\); FM,DPMC \(FPA\) \(Seemail\); s6\(a\)](#)  
[CEO; DCE; DS EMA; DS IEG; APEC/POL; FM,P/S Defence \(Seemail\); FM,P/S MFA \(Seemail\); FM,P/S Trade \(Seemail\); s6\(a\)](#) [DS MLG; NAD; BEIJING; ARD; SORD; UNHC; Sanctions; SAPD; ...EUROPEAN POSIS; DEVELCO; ISLU; EUR; FM,Transport Ministry \(Seemail\); FM,MBIE Formal Messages \(Seemail\); WASHINGTON; OTTAWA; CANBERRA; DS PDG; PACPF; s9\(2\)\(g\)\(ii\) ABU DHABI; ...PACIFIC POSIS; PACREG](#)  
**Subject:** FORMAL MESSAGE: FINLAND: UNDERSEA CABLE DAMAGE: COOK ISLANDS LINK  
**Date:** Friday, 27 December 2024 9:37:34 am

---

[IN CONFIDENCE]

### Rāpopoto – Summary

The latest incident involving damage to undersea cables in the Baltic Sea appears to involve a Cook Islands registered vessel, Eagle S. s6(a)

It is unclear whether there will be any substantive asks for the Cook Islands or New Zealand at this stage.

### Hohenga – Action

Hei titiro māu – for information. Please advise by email to s9(2)(g)(ii) if you want any further reporting on this matter over the holiday period.

### Pūrongo – Report

s6(a), s6(b)(i)

2

s6(a), s6(b)(i)

3 Media reports indicated Finnish Border Guard patrol vessel Tulva escorted the tanker to waters 20 km off Porkkalanemi, a peninsula on the Gulf of Finland. Investigators note that based on preliminary investigation there is reason to believe the vessels anchors caused the

damage. The anchors are no longer in place on the vessel. According to Marine Traffic the vessel was en route from St Petersburg to Egypt. Lloyd's List believes the vessel is part of Russia's oil carrying shadow fleet and that it is the only ship owned by Caravella, a company based in the UAE.

4 The Estlink 2 connection was disrupted shortly after noon on Christmas Day. Fingrid, the power grid entity responsible for the damaged cable, says repairs could take up to seven months. In a statement the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment says there is no immediate threat to Finland's power system or prices. Fingrid is working with its Estonian counterpart on the matter. There are also reports that two fibre optic cables between Finland and Estonia (owned by Finnish operator Elisa) have been broken and a third (owned by China's Citic) has also been damaged.

#### **Tākupu – Comment**

5 If we hear anything further from the Finnish on this, we will report. s7(b)(1), s7(b)(ii)

It would be useful to have an update on New Zealand's efforts on that issue in due course.

MUTU - ENDS

Released under the Official Information Act

**From:** PACPF  
**To:** RAROTONGA; CANBERRA; LONDON; OTTAWA; WASHINGTON; STOCKHOLM  
**Cc:** PACPF; LGL/SAN; LGL; PACREG; PACMM; DS PDG; CEO; DCE; DS EMA; DS AAG; DS MLG; DS TEG; DEVECO; EUR; ISED; AMER; AUS; NAD; ECO; MEA; ARD; SAPD; SSEA; ...PACIFIC POSTS; MOSCOW; ABU DHABI; BEIJING; ANKARA; WARSAW; TEHRAN; SEOUL; FM.P/S MFA (Seemail); FM.P/S Trade (Seemail); FM.DPMC (FPA) (Seemail); s6(a) FM.DPMC (Seemail); FM.Defence (Seemail); s6(a) FM.Treasury (Seemail); s6(a) marsec@maritimenz.govt.nz; FM.Transport Ministry (Seemail); s6(a)  
**Subject:** FORMAL MESSAGE: COOK ISLANDS SHIPPING REGISTRY - TASKING FOR POSTS  
**Date:** Friday, 10 January 2025 4:21:19 pm  
**Attachments:** s6(a)  
s7(D)(I), s7(D)(II)  
s6(a), s7(D)(I), s7(D)(II)

[RESTRICTED]

### Rāpopoto – 'Akako'uko'u – Summary

- New Zealand's existing concerns about the Cook Islands shipping registry have increased following the 25 December incident in the Baltic Sea involving the Cook Islands-registered vessel *MT Eagle S*, which damaged subsea cables between Finland and Estonia.
- As the vessel is suspected of being part of the Russian 'shadow fleet', we seek clarity from the Cook Islands Government about its response to the incident given the seriousness of the issue and potential consequences.
- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

currently available data indicates an increase in the number of sanctioned vessels on its registry.

