

NEW ZEALAND (/NEWS/NATIONAL)

MFAT confirms former NZ soldier Kane Te Tai's death in Ukraine

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Kane Te Tai Photo: Supplied

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade has confirmed a New Zealander recently killed in Ukraine was Kane Te Tai.

The embassy in Warsaw is in contact with Ukrainian authorities to confirm further details.

Te Tai, who co-founded veteran support and advocacy group No Duff, is understood to have been killed while clearing a trench in the Vulhedar area of Ukraine (<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/486458/mother-of-kiwi-killed-in-ukraine-tried-to-stop-him-going-but-he-had-his-mind-made-up>).

Sources told RNZ he moved deeper into the trench, away from his team, when he was killed by Russian soldiers.

His team were forced to leave his body there, before Ukrainian marines went in and recovered him overnight.

On Wednesday (New Zealand time) it was believed his body was being transferred to Kyiv, the Ukrainian capital, then Poland, before making the journey home.

"We're pulling all the pieces together," said No Duff co-founder Aaron Wood.

"A number of volunteers and interested people from New Zealand, all the way through to Ukraine and in between, are coming together to make this happen."

It was highly likely they would be able to bring him home, Wood said, but there were challenges ahead.

Te Tai, a former Army soldier, travelled to Ukraine in April last year. His colleagues described him as well-known and deeply respected for his professionalism, skill, leadership and relentless sense of humour.

Last August he told RNZ he had fallen in love with the country, which was invaded by its larger neighbour early in 2022.

"I was sort of getting a bit bored of being at home... and coming into this conflict was just one of those things that selfishly I thought I could be close to the war without getting too entangled.

"But then that sort of changes... I've met so many people, I've been everywhere in this country and the place grows on you, the people grow on you, and their strength, and that's why I'm still here."

The Russian Wagner mercenary group put an \$11 million price tag on his head.

Te Tai's mother Ngairi told RNZ

(<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/486458/mother-of-kiwi-killed-in-ukraine-tried-to-stop-him-going-but-he-had-his-mind-made-up>), before Thursday's official confirmation of his death, that she tried to stop him going.

"We tried to stop him from going over but he had his mind made up."