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Defence Science and  
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## Pre-Deployment Handbook: Solomon Islands

*Paul Bennett, Kathy Radoslovich and Rebecca Karlsson*

**Joint and Operations Analysis Division  
Defence Science and Technology Organisation**

DSTO-GD-0814

### **ABSTRACT**

This Handbook provides information that will assist in understanding the complex environment that is the Solomon Islands. The research and analysis supports a range of contingencies that might see the Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel operating in the Solomon Islands in support of the Solomon Islands Government. These include bi-lateral and multi-lateral exercises, stabilisation and capacity building missions and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations.

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## Pre-Deployment Handbook: Solomon Islands

### Executive Summary

Australia and Solomon Islands (SLB) have a long, enduring and close relationship. The ADF continues to conduct regular bi-lateral and multi-lateral exercises in order to support a professional, capable and sustainable Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF). The skills and interoperability developed between the RSIPF and the ADF units enhance the RSIPF's border and maritime security capabilities and foster security and stability in the region.

This Handbook contains research and analysis on the Solomon Islands' history, geography, culture, society, government and internal stability as well as providing information on the nature of Australia's whole-of-government assistance to the country. The location of the Solomon Islands places it within the volcanic chain, known as the '*Pacific ring of fire*', that runs between Japan and New Zealand, making it prone to natural disasters. As a consequence, the ADF can expect to support the RSIPF in future HADR operations.

**The Handbook has been developed at the request of the Commander 1st Division and forms part of the material provided to all Australians prior to their deployment or posting to the country.**

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# Pre-Deployment Handbook

## Solomon Islands



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Defence:

- HQ 1st Division
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Updates, observations or feedback to maintain the utility, accuracy and relevance of this handbook are welcomed and can be emailed to [HQ1DIVAWB@DRN.MIL.AU](mailto:HQ1DIVAWB@DRN.MIL.AU)

**This guide is available electronically at:**

<http://teamweb/sites/1div/awc/Solomon%20Islands/Pre-Deployment%20Handbook.pdf>

# Foreword

Success on operations favours those who adapt fastest. Being an adaptive force means we must not only learn quickly, but then rapidly and comprehensively apply relevant lessons. The culture of a learning organisation is fundamental to our success as an Army – of being an Adaptive Army. The ADF has extensive experience and knowledge harnessed through operations within Australia and around the globe.

This handbook is a compilation of these practical, hard-learned lessons from our forces on the ground, and of rigorous academic studies by DSTO. It contains general knowledge about the environment, culture, history, people and combatants – essential information that everyone needs regardless of their role in the mission.

I recommend that you prepare yourself thoroughly by investing the time to read this handbook in detail, and be mentally prepared for the challenges of the operational environment that you are deploying into.

Remember: every soldier is a forward scout. Be the eyes and ears for the rest of the Army, report back so we can all learn from your unique perspective and experiences. Don't keep it to yourself.

I wish you every success on your mission.



**R. M. Burr**, DSC, AM, MVO

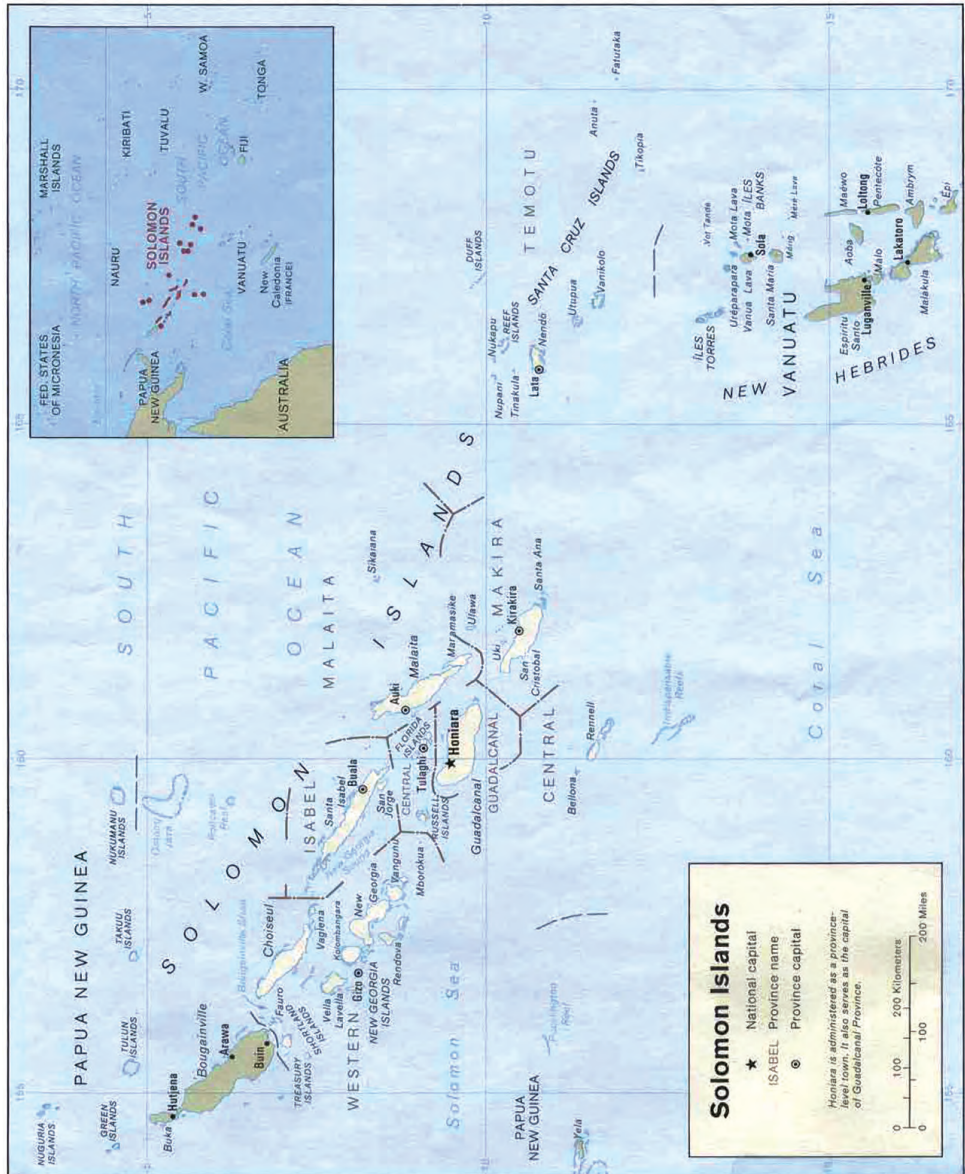
Major General

Commander 1st Division

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# Chapter 1

## Geography

## Geography

- Overview
- Area & Population
- Terrain
- Agriculture & Resources
- Climate
- Diseases & Health Risks
- Other Health Issues
- Rivers and Lakes
- Volcanoes and Natural Disasters
- Flora and Fauna
- Infrastructure
- Communications Networks

### OVERVIEW

**101** The Solomon Islands are located east of PNG, approximately 2000 km NNE of Australia and a three and a half hour flight from Brisbane. It consists of nearly one thousand islands and covers an area of 28 400 km<sup>2</sup> with a coastline of 5313 km. The capital, Honiara, is located on the island of Guadalcanal.

**102** The distance between the westernmost and easternmost islands is about 1500km. The western most group of islands of the Western Province are close to Bougainville, PNG. Bougainville itself is actually geographically part of the Solomon Islands archipelago. The eastern most group of islands of Temotu Province are situated north of Vanuatu and are especially isolated at more than 200km from the other islands.

**103** Administratively, the many islands are aggregated into nine Provinces: Western Province,

Choiseul Province, Isabel Province, Central Province, Guadalcanal Province, Rennell and Bellona Province (also known as Ulawa), Malaita Province, Makira Province (also known as Malaisa and Ulawa) and Temotu Province (also known as the Eastern Islands). Honiara is a separate administrative area.

### AREA & POPULATION

**104** Population data as provided in Table 1 is extracted from both the 1999 census and 2010 population estimates by the Solomon Islands National Statistics Office. Of special note is the dominance of Western, Guadalcanal, and Malaita Provinces in raw size and population figures. The figures show how the population has increased in the past decade for most of the provinces, especially the more urban ones.

**105** Population density varies greatly across the islands, and between rural and urban areas. Urbanisation is increasing as people from the rural areas move to cities in search of work, and the trend is geographically focused in the middle of the Solomon Islands land mass. The higher areas of population density are Honiara and the Central, Malaita, and Temotu Provinces. The data for Guadalcanal Province does not include the separately-administered Capital Territory of Honiara; if included, that province would have had a total population of 109 382 in 1999, when it was the second largest province. By 2010, the combined estimate for Guadalcanal and the Capital Territory is 158,215, making it the largest province.