- We request RRO to demarche the relevant Cook Islands authorities to: reemphasise New Zealand's deep concern about the integrity of its shipping registry and seek assurance that all sanctioned vessels have been formally de-registered or that action is currently under way to do so. Post should also reiterate our offer to send experts to the Cook Islands to assist with a review of the registry or any vetting, auditing, and monitoring required.
- s6(a), s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

### Hohenga – Rave'anga – Action

**RRO:** Please demarche the relevant Cook Islands authorities s6(a), s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)  
s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

s7(c)(i)

**SKM:** Please update the Finnish authorities on New Zealand's actions regarding the *Eagle S* incident s6(a), s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

### Pūrongo – Tuatua 'Akakite – Report

1 On 25 December 2024, a Cook Islands-flagged vessel – the *MT Eagle S* – damaged four international power and communications cables in the Gulf of Finland after it sailed over them with its anchor lowered s6(a)

The ship is a crude oil tanker operated by Caravella LLC-FZ, a company registered in the United Arab Emirates, but is suspected to be part of the



Russian 'shadow fleet'. The 'shadow fleet' comprises ships engaged in illegal operations to circumvent sanctions, evade compliance with safety or environmental regulations, avoid insurance costs and/or engage in other illegal activities.

2 The *Eagle S* was marked as 'severe' in terms of non-compliance in a list compiled by New Zealand's National Maritime Coordination Centre (NMCC) that RRO provided to the Cook Islands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFAI) and Maritime Cook Islands (MCI) in November 2024 (see FM dated 15 November for more detail). MCI is a private company that operates the Cook Islands' shipping registry. It has stated it is providing full cooperation to the Finnish authorities regarding the *Eagle S* incident.

3 In November 2024, MCI provided MFAT with a sanctions compliance update that stated MCI, as the Administrator of the Cook Islands shipping registry and consistent with Cook Islands Government policy, gives effect to sanctions imposed by the EU/G7, EU, UK, and the US (OFAC). It also stated sanctioned vessels seeking to register will not be registered, any vessel registered and sanctioned will be de-registered, and managers and operators who are sanctioned will have their flagged vessels de-registered.

4 s7(a)(i), s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

gives MCI access to all the information it needs to act against non-compliant vessels, including de-registering sanctioned vessels. his

5 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

there are now additional vessels and one entity registered in the Cook Islands shipping registry that are on the OFAC sanctions list. If MCI s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii) it should have received OFAC notifications regarding the blacklisting of these vessels and, according to its processes, should have de-registered them.

6 MCI is also a member of Registry Information Sharing Compact (RISC), an association of registries (including Liberia, Panama, and Marshall Islands) that aims to share information, helping to limit 'flag-hopping'. However, data from the S&P MIRS database and Lloyd List Intelligence (LLI) Database shows indications of 'flag hopping' or the movement of 'shadow fleet' vessels between registries involving these three countries and the Cook Islands.

#### *Stepping up engagement with the Cook Islands*

7 The seriousness of the *Eagle S* incident, s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

heightens our concerns about the administration, oversight and integrity of the Cook Islands shipping registry and the Cook Islands' compliance with its international obligations. The Cook Islands has obligations as a member of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and has duties under Article 94 of UNCLOS as a Flag State. Accordingly, we consider it necessary to step up our engagement with the Cook Islands to reemphasise our strong concerns s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

8 As a self-governing country in free association with New Zealand, the Cook Islands manages, and is responsible for, its own shipping registry and is also responsible at international law to fulfil its obligations as a Flag State. However, as a Realm partner, we have a shared interest in the Cook Islands managing its shipping registry in a way that upholds international peace and security, our shared values, and does not undermine the Cook Islands (or by extension our own) international reputation. Our shared interests and our commitment to maintain shared values as Realm partners are captured in a number of our foundational relationship documents. For example, under our 2001 Joint Centenary Declaration, the Cook Islands committed to upholding a mutually acceptable standard of values in its laws and policies founded on the purpose and principles of the United Nations Charter, and for the rule of law.

9 Given our shared interest in this issue, New Zealand has engaged consistently, for many years, with the Cook Islands on improving its registry and raising issues of concern. s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)



s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

10 Increased engagement on this issue aligns with New Zealand's 28 November endorsement (alongside Australia) of the UK-led Call to Action against the 'shadow fleet' engaged in sanctions circumvention by carrying Russian oil and gas. New Zealand and likeminded sanctions regimes aim to hold Russia accountable for its breach of the UN Charter by invading Ukraine.

