



DEFENCE WOMEN TRAIN WITH SAS TO FORM FEMALE ENGAGEMENT TEAM

Twenty-three military women were assessed by 1 NZSAS Regt to join the first Female Engagement Team being built by the New Zealand Defence Force.

Candidates underwent a series of tough physical and mental assessments over three days to determine if they met the rigid criteria. "They were of an exceptionally high standard and all should be proud of their achievements across the assessment," says the Regiment's Commanding Officer. Eleven candidates finished selection with five selected to undergo the four month Female Engagement Team training this year.

Some of the candidates' thoughts on the selection were:

"It was awesome to be in such a big group of strong, inspirational women."

"It was a really positive experience to test myself to the extent of my capabilities."

"It was really hard, but I was really proud of myself for doing it."

"How will you know what you can achieve if you don't try it?"



Female Engagement Team type capabilities have been used by the NZDF's partner nations in theatres such as Afghanistan, Iraq and various African nations, and the establishment of the Female Engagement Team is intended to develop NZDF capability in this area. "These women will undertake specialised training in order to provide another toolset for commanders to support the local population in the challenging environments we find ourselves deployed in," said the 1 NZSAS Regt spokesperson. "They will be developed as Special Forces Enablers who will support NZDF deployed activities engaging with local women and children, provide advice to commanders on gender issues, and support interactions where gender may be a shaping factor."

The training they undergo will develop their capabilities to engage with the local people where they are deployed, identify gender issues within areas of operations, deepen and specialise their cultural and linguistic knowledge, and shoot, move and communicate to a sufficient standard to support working in tough environments.



"These women will become experts in this field and while this capability is being developed at 1 NZSAS Regt it is an NZDF capability and will be exported to NZDF in the medium term."

The women are expected to reach high physical standards because of the challenging environments they need to be prepared to work in, however they are not Special Forces Operators. "1 NZSAS Regt and NZDF as a whole recognise the unique contribution women make in operational settings in addition to their core soldiering skills and corps/trade specialisations".

"Selection is required because the women do not have the specific trade skills yet in this area. They were selected based on their psychological, physical and mental qualities to achieve the tasks and standards set for them. Women continue to be welcome to apply for SAS selection and Commando assessment in order to become operators at the Regiment."