### TERRAIN

**106** The islands in the archipelago are of two types: they are either of volcanic origin or are coral atolls. The six main islands in the group are volcanic, and so are mostly mountainous and blanketed with dense rain forests. Some of the volcanoes are also active. The highest point is generally considered to be Mount Makarakomburu (2310m) but this has been recently disputed with some experts postulating that Mount Popomanaseu (potentially 2332m) is the highest

PROVINCE	CAPITAL	AREA (KM2)	POPULATION (1999)	POPULATION (2010)
MALAITA	AUKI	4,225	121,229	137, 596
GUADALCANAL	HONIARA	5,336	59,611	93, 613,
WESTERN	GIZO	5,475	62,039	76, 649
HONIARA	HONIARA	22	48,513	64, 602
MAKIRA & ULAWA	KIRAKIRA	3,188	30,668	40, 419
CHOISEUL	TARO	3,837	19,787	26, 379
ISABEL	BUALA	4,136	20,198	26, 158
CENTRAL	TULAGI	615	21,337	26, 051
TEMOTU	LATA	865	18,706	21, 362
RENNEL & BELLONA	TIGOA	671	2,352	3,041
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>404,511</b>	<b>515, 870</b>

Table 1: Provinces listed by 2010 population estimate

Note: Honiara is considered an administrative district by itself, and its population is counted separately to that of Guadalcanal.



Buying food at the local market in Honiara.

point of the Solomon Islands. Both mountains are on Guadalcanal.

## AGRICULTURE & RESOURCES

**107 Agriculture.** It is assessed that of the 4.18% available agricultural land, only a fraction is used for subsistence farming, as most remains forest and woodlands. Agricultural produce

includes important cash crops like palm kernels, potatoes, coconuts, fruits, cocoa beans, vegetables and rice. Some of these have high export value. The other naturally available commodities of commercial significance are fish and timber.

**108 Resource Industries.** Mining is the chief primary industry, followed by copra making and oil-extraction from palms. While the land mass of the Solomon Islands is small, it is rich in undeveloped resources such as gold, lead, phosphates, zinc, bauxite and nickel.

**109 Forests & Eco-regions.** The Solomon Islands archipelago is part of two distinct terrestrial eco-regions. Most of the islands are part of the Solomon Islands rain forests eco-region, which also includes the islands of Bougainville and Buka in Papua New Guinea (PNG). These forests have come under pressure from forestry activities. The Santa Cruz Islands are part of the Vanuatu rain

forests eco-region, together with the neighbouring archipelago of Vanuatu. Soil quality in the Solomon Islands ranges from extremely rich volcanic (there are volcanoes with varying degrees of activity on some of the larger islands) to relatively infertile limestone. More than 230 varieties of orchids and other tropical flowers brighten the landscape.

**110 Fishing.** Solomon Islands forests were dangerously over exploited when, in 1998, world timber prices fell steeply and the GoSLB investigated fisheries as its next best prospect for further export and domestic economic expansion. Tuna exports and a fish cannery were established under bilateral arrangements with Japan (Solomon Taiyo Ltd) until the tensions of 2000. Renegotiation of fishing licences in November 2010 has led to a doubling of the income generated from fisheries for the Solomon Islands.

**111 Mining.** Even though the archipelago was named for the fabled gold mines of King Solomon, there have been insufficient high-quality mineral deposits to justify extensive mining investment. In 1999, production was just 3456kg of gold and 2138kg of silver. The Gold Ridge Mine at Mavu, Guadalcanal, was closed from mid-2000 until 2003. During the Tensions, because of political and ethnic violence, mineral production was limited to primitive panning and sluicing by individuals. The mine underwent upgrades and reopened again in 2010 under new management. The state of production at this mine is tied to stability, and its reopening can be interpreted as a positive step.

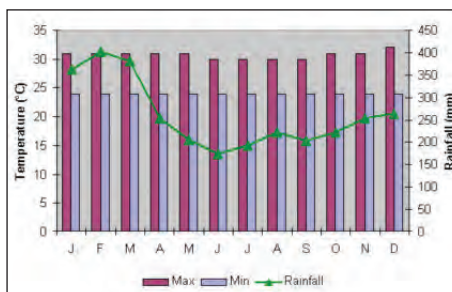


IMF members occupying the Gold Ridge mine in 2003.

Photo: Angela Wylie, The Age

## CLIMATE

**112** The climate is ocean-equatorial with high humidity and temperatures throughout the year. Temperatures are rarely extreme however, due to cooling winds blowing off the surrounding seas. Daytime temperatures are normally 25 to 32°C, falling to about 13 to 15°C at night. From April to October (the Dry Season), the Southeast Trade Winds blow, gusting at times up to 30 knots (55 km/h) or more. June through August are cooler months before the wet season from November to March when the northwest monsoon makes the climate warmer and wetter. Cyclones form in the Coral Sea and the area of the Solomon Islands, but they usually veer toward Vanuatu and New Caledonia or down the coast of Australia. The annual rainfall is about 3050mm.



## DISEASES & HEALTH RISKS

**113 Diseases.** The World Health Organisation (WHO) broadly assess that poor standards of general hygiene, and inadequate sanitation, make malaria and tuberculosis endemic throughout the Solomon Islands. The most prevalent disease reported is malaria. However, in 1999, 15 new cases of leprosy were reported by the WHO, which is advocating multidrug therapy and screening of people in high risk areas to counter the spread of this disease that was once believed to have been eradicated. You may also encounter other tropical diseases and skin conditions. The CTF and RAMSI partners may be involved with establishing or running clinics for the local community. This role is of great benefit and something to be proud of.



*ADF giving out medical supplies to locals.*

**114 Preventing Malaria.** It is easier to prevent Malaria and other mosquito-carried diseases (e.g. Ross River Fever, Dengue Fever, Encephalitis, Yellow Fever and Filariasis) than to treat them. Some have no cure. Follow these tips and other advice received to protect yourself.

- Wear appropriate clothing. This includes long sleeved shirts, long trousers and enclosed shoes, especially in the morning, at dusk and through the night when mosquitoes are at their worst. Permethrin impregnation of clothing should be used wherever possible.
- Use effective mosquito repellents on exposed skin at all times.
- Mosquito netting or suitable screening, preferably permethrin impregnated, should be used for sleeping accommodation.
- Remember to use your Malaria protection medication as directed. Missing only 2 or 3 doses can leave you exposed.

**115 Symptoms of Malaria.** These symptoms normally appear 10-15 days after being bitten. The symptoms may be mild and difficult to identify immediately as malaria, but need to be treated within 24 hours otherwise the disease may progress rapidly to its life-threatening phase. Symptoms include:

- Fever
- Shaking chills

- Headache
- Muscle Aches
- Tiredness
- Nausea
- Vomiting

Seek medical advice if you suffer from any of these symptoms.

**116 Food & Water Risks.** Gastro-intestinal infections are the most common illnesses. Proper food handling, drinking purified water, and maintaining good personal hygiene are key to prevention. Gastro-intestinal illnesses are mainly caused by bacterial contamination (85%) or viral contamination (5%). Other risks include toxins from uncooked or poorly prepared food, especially seafood.

**117 Health Advice.** Always:

- Drink bottled, boiled or purified water. Avoid ice unless you know it was prepared with purified water.
- Use Aquim before eating and after contact with locals or animals.
- Avoid raw or undercooked food, or food that has been left standing, as they are more likely to be contaminated.
- Be aware that locals will have different hygiene standards.

## OTHER HEALTH ISSUES

**118 Sunburn and Heat Illnesses.** The risk of sunburn and heat illness is high in the Solomon Islands, especially for those not used to the heat and humidity. Make sure you always wear sun protection and keep well hydrated. "Doxy" anti-malaria medications significantly increase the risk of sunburn.

**119 Infection.** Even small cuts and abrasions will require immediate attention to prevent major infections. They need to be properly managed and treated.

## RIVERS & LAKES

**120 Major Rivers.** The Solomon Islands has many fast-flowing and narrow rivers, three of which are well known from WWII battles on Guadalcanal: Lunga River, Matanikau River and Tenaru River.



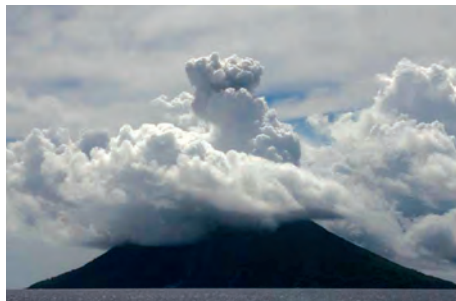
*Matanikau River. Photo: source unknown.*

**121 Lakes.** Major lakes or lagoons include Lake Ghughumbo, Lake Feirende, Lake Kolomateana, Lake Rano, Lolu Lagoon, and Mbumbule Lagoon in Western Province; Lake Korea in Malaita Province; Lee's Lake in Guadalcanal Province; Lake Narano, Lake Waipiapia, and Lake Wairafa in Makira Province; and Lake Te Nggano in Rennell and Bellona Province.

## VOLCANOES AND NATURAL DISASTERS

**122** The Solomon Islands are subject to earthquakes, volcanic activity and tidal waves. The Solomon Islands has four active and four dormant volcanoes. The most active volcano, Tinakula (Temotu Province), erupts approximately every hour. Kavachi, in Western Province, is a submarine volcano. The island of Savo, 35km NW of Honiara, is a cyclically active volcano.