11 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

s7(2)(1)(iv)

12 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii) we request that RRO demarche the relevant Cook Islands authorities s6(d) at your earliest opportunity to:

1. reemphasise New Zealand's deep concern about the administration, oversight and resulting integrity of the Cook Islands shipping registry;
2. seek clarity about how the Cook Islands Government is responding to the *Eagle S* incident given the seriousness of the issue and potential consequences, as the vessel is suspected of being part of the Russian 'shadow fleet';
3. seek assurance that all sanctioned vessels have been formally de-registered or that action is currently under way to do so;
4. seek clarity and specifics about how MCI plans to ensure that any other high risk, non-compliant (but non-sanctioned) vessels on its registry become compliant; and
5. offer to send New Zealand experts to the Cook Islands to assist with a review of the registry or any vetting, auditing, and monitoring required.

s6(a), s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

13 s6(a), s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)  
s6(d)

14 s7(c)(i)

*Offer of support to Finland*

15 Although it does not have diplomatic relations with the Cook Islands, s6(a)

16 s6(a), s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

s6(d), s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

s6(d), s7(c)(i)

**Tākupu – Tā Mātou Manako – Comment**

17 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

18 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii), s7(c)(i)

19 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

20 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

21 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

**Mutu – Oti - End**

---

**From:** RAROTONGA <RRO@mfat.govt.nz>

**Sent:** Friday, November 15, 2024 4:36 PM

**To:** PACPF <PACPF@mfat.govt.nz>; LGL/SAN <DM-LGL/SAN@mfat.govt.nz>; PACREG <PACREG@mfat.govt.nz>

**Cc:** LGL <DM-LGL@mfat.govt.nz>; NAD <DM-NAD@mfat.govt.nz>; SSEA <DM-SSEA@mfat.govt.nz>; EUR <DM-EUR@mfat.govt.nz>; MEA <DM-MEA@mfat.govt.nz>; ISED <DM-ISED@mfat.govt.nz>; ECO <DM-ECO@mfat.govt.nz>; AMER <DM-AMER@mfat.govt.nz>; AUS <DM-AUS@mfat.govt.nz>; BEIJING <BEI@mfat.govt.nz>; WASHINGTON <WSH@mfat.govt.nz>; BANGKOK <BKK@mfat.govt.nz>; KUAIJA LUMPUR <KIU@mfat.govt.nz>; MOSCOW <MOS@mfat.govt.nz>; WARSAW <WSW@mfat.govt.nz>; ANKARA <ANK@mfat.govt.nz>; CANBERRA <CBA@mfat.govt.nz>; CAIRO <CAI@mfat.govt.nz>; LONDON <LON@mfat.govt.nz>; SAPD <DM-SAPD@mfat.govt.nz>; FM.Defence (Seemail) <fm.defence@nzdf.mil.nz>; s6(a)

FM.Treasury (Seemail) <merlin@treasury.govt.nz>; ARD <DM-ARD@mfat.govt.nz>; s6(a) DS EMA <DM-

DSEMA@mfat.govt.nz>; DS AAG <DM-DSAAG@mfat.govt.nz>; DS MLG <DM-DSMLG@mfat.govt.nz>; DS TEG <DM-DSTEG@mfat.govt.nz>; DCE <DCE@mfat.govt.nz>; CEO <DM-CEO@mfat.govt.nz>; ABU DHABI <ABD@mfat.govt.nz>; DS PDG <DSPDG@mfat.govt.nz>; marsec@maritimenz.govt.nz; FM.Transport Ministry (Seemail) <cables@transport.govt.nz>; s6(a)

**Subject:** FORMAL MESSAGE: COOK ISLANDS SHIPPING REGISTRY: s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

[RESTRICTED]

### **Rāpopoto – 'Akako'uko'u – Summary**

- Maritime Cook Islands has run the Cook Islands open shipping registry since it was privatised in 1995. Cook Islands flagged vessels account for 0.4% of the world's shipping tonnage, with 824 vessels in total, including approximately 600 yachts and 98 tankers.
- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

### **Hohenga – Rave'anga – Action**

For information

### **Pūrongo – Tuatua 'Akakite – Report**

HOM met with s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii) of Maritime Cook Islands (MCI) on Friday for an introductory call and to discuss the shipping registry and dark fleet.