**123 Earthquakes & Tsunami.** The Solomon Islands are situated on the "Ring of Fire", an arc of active earthquake and volcanic zones along the edge of colliding continental plates that frequently cause seismic activity. The Ring of Fire stretches around the Pacific Rim, where about 90% of the



*Tinakula Volcano. Photo: source unknown.*

world's earthquakes occur. The most devastating earthquake in recent Solomon Islands history occurred near Gizo Island (Western Province) in 2007 with a magnitude of 8.1 on the Richter Scale. This gives an indication of the potential magnitude of earthquakes, with the resulting tsunami causing damage, casualties, and widespread flooding in coastal regions. Earthquakes as recent as Jan 2010 have also occurred near Rendova Island (Western Province) with a 6.5 and 7.2 magnitude causing a 3m tsunami; destroying 200 homes and displacing 1000 of the 3600 population. Whilst no casualties were reported, nine aftershocks greater than 5.0 magnitude rocked the region subsequently affecting relief efforts.



*Children hunt for clothes in the aftermath of the 2007 tsunami that hit the Solomon Islands. William West, AFP.*

**124 Natural Disasters.** Other causes for preparation and potential aid response occur during the cyclone season (November to April) when flooding, landslides and disruptions to



services may occur. However, tropical storms and cyclones may occur in other months. The direction and strength of tropical cyclones can change with little warning. Solomon Island authorities provide advice of any impending natural disaster threat through local media, radio and television.

## FLORA AND FAUNA

**125** Dense rainforests cover about 90% of the islands, with extensive mangrove swamps and coconut palms along the coasts. The islands abound in reptiles (70 species), birds (163 species), and mammals (53 species), as well as insect life. There are over 230 varieties of orchids and other tropical flowers.



*Solomon Island Dragon Fly. Photo: source unknown.*

The 70 species of reptiles include crocodiles, frogs, lizards, skinks, snakes, toads and marine turtles. Several of the 20 species of snakes are poisonous, but as they are not common they are no serious threat. Crocodiles are a serious risk in coastal and estuarine areas. Funnel Web Spiders related to the Australian Funnel Web Spider can also be found. Blacktip Reef Sharks are common to the Pacific and are generally timid and skittish, seldom presenting as a danger to humans, unless roused by food.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

**126 Roads & Bridges.** There are few roads in the Solomon Islands, with 90% of these on Guadalcanal and Malaita. Paved roads are found only in and around Honiara. These roads, two-lane

and poorly marked, have many potholes and are not well lit at night. The remaining roads in the Solomon Islands are made of coral or gravel, or are just dirt tracks.

**127** Care must be taken when driving off roads to avoid trespassing on communal land. Non-sealed roads often become muddy after rain, making movement by vehicles other than 4WD difficult. In addition, most bridges will become impassable due to washout in the wet season (Nov - Mar).

**128** Standards of driving and vehicle maintenance are poor and care is needed when overtaking any local vehicles. Many Solomon Islanders chew betel nut and frequently open vehicle doors, including on the driver's side, when travelling at speed, in order to spit onto the road. Drivers should also be particularly careful when driving in towns, as the combination of poor pedestrian discipline and cars travelling at speed has resulted in a number of fatal accidents.

**129 Airfields.** The majority of airfields are operational and in fair to good condition. Airfields located outside of Honiara are only capable of light aircraft operations and provide an alternative to maritime access. Honiara International Airfield is the only airport to have both electronic and visual navigational facilities available. The majority of the runways in the Solomon Islands have had periodic maintenance and clearing to ensure that hazards and vegetation growth are minimised.



*Gizo Airfield, Solomon Islands. Photo: source unknown.*



**130** The maintenance of runways is generally conducted by local villagers/tribesmen who have been awarded the work by Solomon Islands Airlines. Pilots are advised to still conduct a check of the state of the runway before using the runways, as some contract disputes have been reported in regards to the maintenance of the runways. The GoSLB plans to upgrade both Munda airport, to cater for jet aircraft, and Seghe airport to serve the potential growth of tourism in the Western Province (New Georgia Islands).

**131 Ports.** There are three international ports within the Solomon Islands: Honiara, Gizo and Graciosa. These, along with local ports, support the export of timber, fish, copra, fertiliser and coconut.

## COMMUNICATIONS NETWORKS

**132 GSM (mobile phone) Services.** Currently four districts have limited GSM services and nine towns are able to access the GSM network (Honiara, Henderson (adjacent to the Airfield), Tetere, Gold Ridge, Tulagi, Gizo, Auki, Noro and Munda).

**133 Other Telephone Services.** Landline telephone services are difficult to deploy and maintain due to terrain and thick jungle canopy. Satellite based means are the most reliable with Western/Malaita Districts connecting to Guadalcanal District via satellite communications and the Central District via probable VHF links.

**134 Radio and TV Stations.** Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation (SIBC) has two national services, Radio Happy Isles and Wantok FM, and two regional stations, Radio Happy Lagoon and Radio Temotu, in Western and Tomotu Provinces. SIBC has the only TV services based in the Solomon Islands, although satellite TV stations can be received. There is also free-to-air access to ABC Asia Pacific (from Australia) and BBC World. The one commercial radio station is PAOA FM.

**135 Newspapers.** The one daily newspaper is the Solomon Star. Two weekly papers are also

produced: Solomons Voice and Solomon Times. Two monthly newspapers, the Agrikalsa Nius and the Citizen's Press, also circulate. The Solomon Star and Solomon Times are both available online.

**136** Radio is the most influential type of media in the Solomon Islands due to language differences and illiteracy; in a recent survey 38% of respondents listened to the radio as opposed to 6% who read the paper.



*Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation (SIBC).*

*Photo: source unknown.*



## Chapter 2

### History of the Conflict

## History of the Conflict

- Pre-Colonial History
- Colonial History
- Second World War
- Post War Years
- Independence
- The Tensions Period
- The Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI)
- 2006 Ethnic Tensions
- 2007 Earthquake/Tsunami
- 2010 Elections

### PRE-COLONIAL HISTORY

**201** It is believed that Papuan speaking settlers began to arrive in the Solomon Islands around 30,000 BC. Austronesian speakers arrived circa 4000 BC, bringing cultural elements such as the outrigger canoe. Between 1200 and 800 BC the ancestors of the Polynesians, the Lapita people, arrived from the Bismarck Archipelago.

### COLONIAL HISTORY

**202** The first recorded European to visit the islands was the Spanish navigator Álvaro de Mendaña de Neira, sailing from Peru in 1568. Three subsequent Spanish expeditions were unsuccessful and the Solomon Islands remained undisturbed by outsiders until 1767 when a British Navy expedition under Captain Philip Carteret discovered the Santa Cruz and Malaita Islands.

**203** Whaling boats and traders began to visit the archipelago during the nineteenth century, followed closely by missionaries in the mid-19th century who brought western education and

Christian religion. They made little progress at first because "blackbirding", the often brutal acquisition (more akin to slavery than recruitment) of labourers for the sugar plantations in Queensland and Fiji, led to a series of reprisals and massacres by Islanders against the newcomers.

**204** The excesses of blackbirding prompted the UK to declare The British Solomon Islands Protectorate over the southern Solomon Islands in June 1893. The British also controlled the eastern group of islands and Germany held control over most of the west. As the result of an Anglo-German Agreement of 1899, the British Protectorate was extended to all nine main island groups now part of the Solomon Islands, while Buka and Bougainville became part of German New Guinea (later incorporated into PNG).

**205** Traditional trade and social intercourse between the western Islands of Mono and Alu (the Shortlands) and the traditional societies in the south of Bougainville continued without hindrance. These connections continue to this day.

**206** Under the Protectorate, missionaries settled in the Solomon Islands in numbers, converting most of the population to Christianity. In the early 20th century, several UK and Australia firms began large-scale coconut planting, but economic growth was slow and the Islanders benefited little.

### SECOND WORLD WAR

**207** World War II was a significant turning point in Solomon Islands history. With the outbreak of WWII in the Pacific, most expatriate planters and traders were evacuated to Australia and most trade ceased. The sense of betrayal after being abandoned by their colonial "masta" left a legacy of doubt and distrust about the colonial regime. Some of the most intense fighting of WWII occurred in the Solomon Islands, while the Japanese occupation caused hardship and near starvation in some areas. The most significant of the Allied Forces' operations against the Japanese Imperial Forces was launched on 7 Aug 1942 with

simultaneous naval bombardments and amphibious landings on the Florida Islands at Tulagi and Red Beach on Guadalcanal Island.



*Guadalcanal Island.*

**208** The Battle of Guadalcanal became one of the most important, and bloody campaigns, fought in the Pacific War as the Allies began to repulse Japanese expansion. Of the approximately 36,000 Japanese soldiers on Guadalcanal, about 26,000 were killed or missing in action, 9,000 died of disease, and only 1000 were captured. The movie "the Thin Red Line" is based on the Battle of Guadalcanal.



*CAPT Martin Clemens, (Coastwatcher) with Islander Scouts, WWII. Photo: source unknown.*

**209** Solomon Islanders played a significant role in supporting the Allied campaigns. Australian

Coastwatchers were often based in the Solomon Islands, and were reliant on the courage and support of local communities for their survival. Coastwatchers also demonstrated great courage. Operating in remote locations, often on Japanese held islands, they provided early warning and intelligence on Japanese naval, army and aircraft movements during the campaign.

**210** An important lesson can be learnt from American interactions with the local population during World War II. American soldiers were well liked because they paid well for services provided, interacted positively with locals (e.g. sharing meals as friends), supported local communities and treated people of diverse backgrounds with greater equality than was previously seen. This shows that respect for the local population and equality of treatment are valuable in winning the support of local populations.