2 The Cook Islands' shipping registry was privatised in 1995, and the management contract awarded to MCI. s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

The Cook Islands became a member of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) in 2008.

3 MCI told us are currently 824 ships in the Cook Islands' registry, of which about 600 are yachts and 98 are tankers. 0.4% of the world's shipping tonnage is Cook Islands flagged, compared to the Marshall Islands, Liberia and Panama, which together make up 50% of global tonnage. s9(2)(ba)(i)

s9(2)(ba)(i)

4 s9(2)(ba)(i)

5 s9(2)(ba)(i)

6 s9(2)(ba)(i)

s9(2)(ba)(i)

s9(2)(ba)(i)

7 HOM raised the question of the dark fleet, noting New Zealand's concern regarding Lloyd's List Intelligence (LLI) information which stated that 88% of Cook Islands flagged vessels were in the dark fleet. She also noted that New Zealand had been invited to join UK Prime Minister Starmer's Call to Action.

8 s9(2)(ba)(i)

9 s9(2)(ba)(i)

10 s9(2)(ba)(i)

11 s9(2)(ba)(i)

s9(2)(ba)(i)

12 s9(2)(ba)(i)

s9(2)(g)(i)

13 s9(2)(ba)(i)

14 s9(2)(ba)(i)

Released under the Official Information Act



15 s9(2)(ba)(i)

**Tākupu – Tā Mātou Manako – Comment**

16 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

17 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

18 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

19 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

20 Should New Zealand join PM Starmer's Call to Action, we will engage with MCI, the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration to officially inform them. We have already foreshadowed this possibility with MFAI and MCI.  
s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

**Mutu – Oti - End**

Released under the Official Information Act

Released under the Official Information Act

Released under the Official Information Act

Released under the Official Information Act

Released under the Official Information Act

Released under the Official Information Act

Released under the Official Information Act

Released under the Official Information Act



s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

---

### ***MT Eagle S Incident***

- New Zealand's existing concerns about reporting on the Cook Islands shipping registry containing vessels associated with the "shadow fleet" have heightened following the incident in the Baltic Sea involving the Cook Islands-registered vessel *MT Eagle S* on December 25, 2024, that resulted in damage to four international power and communications cables between Finland and Estonia.
- We understand that Maritime Cook Islands (MCI) has publicly confirmed it is providing full cooperation to the Finnish authorities and has launched a preliminary technical investigation, with an expanded inspection of the *Eagle S* scheduled to take place as soon as feasibly possible.

- s6(a), s7(c)(i)

- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii), s7(c)(i)

- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

### ***The 'Shadow Fleet'***

- We remain deeply concerned about Russia's and DPRK's deliberate and targeted use of 'shadow fleet' vessels to transport oil in contravention of the G7+ Oil Price Cap (to which New Zealand is a party) and like-minded partners sanctions regimes.
- As you will know, New Zealand and Australia (on 28 November) joined the international 'Call to Action: Shadow Fleet' (alongside others).
- 'Shadow fleet' vessels pose a range of security, legal, economic, environmental, and reputational risks to the countries that choose to bear the responsibilities of flagging them. In addition to their efforts to undermine sanctions, these vessels present a particular global threat to our environment as they are old, often poorly maintained, do not meet international standards for safe crewing and operation, and are often under-insured or uninsured.

### ***Concerns with the Cook Islands shipping registry***

- **We continue to have concerns about the risks associated with a significant proportion of tanker vessels on the Cook Islands shipping registry with associated 'shadow fleet' and sanctions compliance warnings, including vessels that have been associated to a series of activities linked to the 'shadow fleet'.**

*New Zealand's mutual interest as a Realm partner*

- We recognise that the Cook Islands independently manages its own shipping registry. However, as a Realm partner **New Zealand has a shared interest** in the Cook Islands undertaking this task in a way that upholds international peace and security and our shared values.
  - In the 2001 Joint Centenary Declaration, the Cook Islands committed to upholding a mutually acceptable standard of values in its laws and policies founded on the purpose and principles of the United Nations Charter, and for the rule of law. New Zealand and likeminded sanctions are a response to Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, which is a breach of the UN Charter. Allowing sanctioned vessels to be registered to the Cook Islands' shipping registry is inconsistent to our shared values and our mutual commitment to uphold the purpose and principles of the United Nations Charter.

*De-listing sanctioned vessels*

- We note from MCI's Sanctions Compliance update from November 2024 that, consistent with Cook Islands Government policy, MCI states that it gives effect to sanctions imposed by the EU/G7, EU, UK, and the US (OFAC), including de-registering sanctioned vessels and not registering sanctioned vessels.
- While we understand Maritime Cook Islands has recently delisted some vessels of concern, which is a welcome move, data as of 8 January 2025 from the S&P Maritime Risk and Intelligence database and Lloyd List Intelligence Database shows there are still several sanctioned vessels on the Cook Islands shipping registry.
- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

*Cleaning up its registry*

- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

- However, the *Eagle S* incident acutely highlights the risks associated with registering tanker vessels and the importance of flag states taking proactive measures, especially where compliance warnings already exist, to ensure vessels listed in their shipping registries are compliant with all international regulations and requirements.
- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)
- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)
- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)
- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)
- There is also data in the databases that shows a concerning number of vessels on the Cook Islands shipping registry do not have a listed or associated insurer.s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)
- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii) MCI is a member of Registry Information Sharing Compact (RISC) – an association of registries (including Liberia, Panama, and Marshall Islands) with “the common objective to enhance maritime compliance and security through information sharing” – the flag history of several Cook Islands-registered vessels indicates potential ‘flag hopping’  
s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)
- We have previously worked together on capability building regarding the shipping registry. **We have New Zealand experts available and able to assist the Cook Islands with administration, vetting, auditing, review, and monitoring of the Cook Islands shipping registry if you need additional capacity to take proactive steps.** We would be happy to take this forward with you.
- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)



***[If required] New Zealand's sanctions on Russia***

- We continue to condemn Russia's ongoing acts of aggression against Ukraine, and those who continue to provide assistance to Russia in its aggression.
- Sanctions prevent designated individuals from travelling to New Zealand, moving assets here, or using our financial system to circumvent sanctions.
- The sanctions also prevent New Zealand individuals and entities from having dealings with those who have been sanctioned and their assets.
- Our aim is to ensure that New Zealanders do not offer support to Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, whether inadvertently or otherwise.

Released under the Official Information Act

UNCLASSIFIED

s6(a), s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

Released under the Official Information Act

s6(a), s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

***For Finland only***

- New Zealand is deeply concerned about the *Eagle S* incident and supports Finland taking necessary steps to establish what happened.
  - While the Cook Islands is self-governing, conducts its own international relations and is responsible for its own shipping registry, New Zealand is keen to be of assistance where possible.
- s6(a), s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

Released under the Official Information Act

s6(a), s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

Released under the Official Information Act

**From:** [STOCKHOLM](#)  
**To:** [PACPF](#); [ISED](#); [EUR](#)  
**Cc:** [LGL/SAN](#); [LGL](#); [PACREG](#); [PACMM](#); [DS PDG](#); [CEO](#); [DCE](#); [DS EMA](#); [DS AAG](#); [DS MLG](#); [DS TEG](#); [DEVECO](#); [AMER](#); [AUS](#); [NAD](#); [ECO](#); [MEA](#); [ARD](#); [SAPD](#); [SSEA](#); ...[PACIFIC POSTS](#); [ABU DHABI](#); [BEIJING](#); [ANKARA](#); [TEHRAN](#); [SEOUL](#); [FM.P/S MFA \(Seemail\)](#); [FM.P/S Trade \(Seemail\)](#); [FM.DPMC \(FPA\) \(Seemail\)](#); [s6\(a\)](#)  
[FM.DPMC \(Seemail\)](#); [FM.Defence \(Seemail\)](#); [s6\(a\)](#)  
[HM.Treasury \(Seemail\)](#); [s6\(a\)](#) [marsec@maritimenz.govt.nz](#); [HM.Transport Ministry \(Seemail\)](#); [s6\(a\)](#) ...[EUROPEAN POSTS](#); [WASHINGTON](#); [OTTAWA](#)  
**Subject:** FORMAL MESSAGE: BALTIC SEA: UNDERSEA INFRASTRUCTURE: ANCHOR ME  
**Date:** Saturday, 11 January 2025 11:44:38 pm

---

[RESTRICTED]

### Rāpopoto – Summary

Finland's twin investigations into the damage of undersea infrastructure most likely by the Cook Islands registered vessel Eagle S are continuing, supported by two Cook Islands technical experts. s6(b)(i)

Finland and Estonia are hosting a summit of NATO Baltic states on 14 January in Helsinki. This will focus on the security of the Baltic Sea, measures to secure undersea infrastructure and deal with the threat of Russia's "shadow fleet". NATO has this week commenced an operation in the Baltic designed to protect critical infrastructure and deter potential sabotage. s6(a)

s6(a)

### Hohenga – Action

Hei titiro māu – for information.