**211** World War II has direct bearing on the current crisis. During the war, significant numbers of Malaitans moved to Guadalcanal to work on American projects. After the war, they stayed on, encouraged by greater economic opportunities. This was a direct cause of the 1998 crisis, because local Guadalcanal residents still feel they lack compensation from Malaitans who they believe have stolen their land and taken their jobs. Honiara has a majority immigrant workforce, which exacerbates the problem.



*US Marine Corps fighters at Henderson Field, Guadalcanal 1943. Photo: source unknown.*

## POST WAR YEARS

**212** Immediately after WWII, the capital of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate was moved from Tulagi (Central Province) to Honiara on Guadalcanal to make the most of the infrastructure left there by departing US forces. In 1952 the UK High Commissioner for the Western Pacific moved from Fiji to Honiara and the post was combined with that of the Governor of the Solomon Islands. The airfield, (the cause of the fighting in 1942) known as Henderson Field, became the international airport for the Solomon Islands.



*American troops unloading supplies on the beach of Guadalcanal Island. Photo: source unknown.*

**213** Local councils were established in the 1950s as the islands stabilised from the aftermath of WWII and Malaitans began to express their will for self determination. At first this was through invoking kastom (traditional law) as a form of resistance in response to external government and the frustration over lack of development and inclusion into the political process. Maasina Ruru was a Malaitan movement protesting against colonial rule, and was a precursor to the militia organisations formed during the latter tensions.

## INDEPENDENCE

**214** A new Solomon Islands Constitution was established in 1970 and elections were held, although the Constitution was contested and

a new one was then created in 1974. In 1973 when the first world oil price shock occurred, the increased cost of running a Protectorate became apparent to British administrators so, following the independence of neighbouring PNG from Australia in 1975, the Solomon Islands gained self-rule in 1976 and full independence on 7 Jul 1978. The Solomon Islands remain part of the British Commonwealth with Queen Elizabeth as Head of State. The first Prime Minister was Sir Peter Kenilorea.



*The first Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, Peter Kenilorea. Photo: source unknown.*

**215** The country's first 20 years following independence were characterized by threats of secession, demands for federalism and riots. This largely reflects the effect of imposition of colonial rule and the subsequent grouping of some 900 islands into a nation, without consideration of the ethnic and geographic diversity of the country.

## THE TENSIONS PERIOD

**216** Commonly referred to as "the Tensions" or "the ethnic tension", the initial civil unrest was mainly characterised by fighting between the Isatabu Freedom Movement (IFM, also known as the Guadalcanal Revolutionary Army) and the Malaita Eagle Force (MEF, also known as the Marau Eagle Force). Although much of the conflict was between Guales (people from Guadalcanal) and Malaitans' some experts argue that the 'ethnic conflict' label is an oversimplification. There were a large range of non-ethnic issues that led to



this situation, which had not been addressed by successive governments. These include issues of land ownership, distribution of wealth and development across the islands, miss-use of compensation and corruption.



*IFM guerrillas. Photos: Ben Bohane.*



*MEF Commander Jimmy Rasta Lusibaea.*

**217 Conflict Outbreak.** In Dec 1998, IFM militants on the island of Guadalcanal commenced a campaign of intimidation and violence towards Malaitan settlers, although tensions had ebbed and flowed for some years before. Guadalcanal people resented the influence of settlers from other islands (i.e. non-traditional tribal land owners) and their occupation of land. The settlers, particularly from Malaita, were drawn to Honiara and the surrounding areas by economic opportunities.

**218** During the next year, up to 20,000 Malaitan settlers (many second generation) fled into Honiara or were repatriated to Malaita by the Red Cross. While Honiara is situated on Guadalcanal Island (home of the IFM), it is predominantly populated by Malaitans and Islanders from other provinces.

**219** In 1999, the MEF was established by Malaitans in response to the IFM threat. Violent clashes involving these rival militant groups destabilised the GoSLB and undermined national institutions and coherence. This situation was to persist for more than four years.

**220** The reformist government of Prime Minister Bartholomew Ulufa'alu, and its enforcement arm, the Royal Solomon Island Police Force (RSIPF), faced serious challenges in dealing with growing tensions and by mid-1999 the Guadalcanal militants had taken control of the countryside around Honiara forcing the government to declare a four month state of emergency on Guadalcanal. There were a number of attempts at reconciliation ceremonies, which were largely symbolic or unsuccessful. Ulufa'alu also requested assistance from Australia and New Zealand in 1999 but this was rejected. There are a number of reasons for Australia's reluctance to support such requests. First, GoAS maintained that intervention would not be supported within the Pacific region. Second, they were concerned that Australian taxpayers would not support it. Third, they were worried that intervention would require a long term strategy with an ill-defined exit point. Lastly, it was believed that foreigners did not have the answers to the Solomon Islands' internal issues.

**221** The Commonwealth Special Envoy, Sitiveni Rabuka, brokered the Honiara Peace Accord, signed by members of the National and Provincial Governments and the Opposition, but the Accord failed to resolve the conflict. Despite several subsequent efforts to negotiate a cease-fire, the conflict continued throughout 1999. A

Multinational Police Peace Monitoring Group, sponsored by the Commonwealth with assistance from Australia and New Zealand, and comprising police from Fiji and Vanuatu, arrived in Honiara in October 1999 but violent incidents and harassment continued to escalate.



*Sitiveni Rabuka. Photo: source unknown.*

**222 Renewed Conflict.** On 5 Jun 2000 MEF militants, together with disaffected police officers who had formed a para-military unit called the Joint Operations Force, seized control of key installations in Honiara and took Prime Minister Ulufa'alu hostage, demanding his resignation. MEF militia members felt that although he was a Malaitan, he was not doing enough to protect their interests. Ulufa'alu subsequently resigned on 13 Jun 2000, in exchange for his release. Australia responded by conducting OP PLUMBOB, an evacuation of Australian and New Zealand citizens.

**223** At a meeting of Parliament on 30 Jun 2000, Manasseh Sogavare, who had earlier been Finance Minister in Ulufa'alu's government but had subsequently joined the opposition, was elected as Prime Minister. However Sogavare's election was shrouded in controversy because six MPs, who were supporters of Sogavare's opponent, were unable to attend parliament for the crucial vote.

**224 Sogavare Government.** Following Sogavare's election, reinvigorated efforts were made, assisted by Australian and New Zealand, to



*Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare. Photo: source unknown.*

bring the militant groups to the negotiating table. Talks took place on board HMAS Tobruk in Jul 2000, concluding successfully with agreement to a ceasefire on 3 Aug 2000. These talks provided the momentum leading to the peace talks at the RAAF base in Townsville, between 9 and 16 Oct 2000. The Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) provided a framework for consolidating peace. It provided for a weapons and general amnesty, disarmament and demilitarisation, restructuring of the RSIPF, the decommissioning of the Joint Operations Force, and the compensation of individuals and proposed development of areas affected by the violence and displacement of people.

**225** The TPA was signed by the MEF, elements of the IFM, and GoSLB. This was closely followed by the Marau Peace agreement in Feb 2001, signed by the MEF, IFM, the Guadalcanal Provincial Government and GoSLB. However, a key Guale militant leader, Harold Keke, refused to sign the Agreement causing a split within the Guale groups. Subsequently, Guale signatories to the Agreement led by Andrew Te'e joined with the Malaitan-dominated police to reform the Joint Operations Force. During the next two years the conflict moved to the Weathercoast (Southern side) of Guadalcanal as the Joint Operations Force unsuccessfully attempted to capture Keke and his group. An indigenous Peace Monitoring Council (PMC) was charged with responsibility for

implementing the peace, with the assistance of an International Peace Monitoring Team (IPMT), established at the invitation of TPA signatories.



*Harold Keke. Photo: Ben Bohane.*



*Commander Andrew Te'e 2002. Photo: Ben Bohane.*

**226 2001 Elections.** New elections on 5 Dec 2001 returned a government with a mandate to redress the country's severe decline. It brought Sir Allan Kemakeza into the Prime Minister's chair with the support of his People's Alliance Party and also the Association of Independent Members. Donors, including Australia and New Zealand, provided substantial support to promote free and fair elections, particularly through support to the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission,

to the RSIPF, and through the provision of 90 international electoral observers from Australia, New Zealand, Pacific Islands Forum countries, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the UN, the EU, UK, US, Japan, and Taiwan. The elections proceeded peacefully and the large contingent of international observers concluded the elections were fair and reflected the will of the people of Solomon Islands. About two-thirds of sitting members were defeated, including the majority of ministers of the outgoing Sogavare Government.

**227 Kemakeza Government.** Prime Minister Kemakeza and his Cabinet made efforts in early 2002 to address law and order problems, to develop credible economic policies, and to include the wider community in discussions to address the major problems facing the Solomon Islands. Kemakeza recognized both the seriousness of the situation and that significant progress in addressing the law and order problems in Solomon Islands was a prerequisite for social and economic recovery. The IPMT departed Solomon Islands on 25 Jun 02, after agreement by GoSLB, GoAS, and GoNZ, that the IPMT had done all it could to assist the peace process. Australia continued to assist the Solomon Islands to address the law and order situation through working with the government and the RSIPF on a Law and Justice Sector Program aimed at strengthening the police, prison and legal services, assisting the work of the National Peace Council, financial support for the UNDP project for the Demobilization of Special Constables, and communications and logistics support for the Police through the DCP. The appointment of an expatriate Police Commissioner funded by the EU in late Jan 03 was aimed at strengthening police leadership and providing impetus to rebuilding the police force.

**228 Renewed Conflict.** Despite these efforts lawlessness prevailed, with frequent outbreaks of violence and widespread extortion. The integrity of the RSIPF was compromised as senior officers maintained links with criminal gangs. These problems presented significant obstacles to



recovery and from late 2002, the government's ongoing commitment to reform and fiscal discipline was increasingly undermined by extortion and other intimidation. The assassination of former Police Commissioner and National Peace Councillor Sir Fred Soaki in Auki on 10 Feb 2003, and the two day closure of commercial banks in Honiara in late May in response to threats, underscored the serious state of lawlessness in Solomon Islands.

**229** Law and order deteriorated further as the nature of the conflict shifted. There was continuing violence on the Weathercoast whilst militants and other criminal elements in Honiara increasingly turned their attention to crime and extortion. The Department of Finance would often be surrounded by armed men when cash was due to arrive. In Dec 02, Finance Minister Laurie Chan resigned after being forced at gunpoint to sign a cheque made out to the militants. Conflict also broke out in Western Province between locals and Malaitan settlers. Renegade members of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) were invited in as a "protection force" but they ended up causing as much trouble as they prevented. The prevailing atmosphere of lawlessness, widespread extortion and ineffective police prompted a formal request by the GoSLB for outside help. With the country bankrupt and the capital in chaos, the request was unanimously supported in Parliament.

## THE REGIONAL ASSISTANCE MISSION TO THE SOLOMON ISLANDS (RAMSI)

**230 A Call for Help.** In Apr 2003, Prime Minister Kemakeza wrote to the Australian Prime Minister, John Howard, requesting Australian assistance. Following consultations between the governments of the Solomon Islands, Australia and New Zealand, a package of strengthened assistance to support the GoSLB was proposed and unanimously endorsed by a meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF). The package was debated and unanimously endorsed by the Solomon Islands Parliament, commended by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan,

and supported by the Commonwealth's Ministerial Action Group and Secretary-General.



**231 Formation of RAMSI.** Australian and Pacific Islands police, military and civilian personnel arrived in the Solomon Islands on 24 Jul 2003, as part of the Australia-led Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI). It was a sizable international security contingent initially of 2200 police and troops, with representatives from 20 other Pacific nations. Its operational title was Operation HELPEM FREN, which in Pidgin English means 'Help a Friend'.



*Solomon Island children reading RAMSI brochures.*

*Photo: source unknown.*

**232 RAMSI Mandate.** The GoSLB, along with the countries of the Pacific region, through the PIF,

agreed on a mandate for RAMSI to address civil unrest and lawlessness, economic decline, and a dramatic drop in service delivery and government administrative standards. The key elements of the mandate are to restore civil order in Honiara and throughout the country, stabilise government finances and fight corruption, promote long-term economic recovery and revive business confidence, and rebuild the machinery of government.

**233.** Between the arrival of RAMSI and 2006 there were a number of incidents of unrest including the fatal shooting of AFP Protective Services Officer Adam Dunning in Dec 2004, which prompted several increases to the military and police numbers within RAMSI. The ADF also suffered a tragic fatality, the accidental death of Private Jamie Clark in 2005.

## 2006 ETHNIC TENSIONS

**234** On 5 Apr 2006, Solomon Islands held its first national elections since RAMSI's arrival. The peaceful elections were monitored by 44 international observers, including 10 from Australia. The observers judged that the election was conducted in an orderly and lawful manner. On 18 Apr 2006 former Deputy Prime Minister Snyder Rini was elected Prime Minister by the newly-constituted Parliament. The announcement of Rini as Prime Minister triggered an outbreak of civil unrest in Honiara. Allegations that the newly elected Prime Minister had used bribes from Chinese businessmen to buy the votes of members of Parliament led to mass rioting in the capital Honiara. A deep underlying resentment against the minority Chinese business community led to much of Honiara's Chinatown being destroyed. Tensions had also been increased by the belief that large sums of money were being exported to China. China sent chartered aircraft to evacuate hundreds of Chinese who fled to avoid the riots.

**235** Evacuation of Australian and UK citizens was on a much smaller scale. Further Australian, New Zealand, and Fijian police and troops were dispatched to try to quell the unrest. From 20 Apr 2006, RAMSI forces were rapidly bolstered by

a further 220 Australian troops. NZ also sent a further rifle company and 30 police to increase its RAMSI contribution to around 160 troops and 67 police.

**236** The unrest resulted in significant destruction of property, including the burning and looting of shops, hotels and vehicles. Police and military from Australia and other regional partners in RAMSI worked together with the RSIPF to restore calm in the capital. On 26 Apr 2006, Snyder Rini resigned as Prime Minister after only eight days in office and on 4 May 2006 Manasseh Sogavare was re-elected by members of the Solomon Islands Parliament and sworn in as Prime Minister.

## 2007 EARTHQUAKE/TSUNAMI

**237** On 2 Apr 2007 a massive earthquake measuring 8.1 on the Richter Scale occurred 40km off the island of Gizo in the Georgia Islands of Western Province, 345km from Honiara. The resulting tsunami, measuring between two and 10m high, struck western Solomon Islands and wiped out thirteen villages, killed 52 people, and left up to 7000 people homeless. The island of Ranongga in the New Georgia island group was lifted three meters by the earthquake, causing its beaches to shift outwards by up to 70m. Large coral reefs in the area are now largely above the surface.

**238 Response.** Australia provided over half a million dollars to NGOs based in Solomon Islands to feed, house and improve water supplies to affected communities. Also, RAMSI helicopters and fixed wing aircraft were used to survey the extent of damage and assess immediate needs, RAMSI medical teams were on stand-by to provide treatment for tsunami victims, and the disaster response expertise of the RAMSI police was made available. Overall Australia, through AusAID, provided AS\$5.7M for emergency relief and reconstruction assistance to the Solomon Islands. Many other nations around the world also provided significant amounts of aid.



*ADF, RAMSI police and local police at Honiara market.*

**239** The UN established eight hospitals and three camps for IDPs. UNICEF issued an appeal for \$US500 000 for both the Solomon Islands and PNG. Separately, the Red Cross issued an appeal for \$US800 000. The remoteness of some villages meant that aid did not reach them until several days after the tsunami occurred.

## 2010 ELECTIONS

**240** The GoSLB, with international electoral support, successfully conducted the 4 Aug 2010 elections, the second election since RAMSI's arrival. The UN Secretary General and Commonwealth of Nations commended the Solomon Islands on the peaceful conduct of the elections. Of the 50 seats, 25 new MPs and 25 former MPs were elected, with a new Prime Minister, Mr Danny Philip. Petitions have been lodged against some of the results which may take some time to resolve, with the potential to create further uncertainty and tension across the country.

**237** In Nov 10, the Solomon Islands Supreme Court convicted the incumbent Fisheries Minister, Mr Jimmy Lusibaea, of unlawful wounding and assault during an incident during the height of the 1999/2000 tensions, which resulted in minor disturbances throughout Honiara from Mr Lusibaea's supporters.



*Danny Philip waves after being voted new Solomon Islands Prime Minister in Honiara. Photo: source unknown.*



## Chapter 3

### Culture & Government

## CULTURE & GOVERNMENT

- Introduction
- Population
- Ethnicity & Language
- Religion, Divisions & Minorities
- Solomon Islands Public Holidays
- Literacy & Education
- Family, Village Life & Social Customs
- Wantok System
- Kastom
- Compensation
- Health & Diet
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- Kwaso and Drugs
- Persons of Interest (POI)
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- Politics & Political Stability
- The Legal and Justice System
- Cultural Advice
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### INTRODUCTION

**301** With a broad understanding of the history and varied geography of Solomon Islands, the aim of this chapter is to provide a basic understanding of the culture, society, and government.

While reading this chapter bear in mind the following points:

- Respect, tolerance, patience and the ability to laugh at yourself are key to working in a new cultural environment. You should approach each situation and each individual with humility and respect.
- As a visitor, YOU are the strange one. Keep an open mind as you explore Solomon Islands culture and meet local people.
- Do not undervalue local knowledge. Be aware that there are different ways of knowing and seeing the world. A local knows the place best.

### POPULATION – AGE, GROWTH, SOCIAL PRESSURES

**302** Traditional tribal dynamics are being pressured by population growth, an increasing youth bulge, life span, birth and death rates, limited and distributed health services, a starch based diet, urbanisation and employment pressures. These are creating a culture that is shifting from a family/tribal-centric view that values group over individual to a more ego-centric view that values individuals over group; however, family and tribal loyalties still underpin all aspects of Solomon Islands society.

**303** 39.5% of the population is under 14 and only 3.5% is over 65. 57% of the population is working age and the median age is 20.6 years old. Additionally the population growth rate of 2.4% with 1.02 males to females born, is very high. The birth rate is over twice that of Australia. (Australia has a rate of 1.2%) The life expectancy of 74 years (Australia is 82 years) is surprisingly very high when considering the basic Solomon Islands



*Children at the Gualcanal coast. Photo: David Jones.*

health services, the starch laden 'subsistence' diet (fishing and farming), and the exposure to extremes of nature. Each year the population shifts to the urban centres by 4%, creating pressure on employment and government provided civil services.