### Pūrongo – Report

PACPF's FM of 10 January refers.

2 We spoke on 10 January with s6(a) about latest developments in the investigation into the damage of undersea infrastructure involving the Eagle S registered in the **Cook Islands**. s6(b)(i)

This was part of the ongoing work by the Finnish Police and by Finland's Transport and Communications Agency (Traficom). Both agencies had released press statements in recent days acknowledging Cook Islands cooperation (see <https://poliisi.fi/en/-/underwater-investigation-of-the-cable-ruptures-nearly-complete> and <https://www.traficom.fi/en/news/port-state-control-inspection-eagle-s-about-be-completed> both of which acknowledge Cook Islands cooperation). s6(b)(i)  
s6(a), s6(b)(i)



s6(a), s6(b)(i)

3

s6(a),  
s6(b)(i)

(see also [Forensic analysis of the anchor hoisted from Gulf of Finland started - Police. Anchor allegedly involved in cable ruptures on Christmas day recovered in Gulf of Finland - Police](#) ).

4

s6(a), s6(b)(i)

[Traficom completed port state control inspection of Eagle S. ship detained due to deficiencies | Traficom](#)

5 At the political level, Finland's President Stubb will host a **summit meeting of Baltic Sea NATO members in Helsinki** along with Estonia's Prime Minister. Attendees will include NATO Secretary General Rutte, the Prime Ministers of Denmark, Poland and Sweden, the Chancellor of Germany, Presidents of Latvia and Lithuania, and Executive Vice President of the European Commission Virkunnen. The focus of the summit on 14 January will be the security of the Baltic Sea, especially measures to secure undersea infrastructure. There will be a focus on strengthening NATO's presence in the Baltic and responding to the threat posed by the shadow fleet. s6(a)

6

s6(a), s6(b)(i)

7

s6(a), s6(b)(i)

8

s6(a), s6(b)(i)

s6(a), s6(b)(i)

9 There have been media reports of a **NATO deployment** commencing this week in the Baltic involving ships and aircraft that will patrol the sea until April. s6(a)

s6(a), s6(b)(i)

10 s6(a)

11 s6(a)

12 s6(a)

13 s6(a)

further in due course.

We will report

Released under the Official Information Act

**Tākupu – Comment**

14 s6(a)

Next week's summit in Helsinki may identify tools and avenues of thought for further work to mitigate the risks of sabotage and address the shadow fleet problem. We will report further following the summit.

MUTU – ENDS

Released under the Official Information Act

**From:** s9(2)(g)(ii)  
**To:** s9(2)(g)(ii)  
**Subject:** RE: [Due 9:30AM Mon 13 Jan] PDG Issues/Updates for OMC 13 January  
**Date:** Friday, 10 January 2025 4:20:06 pm  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

---

[RESTRICTED]

Hi: s9(2)(g)(ii)

Points from the Cooks for DS PDG

**Eagle S (Cook Islands shipping registry)**

The Eagle S incident on 25 December (where a Cook Islands flagged vessel, suspected to be part of Russia's 'shadow fleet', damaged subsea cables between Finland and Estonia) illustrates why New Zealand has been raising concerns about the integrity of the Cook Islands shipping registry (and the high number of flagged vessels associated with the 'shadow fleet') with Cook Islands authorities. Given the s9(2)(g)(i) response to date from the Cook Islands authorities, PACPF (in conjunction with LGL/SAN/EUR) have sent another tasking on Friday asking RRO to engage again with the Cook Islands authorities on this issue. s6(a), s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

Out of scope

Released under the Official Information Act

Out of scope

Released under the Official Information Act

Out of scope

Released under the Official Information Act

Out of scope

Released under the Official Information Act

Out of scope

Eagle S & Shadow Fleet

- Emphasise New Zealand's concern with the Cook Islands shipping registry. Note that while this is not a new issue s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii) the current role it appears to be playing in the 'shadow fleet' has heightened our concerns.
- Note our High Commission in Rarotonga will be demarching the relevant Cook Islands authorities again as soon as possible, s6(a) to reemphasise our concerns, seek assurances around how the Cook Islands plans to clean up its registry, and reiterate our offer of assistance.
- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)
- s6(a), s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)
- Background: The Cook Islands (as a self-governing state) manages, and is responsible for, its own shipping registry and for its international legal responsibilities as a flag state. However, given our shared security interests and shared values as Realm partners, New Zealand has a significant interest in how the Cook Islands operates its registry and will continue to engage actively on this issue.