### ETHNICITY & LANGUAGE

**304 Ethnicity.** In 2006 the majority of the population of the Solomon Islands were ethnically Melanesian (94.5%). Polynesians (3%) and Micronesians (1.2%) are the two other major ethnicities, along with a few thousand of Chinese and European origin. Sub-regionally within Oceania, the Melanesian region extends across the populations from the Arafura Sea to PNG, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and New Caledonia. The Polynesian sub-region of Oceania extends from New Zealand north easterly to include Tonga, Samoa, Hawaii, and French Polynesia. Accordingly, the Eastern islands of the Solomon Islands, such as Ontong Java, Tikopia, Anuta, the Duff Islands and Sikaiana of Temotu Province, are of a Polynesian ethnicity. Culturally the (western) Polynesians are conditioned to high population density, have strong institutions of marriage and well-developed judicial, monetary and trading traditions. Melanesian societies (likely ancestors of the present-day Papuan-speaking people) and their customs differ marginally, emphasising communal

welfare over individualism, and the communal ownership and working of land.

**305** Islanders in the west and north (Choiseul, Western and Isabel Provinces) reflect some Papuan influence after generations of living and trading with each other. They are different in customs and traditions, as well as the more obvious signs of language, darker skin colour and Papuan facial features.

**306 Language.** Although English is the official language of the Solomon Islands, Pijin is spoken by the majority of people. There are also 74 distinct local languages, of which 70 are still "living languages", and numerous local dialects of these languages. These languages or dialects can even be limited to just one or a small group of islands.

### RELIGION, DIVISIONS & MINORITIES

**307** Religion is an extremely important part of Solomon Islands life. 97.1% of Solomon Islanders are Christian. Of the remaining 2.9%: 0.2% have no beliefs, 0.3% are unspecified, and 2.4% practice indigenous religious beliefs. Importantly, religion has been intertwined with previously held customs and beliefs so that traditional spirits are as influential as Christianity in shaping how people behave. According to the most recent reports, Islam in Solomon Islands (mainly in Malaita) is made up of approximately 350 Muslims, including members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. Engaging positively with the Church and attending religious services builds rapport with locals.

**308** The Anglican Church of the Province of Melanesia is the official name of the largest church in Solomon Islands, but it is usually shortened to the Anglican Church of Melanesia or ACOM, and within the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu the Church is often called simply Anglican. Today there are nearly 200,000 Anglicans out of an estimated 800,000 population across both Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. The Church was established by Bishop George Augustus Selwyn in 1849, and was initially headed by a Bishop of





*Sisters from the Teniru Womens Shelter.*

Melanesia. The Melanesian Mission adopted the language of the island of Mota in the Banks group of islands (Vanuatu) as the lingua franca of the church for almost 100 years. Of the eight dioceses, five are found in Solomon Islands; the Diocese of Central Melanesia (including Honiara), the Diocese of Central Solomons, the Diocese of Temotu, the Diocese of Malaita, and the Diocese of Ysabel.

**309** The South Seas Evangelical Church (SSEC) is an evangelical, Pentecostal church in the Solomon Islands. The SSEC is particularly popular on Malaita, the most populous island, where 47% of its members live. There are also smaller populations in Guadalcanal, Honiara, Makira, and other provinces. The organization was founded in 1886 as the "Queensland Kanaka Mission" (QKM) in Queensland, as an evangelical and non-denominational church targeting Kanakas (blackbirded laborers at the sugarcane plantations, mostly from the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu). The SSEC was established in 1964 under its current name, and became independent from the QKM in 1975. The SSEC is strict with regard to behaviour of its members, who are not permitted to drink alcohol, chew betel nuts or smoke. SSEC discourages performance of traditional forms of music, such as 'Are'are panpipe ensembles, because they are seen as related to the traditional ancestor worship, the spirits of which are considered "devils."

**310** The Seventh-day Adventist Church (commonly abbreviated SDA, or officially Adventist) is a Christian denomination which is distinguished by its observance of Saturday, the original seventh day of the Judeo-Christian week, as the Sabbath, and by its emphasis on the imminent second coming of Jesus Christ. As of May 2007, it was the twelfth-largest religious body in the world, and the sixth-largest highly international religious body.

**311 Islamic Faith.** The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community (also referred to as the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at or simply Jama'at Ahmadiyya) is the larger of two communities that arose from the Ahmadiyya movement founded in 1889 by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian. The original movement split into two factions soon after the death of the founder. The other branch is the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the founder of the Ahmadiyya movement, declared the motto of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is "Love for All, Hatred for None". Mr. Mubashir Martin Rasu, the current President, first arrived as a missionary in May 2001 during the ethnic tensions. The purpose of this visit was to look for some Ahmadis who had scattered throughout Honiara and other islands. The Mission Centre is at Kolale, West Kola Ridge in Honiara. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has many influential members and is established in other provinces including North and South Malaita, and Vella La Vella in the Western Province; and Nangu Village, Temotu Province. The Community is gaining more influence among the Melanesian, Polynesian and Micronesian peoples for its social support, sponsorship and project work throughout the Solomon Islands e.g. the East Rennell Foundation Trust has invited the Community to work together to build health services such as a community clinic with voluntary doctors.

**312 Pre-Christian Faith and Pagan Beliefs.** Many pre-Christian practices and beliefs have been passed verbally through generations. On the island of Funaafou and Laulasi, in the Lau Lagoon off the northeast coast of Malaita Island; indigenous religious tradition requires that the

heads of deceased chiefs and priests be collected in a sacred part of the island. These lagoon people also believe the spirits of their deceased live in the sharks around the island's waters. Guadalcanal and Malaita have people that follow traditional religions, such as Kwaio and 'Are'are on Malaita. There are also pagan villages in Fataleka, Baegu and Kwara'ae. On Guadalcanal on the southeast side of the Weathercoast there is a Moro Movement formed by ex-Roman Catholics who have returned to customary ways.

### SOLOMON ISLANDS PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

**313** Solomon Islands National holidays are as follows:

- New Year's Day
- Easter, including Good Friday, Holy Saturday, Easter Sunday, and Easter Monday
- Whit Monday: date varies
- Queen's Birthday: 10 June
- Independence Day: 7 July
- Christmas Day: 25 December
- National Day of Thanksgiving: 26 December

**314** Each province has its own Province Day (if a Province Day falls on a Sunday, the public holiday is on the following Monday), as follows in chronological order:

- February 25: Choiseul
- June 2: Isabel
- June 8: Temotu
- June 29: Central
- July 20: Rennell and Bellona
- August 1: Guadalcanal
- August 3: Makira-Ulawa
- August 15: Malaita
- December 7: Western

### LITERACY & EDUCATION

**315** Education in the Solomon Islands is not compulsory and even though it is free, only 60%

of school-age children have access to primary education. Many do not complete primary school (only about 30% for each gender). About 60% of the adult population is estimated to be literate. Higher education is provided by the Solomon Islands Teachers College (Honiara), the Honiara Technical Institute, and the University of the South Pacific Solomon Islands Center, also in Honiara.



*ADF talk with school children from Ria Sali Primary School.*

**316** Understandably the likelihood of reaching tertiary level (defined in population data as "greater than secondary level") is much greater among the wealthiest Solomon Islanders than those from poorer households. 9% of males from the wealthiest households have tertiary education. A similar pattern is observed for women, with 7% of females from the wealthiest households and just 0–2% of those from less wealthy households having attained a tertiary level of education.

**317** The GoSLB seeks to address these deficiencies through budget allocations to education. For instance Solomon Islands \$86.2m was allocated in 2003, which was almost doubled by 2007, and as a percentage of the GDP represents a 3.5% to 4.5% of GDP increase and subsequent recognition of the GoSLB priority on education. Low literacy levels will affect the way you interact with the local population. For example, newspapers and letters may not always be the best way to get a message across. Always



remember, illiteracy just reflects opportunities someone has had and not their potential to understand. Solomon Islands locals are capable of complex social organisation, despite widespread illiteracy.

## FAMILY, VILLAGE LIFE & SOCIAL CUSTOMS

**320** In modern Melanesia, international economic development (logging and mining) have caused the formerly classless Melanesian societies to become class-stratified, with politicians, public servants, and entrepreneurs constituting an emerging elite on the islands. Moreover, at least in the English-speaking areas, the elites increasingly share a common (Westernised and consumerist) culture and common political and economic interests that cut across cultural, linguistic, and national boundaries.



*Cultural dance. Photo: source unknown.*

**321** Among the new elite, cultural nationalist ideologies have tended to focus on traditional customs and “the Melanesian way.” Cultural revivalism has become a prominent theme. Art festivals, cultural centres, and ideologies of customs have cast in a more positive light the traditional cultural elements, such as ceremonial exchanges, dance and music, and oral traditions, that had long been suppressed by the more conservative and evangelistic forms of Christianity. The emphasis on traditional culture as a source

of identity finds expression in the perpetuation or revival of old systems of exchange. Exchange of shell armbands and necklaces continues, carried on by air travel and among politicians, professionals, and public servants, as well as by villagers in canoes. Members of the new elite still conspicuously pay bride price in shell valuables.

## WANTOK SYSTEM

**321** Within the Solomon Islands the most fundamental group is the extended family. The family in its current form extends to business interactions, and political alliances at all levels. The extended kinship group or *laen* is bound together by descent and can cover a wide area. Solomon Islands, like other countries in the region, have a ‘Wantok’ system of tribal relationships. The Wantok system stems from the word ‘one talk’, which could be loosely defined as those speaking the same language and is a marker of collective identity. Wantok relationships permeate every aspect of a Solomon Islanders’ life. It is a unique system of expressing shared social obligations and extending favours through non-kinship relationships. On the surface it is a rather egalitarian system. Within the villages, each person is entitled to land, food and a share in the community assets. They are also expected to accommodate and feed their wantoks until they can make more permanent arrangements. In essence it provides a sense of security and economic support. In practice, Wantok systems in urban areas have led to increased economic hardship for some, and are an underlying factor behind corruption at all levels of society.

**322** Understanding the Wantok system is vital to the mission. Wantok loyalties affect every aspect of the Solomon Islands life. Solomon Islands people, including those in government or law enforcement roles, will often feel their highest responsibility is to their Wantok. This may be at the expense of doing their job properly. New government structures have not been aligned to social values, resulting in endemic corruption.



Children in traditional dress. Photo: source unknown.

## KASTOM

**323** Kastom is the pijin derivative of “custom” and refers to the culture and tradition of people of Solomon Islands, which can vary markedly across communities. Kastom can be considered in the light of the interaction between church, state, historical, social and political factors. Kastom is the contemporary beliefs which have been born out of pre-contact traditions and are ideologies which empower traditions and practices. An alternative use of kastom is one of opposition originally to British rule. There is extensive variation across the Solomon Islands in the concept of kastom and how it is invoked. Notwithstanding, the Malaitans have employed Kastom as a political ideology to challenge government and authority. Due to the differences and similarities of Kastom it is an abstract concept and has been applied to traditional folk as well as urban (modern) people.



The traditional Solomon Island method of cooking is known as “motu.” Photo: source unknown.

## COMPENSATION

**324** Underpinning the functioning of Solomon Islands society and ideas of justice is the principle of compensation. Social harmony is highly valued, and where an individual or group violates kastom, injures or insults someone, or otherwise does wrong, compensation is demanded. Compensation is designed to restore balance, and is part of a process of reconciling the two parties. It generally involves an exchange of wealth, elaborate ceremony and a process of reconciliation. During the Tensions period the mechanisms for compensation were abused, with claims being made against the central government on behalf of entire islands and compensation being used as a cover for corruption. These issues aside, compensation is an important and often positive part of Solomon Island culture.

## HEALTH & DIET

**325** With such a dispersed population across over 900 islands, the provision of basic health, emergency and clinical health and health education services, is a strain on government resources in terms of budget, staffing and timeliness of response. This is also exacerbated by subsistence level farming and fishing which affects the basic dietary habits of most islanders.

**326 Health Resources.** Seven of the nine provinces have a public hospital: Guadalcanal Province is serviced by the National Referral Hospital, and Rennel/Bellona Province has no hospital. Additionally, there is one private hospital in the Western Province, one in Malaita Province and one in Choiseul Province. This gives a total of eight public and three private hospitals throughout the country. Area and rural health centres and nurse aide posts are well distributed throughout the provinces, based on the size and geographical distribution of their populations. At the end of 2005, a total of 89 doctors (19 doctors per 100,000 population), 52 dentists and 53 pharmacists (11 dentists and pharmacists per 100,000 population) were employed by the GoSLB. In terms of nurses,

a total of 620 nurses, including nurse aides, were employed by the Ministry of Health (130 nurses per 100,000 population).

**327** Nutritionally, traditional subsistence farming and fishing has exacerbated health risks. Health has been on the improve from 1970 when 61% of children under five who suffered from being malnourished, over or underweight, stunted or were wasting away. In 2006/07 the figure was 51.1%. However this still affects approximately 60,000 children.

## SECURITY

**328** Recently returned soldiers have said that they felt safe on this deployment, and that there was no imminent person or group that was threatening them. Force protection measures and postures need to be carefully balanced between the threat and mission. Commanders should use a common sense approach, as security measures when patrolling through traditionally peaceful villages during the day would be quite different to patrolling in a troubled area at night. At times of increased tension the corresponding increase in force protection levels caused the local population to withdraw from contact with the more aggressive appearing patrols.

## CRIME

**329** Crime (and the RSIPF's ability to respond to it in conjunction with the PPF) are significant in determining the stability of the Solomon islands and represents one of the main remaining security risks. Criminal activity is of particular concern in Honiara and sometimes involves violence, but exists in all communities. Crime has been directed against RSIPF and PPF members. Common types of criminal activities include petty theft (particularly at the King Geirge markets), rock throwing and riots. Nightclubs and bars are known for drunken assaults. House and vehicle break-ins occur, including against expatriates from other nations. Attacks on vehicles, such as stoning of vehicles and blocking of roads, occur periodically. There have also been incidents of more serious attacks

on vehicles, including hijacking, robbery and sexual assault, particularly at night. The incidence of crime increases during the Christmas period and around pay days, or wherever Kwaso (see below) is present. The presence of firearms in the community, particularly those in the hands of criminal elements, is a low but a continuing risk. Particular care needs to be taken when using automatic teller machines or visiting local markets. Notwithstanding, the levels of crime are comparable to any similar sized Australian city and may have stabilised to a point that could be considered 'normal' for the Solomon Islands. Corruption and organised crime are major concerns within Solomon Islands, but RAMSI has only a limited authority to act.



*Solomon Island police. Photo: source unknown.*

## KWASO AND DRUGS

**330** The presence of Kwaso (illegal distilled alcohol) is a major threat to the community, leading to drunken violence and other crime. There are also behavioural issues related to marijuana and betel nut use. Be aware that consumption of Kwaso will impact significantly on crowd behaviour.

## PERSONS OF INTEREST (POI)

**331** In the past, the CTF have supported the police during POI targeting operations by providing the cordon or security. In recent deployments there were only a few POI still at-large and they are difficult to identify due to dated photos.



Parliament building, Honiara. Photo: source unknown.

## PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM

**332** The Solomon Islands is a constitutional monarchy and has a parliamentary democracy system of government. Queen Elizabeth II is the Monarch and Head of State. She is represented by the Governor-General who is chosen by the Parliament and sits in office for up to five-year terms. There is a unicameral parliament (all members sit in one chamber) of 50 members, elected for four-year terms. However, Parliament may be dissolved by majority vote of its members before the completion of its term.

**333.** Representation in the Parliament is based on single-member constituencies. Following legislative elections (held at least every four years), the Prime Minister, who is either the leader of the majority party (although there has only been one majority party in the history of the Solomon Islands governments), or the leader of the majority coalition, is invited to form government. The Prime Minister then chooses the other members of the cabinet. Each ministry is headed by a cabinet member, who is assisted by a Permanent Secretary, a career public servant who directs the staff of the ministry.

**334** The Executive Branch of Government comprises the Head of State (represented by the Governor General), the Prime Minister and his Deputy, and the Solomon Islands Cabinet Members.

## POLITICS & POLITICAL STABILITY

**335** Solomon Islands politics are characterised by very fluid coalitions and alliances. The Solomon Islands has a multi-party system with numerous political parties. In most elections, no one party wins an absolute majority of seats and so usually parties must work with each other to form coalition governments. They are subject to frequent votes of no confidence, and government leadership and Cabinet changes are common. Many parties are established immediately prior to an election and most are very short-lived. Accordingly consistent application of policy in all areas of politics across the Provinces is very difficult to achieve.

## THE LEGAL AND JUSTICE SYSTEM

**336** The Solomon Islands legal system uses a hierarchy of the courts following the standard model of inferior (local) court, magistrate's court, superior (high) court, and an appeal court. Separate courts deal with customary land and minor local disputes. The Customary Land Appeal Court may receive appeals from the Local courts. Appeals from the Customary Land Appeal Court to the High Court are allowed on points of law only. The Solomon Islands suffers from a shortage of judges and other legal personnel. The RSIPF in conjunction with the PPF are rolling out a community policing model which places well respected community leaders in a position to deal with local grievances. Any serious acts are still dealt with by the RSIPF and the model is well received.

## CULTURAL ADVICE

**337** Working in a new cultural environment can sometimes be confusing and challenging. You will never know everything that you need to know before you deploy and will learn much while in country. However, with an open mind, patience, respect, humility, tolerance, and the ability to laugh at yourself, you will find engaging with a local population much easier. Remember, if in doubt, ask a local.

Below are some tips for interaction with Solomon Islands locals that should help make your stay easier. It is also a good idea to read up about the cultures of the people you will be working with from RAMSI.

### CULTURAL SENSITIVITIES INCLUDE:

#### 338 Language and communication

- It is arrogant to expect everyone to speak English. The Solomon Islands is a linguistically diverse country. English is only spoken by a very small number of people. Other languages are just as valid as English. As a visitor you are responsible for making yourself understood by locals.



*ADF talking to local.*

- Learn some simple Pijin phrases, such as hello and thank you. This will help break the ice in a new location. Keep a phrasebook handy. Don't be scared to try the local language. You will make mistakes, but practice makes perfect and people appreciate the effort. Be prepared to laugh at your mistakes.
- Treat your interpreter with respect, not as "hired help," and they will provide a better service. Involve them in planning where appropriate. They may have helpful information. However, always remember that your interpreter's loyalties may ultimately lie elsewhere.
- Remember, the tone of your voice is important. Avoid aggressive or frustrated tones, as

people can hear this even when they cannot understand your words.