s6(a), s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

Out of scope



Out of scope

Released under the Official Information Act

Out of scope

---

**From:** s9(2)(g)(ii)

**Sent:** Saturday, December 28, 2024 6:50 PM

**To:** MEDIA <media@mfat.govt.nz>; s9(2)(g)(ii)

s9(2)(g)(ii)

s9(2)(g)(ii)

**Cc:** MEDIA <media@mfat.govt.nz>; s9(2)(g)(ii)

s9(2)(g)(ii)

**Subject:** RE: Media Inquiry- Seized Cook Islands Registered Vessel

[UNCLASSIFIED]

Here is the MCI release just received from CI MEAL.

<https://maritimcookislands.com/press-release/>

Sent with BlackBerry Work

([www.blackberry.com](http://www.blackberry.com))

---

**From:** MEDIA <[media@mfat.govt.nz](mailto:media@mfat.govt.nz)>

**Date:** Friday, 27 Dec 2024 at 6:02 PM

**To:** s9(2)(g)(ii)

, MEDIA <[media@mfat.govt.nz](mailto:media@mfat.govt.nz)>, s9(2)(g)(ii)

s9(2)(g)(ii)

**Cc:** MEDIA <[media@mfat.govt.nz](mailto:media@mfat.govt.nz)>, s9(2)(g)(ii)

s9(2)(g)  
(ii)

**Subject:** RE: Media Inquiry- Seized Cook Islands Registered Vessel [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

[UNCLASSIFIED]

Kia ora all,

RNZ web story here [New Zealand not responsible for ship seized by Finland - MFAT | RNZ News](#)

It's also made the 5pm bulletin.

s9(2)(g)(ii)

**Senior Media Adviser**

Communications Division

New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade | Manatū Aorere

M s9(2)(a) | E s9(2)(g)(ii)

---

**From:** s9(2)(g)(ii)

**Sent:** Saturday, December 28, 2024 1:36 PM

**To:** s9(2)(g)(ii)

s9(2)(g)(ii)

MEDIA <[media@mfat.govt.nz](mailto:media@mfat.govt.nz)>;

s9(2)(g)(ii)

**Cc:** MEDIA <[media@mfat.govt.nz](mailto:media@mfat.govt.nz)>; s9(2)(g)(ii)

**Subject:** RE: Media Inquiry- Seized Cook Islands Registered Vessel

[UNCLASSIFIED]

Thanks all, and happy after-Xmas.

s9(2)(g)(ii) - as discussed. Lines as modified by s9(2)(g)(ii) look good to me too.

Ngā mihi nui

s9(2)(g)(ii)

Unit Manager, Te Rāwhiti o te Moana / PACPF - MFAT Manatū Aorere

s9(2)(a)

Sent with BlackBerry Work

---

**From:** s9(2)(g)(ii)

**Date:** Saturday, 28 Dec 2024 at 1:29 PM

**To:** MEDIA <[media@mfat.govt.nz](mailto:media@mfat.govt.nz)>, s9(2)(g)(ii)

s9(2)(g)(ii)

**Cc:** MEDIA <[media@mfat.govt.nz](mailto:media@mfat.govt.nz)>, s9(2)(g)(ii)

s9(2)(g)(ii)

**Subject:** RE: Media Inquiry- Seized Cook Islands Registered Vessel [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

[UNCLASSIFIED]

Thanks. Fine with me.

I am cc'ing RRO so that they can advise the CI Govt of this media enquiry.

Bringing in a few other colleagues.

s9(2)(g)(ii)

Sent with BlackBerry Work

([www.blackberry.com](http://www.blackberry.com))

---

**From:** MEDIA <[media@mfat.govt.nz](mailto:media@mfat.govt.nz)>

**Date:** Saturday, 28 Dec 2024 at 12:04 PM

**To:** s9(2)(g)(ii)

s9(2)(g)(ii)

**Cc:** MEDIA <[media@mfat.govt.nz](mailto:media@mfat.govt.nz)>

**Subject:** RE: Media Inquiry- Seized Cook Islands Registered Vessel [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

[UNCLASSIFIED]

Thanks s9(2)(g)(ii)

PACPF, grateful for your checking of below and let me know you're happy for this response to go.

Cheers

s9(2)(g)(ii)

Sent with BlackBerry Work

([www.blackberry.com](http://www.blackberry.com))

---

**From:** s9(2)(g)(ii)

**Date:** Saturday, 28 Dec 2024 at 12:00

**To:** MEDIA <[media@mfat.govt.nz](mailto:media@mfat.govt.nz)>, s9(2)(g)(ii)

**Cc:** MEDIA <[media@mfat.govt.nz](mailto:media@mfat.govt.nz)>

**Subject:** Re: Media Inquiry- Seized Cook Islands Registered Vessel

From MFAT please.

My suggestion is we modify only slightly the lines we'd previously agreed, as follows:

- We are aware of the potential involvement of a Cook Islands flagged vessel in this incident. Questions on that are a matter for the Cook Islands Government.
- The Cook Islands, not New Zealand, is responsible for the management of its shipping registry. Questions of liability flowing from misuse of that registry should equally be put to the Government of Cook Islands.
- New Zealand is concerned about and opposed to Russia's use of a shadow fleet of vessels to circumvent sanctions and support its war on Ukraine. We recently joined the UK led "Shadow Fleet" Call to Action, in order express these concerns.
- New Zealand has in recent months shared our concerns with the Cook Islands Government about the risk of its shipping registry being used to aid this shadow fleet - and the consequent damage this could cause to the Cook Islands' international reputation.

Best

s9(2)(g)(ii)

-----

s9(2)(g)(ii)

Senior Foreign Affairs Adviser  
Office of Rt Hon Winston Peters  
New Zealand Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Phone/WhatsApp: s9(2)(a)

---

**From:** MEDIA <[media@mfat.govt.nz](mailto:media@mfat.govt.nz)>

**Sent:** Saturday, December 28, 2024 11:50:38 AM

**To:** s9(2)(g)(ii)

s9(2)(g)(ii)

s9(2)(g)(ii)

**Cc:** MEDIA <[media@mfat.govt.nz](mailto:media@mfat.govt.nz)>

**Subject:** FW: Media Inquiry- Seized Cook Islands Registered Vessel

[UNCLASSIFIED]

Hi everyone,

See query below from RNZ on the Cook Islands flagged vessel.

s9(2)(g)(ii) - seeking advice on preference as to whether a response should come from OMFA or MFAT?

Will follow up shortly with a call to a couple of you.

s9(2)(g)(ii)



MFAT media after hours

Sent with BlackBerry Work  
([www.blackberry.com](http://www.blackberry.com))

---

**From:** Finn Blackwell s9(2)(a) [@rnz.co.nz](mailto:finn.blackwell@rnz.co.nz)  
**Date:** Saturday, 28 Dec 2024 at 11:09  
**To:** MEDIA <[media@mfat.govt.nz](mailto:media@mfat.govt.nz)>  
**Subject:** Media Inquiry- Seized Cook Islands Registered Vessel

Kia ora,

We ran a story from Reuters regarding a Russian vessel seized by Finnish authorities on suspicion of causing the outage of an undersea power cable connecting Finland and Estonia. As the ship is registered to the Cook Islands and New Zealand has constitutional responsibility with the nation, I would like to request a comment from MFAT on the following questions please:

- Are you aware of the incident involving the Cook Islands registered vessel, the Eagle S?
- What liability does New Zealand have in regard to this incident, given our relationship with the Cook Islands?
- What discussions are being had with Cook Islands officials over this incident? Do they include the possibility of New Zealand being liable for this incident?

Deadline for reply is 1.30pm today.

Ngā mihi,  
Finn

Finn Blackwell | Reporter

Radio New Zealand

s9(2)(a)



[rnz.co.nz](http://rnz.co.nz)

Emails sent by Radio New Zealand Limited (RNZ) or any related entity, including any

attachments, may be confidential, protected by copyright and/or subject to privilege. If you receive an email from RNZ in error, please inform the sender immediately, delete it from your system and do not use, copy or disclose any of the information in that email for any purpose. Emails to/from RNZ may undergo email filtering and virus scanning, including by third party contractors. However, RNZ does not guarantee that any email or any attachment is secure, error-free or free of viruses or other unwanted or unexpected inclusions. The views expressed in any non-business email are not necessarily the views of RNZ. [www.rnz.co.nz](http://www.rnz.co.nz)

---

"The information contained in this email message is intended only for the addressee and is not necessarily the official view or communication of the Ministry. It may be legally privileged. If you are not the intended recipient you must not use, disclose, copy or distribute this message or the information in it as this may be unlawful. If you have received this message in error, please email or telephone the sender immediately."

Released under the Official Information Act