- Gestures and body language, such as pointing, may be interpreted differently in different locations. However, a smile is universally understood.
- A powerful handshake will not impress, and may be seen as overly aggressive.
- Men should avoid making eye contact with married women as a sign of respect.

#### 339 Time, working with locals

- Solomon Islanders generally do not wear a watch or have clocks and consequently have a different approach to being 'on time'. When working with locals it is advisable to be patient. Do not expect anything to happen in a hurry. Work in 'Solly' time. Never show frustration when an appointment is not kept. This reflects poorly on you, is counter-productive and will lower your standing in the eyes of locals.
- Avoid aggressive or public confrontations with colleagues. Be careful how you discipline or correct people. Public confrontation or being told you are wrong in front of others can be extremely distressing and shameful. Think about the best way to approach this in the circumstances, and be sensitive to local customs. A private conversation may be more appropriate.
- Do not create or spread rumours, however, listening to rumours on the "coconut radio" can provide valuable insights into local activities and perceptions.
- Take special care to follow local customs relating to the interactions between men, women and children. Remember, your interactions may affect local people. Inappropriate (or perceived to be inappropriate) behaviour can harm your mission, leave you open to accusations and blackmail, may damage the reputation of yourself, your mission, and the local involved, and may result in (unseen to you) punishment of the local.



- Some Solomon Islanders expect material assistance or handouts from RAMSI. In these situations, it is best to emphasise the mission statement and your friendship.
- Some Solomon Islanders will try to sell things with prices hiked up for foreigners.



*Handshake.*

### 340 Government and politics

- Do not get involved in politics or seem to support or agree with a tribal/Wantok agenda. Some Solomon Islanders will want you to lobby for them. Stick to your mission statement and do not offer an opinion on political matters.
- While in country, you should always respect local laws and work alongside law enforcement officers and government institutions. Be aware that locals may be suspicious of their government or RSIPF personnel.
- Be prepared to give a thank you speech as you depart a village.

### 341 Justice

- Justice in the Solomon Islands is based around principles of compensation and local/traditional conflict resolution systems are favoured by the population.

- Locals expect foreigners and visitors to pay compensation for their wrongs. This can include breaches of local kastom, physical damages, personal or cultural insults, inappropriate behaviour, swearing and blasphemy. Refer all matters through the chain of command immediately and keep note of any damages you may have caused while on or off duty.
- You should not swear around locals, and you should never insult the Church (including in jokes).
- Men should not speak to local women unless local men are present, and at no stage should local women be touched. Doing otherwise may be perceived as inappropriate behaviour and can leave you open to claims of compensation or blackmail. Local women may be punished by their community for inappropriate behaviour.
- Foreigners, including Australians, have been accused of molesting children in the Solomon Islands. These allegations and consequential demands for 'compensation' can be unfounded and unwary people can leave themselves open to blackmail. Children should not be allowed to socialize frequently with the same soldiers, and should never be alone with just one soldier.



*ADF with children from AUKI.*

- Solomon Islands laws and penalties appear typically harsh by AUS standards. For example homosexual acts (by either sex) are illegal and penalties include jail sentences.

- It is illegal to import or possess pornographic material.
- You are expected to abide by local laws and customs, even if they seem strange or harsh to you.

### 342 Community structure

- People with higher social positions may be noticeable by how they dress, the cars they drive, and where they live.
- When entering a village it is best to stop a respectful distance and then request a meeting with the chief to ask permission to enter or transit. Follow the chain of command when engaging with a community and speak to the chief first. The chief speaks for the village.
- Tribe does not mean primitive. Tribal cultures are extremely complex and often embrace modern technology and ideas.
- Members of tribal communities often identify strongly as a member of their tribe, rather than as a citizen of their country. Tribal loyalties are strong. Members may feel obliged to support other tribal members financially, help them get jobs, or help protect them from law enforcement/military personnel.
- Looking at a national news website such as the Solomon Star may provide examples of hot political topics and key individuals.

### 343 Interpersonal Issues

- Children everywhere love fun and games. In appropriate situations (e.g. while your commander is meeting with the village chief on arrival in a village), an impromptu game of soccer can be a good way to break barriers and build rapport. However, do not let children hang around you by yourself. When preparing for a patrol it is advisable to include a piece of sports equipment that can easily be used for a 5-10 minute game.
- If you suspect a child or adult is being abused, you should refer the issue through the chain of command.

- Different hygiene standards are not a mark of inferiority. You should treat everyone with respect and dignity regardless of their appearance. A dirty appearance does not equate to criminality.
- Conservative standards of dress are the norm in the Solomon Islands and care should be taken not to offend. Swimwear is only acceptable while on beaches frequented by foreigners, and not while walking in town.
- Solomon Islanders respond well to questions/conversations about their families and will be interested to learn of yours. Avoid issues of money and giving the impression Australia is superior.
- If you play a guitar, take it along. The locals love singing and your talents will be "gold dust" when interacting with them while on a patrol.

### 344 Miscellaneous

- You'll be operating in one of the most hotly contested World War II battlefields on earth. Read up on it and consider watching "the Thin Red Line."



*Playing soccer with children from Ria Sali Primary School.*



## Chapter 4

### **The Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI)**



## THE REGIONAL ASSISTANCE MISSION TO THE SOLOMON ISLANDS (RAMSI)

- Australian Whole of Government (WoG) Approach
- Australian Agencies
- The Role of RAMSI
- RAMSI Structure
- CTF 635

### AUSTRALIAN WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT (WoG) APPROACH

**401** In order for multiple Australian Government departments and agencies to engage effectively in complex environments on the international arena, GoAUS uses a comprehensive WoG approach to coordinate and synchronise its actions. The GoAUS bilateral (government to government) approach is integrated across multiple departments (DFAT, AusAID, AFP, Finance, Treasury, Electoral Commission, Customs and Attorney General as well as the ADF). In 2010–11, the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) will provide an estimated \$A50.9 million in aid to Solomon Islands under its bilateral program. Other Australian assistance provided through RAMSI, AusAID's regional and global programs and other Australia Government agencies, such as the Australian Federal Police, Treasury and Customs, brings total estimated expenditure in 2010-11 to \$A225.6 million.

### AUSTRALIAN AGENCIES

**402 DFAT.** The role of DFAT, as the lead department, is the coordinated engagement and communications between AUS and Solomon Islands. Within its portfolio, DFAT encompasses many agencies such as AusAID, Austrade, ASIS and others and is responsible for overall coordination of Australian engagement.



*Three Pillars of RAMSI WoG approach cartoon.*

**403 AusAID.** AusAID cooperates with a range of GoAUS departments and agencies in delivering the development aid program. Nine government departments and agencies are involved in supporting Australian efforts to improve development outcomes in the Solomon Islands. Areas of aid funding include education, health, water and sanitation, roads and bridges, gender equality, workforce up-skilling, and public sector reform.

**404 Austrade.** The Australian Trade Commission (Austrade) is GoAUS's trade and investment development agency. It helps Australian businesses to succeed in international trade and foreign investment and supports up to 700 Australian citizens operating businesses in Solomon Islands. With Austrade and DFAT providing the AUS government assistance and legal guidance for trade, non-profit organisations such as the Australia Pacific Islands Business Council (APIBC) represent Australian business interests in the Pacific formally to the Australian government. The APIBC goals are to advance the interests of Australian business in the Pacific Island Forum (PIF) economies and Pacific

islands' business with interests in Australia by increasing bilateral trade and investment between Australia and the region; encouraging the further development and expansion of the economies of the PIF; representing Australian business interests to the PIF governments; and providing a network of business people with shared interests in the PIF economies.

**405 AFP.** The AFP leads, and provides officers to, the Participating Police Force (PPF) within RAMSI. PPF officers and technical specialists act as advisors and trainers to the RSIPF. During 2009–10 a significant shift in operational planning allowed the RSIPF leadership group to take back responsibility for planning operations. A positive sign is the PPF are moving away from the front line policing role to capacity building within the RSIPF, allowing the RSIPF to increase their primacy in the security domain.



*Former PPF Commander meets with Harold Keke.*

*Photo: AAP/AFP.*

## THE ROLE OF RAMSI

**406** In 2003 the GoSLB and countries of the Pacific Region, through the PIF, agreed on a mandate for RAMSI to address civil unrest and lawlessness, economic decline, and a dramatic drop in service delivery and government administrative standards. The key elements of the mandate are to restore civil order in Honiara and throughout the country, stabilise government finances and fight corruption, promote long-term economic recovery and revive business confidence,

and rebuild the machinery of government. RAMSI's regional nature is its core underlying strength. Every PIF country participates in RAMSI and the mission benefits from the diverse cultures and experience of the 15 contributing members.

### **407 RAMSI Partnership Framework.**

RAMSI executes its mandate through the RAMSI Partnership Framework:

- **Law & Justice:**
  - RSIPF
  - SI Fire Service
  - Correctional Services of SI
  - Law and Justice
  - Border Security
- **Economic Governance and Growth:**
  - Public Finance
  - Infrastructure
  - Policy Development and Capacity Building
  - Economic Management
- **Machinery of Government**
  - Office of PM and Cabinet
  - Infrastructure
  - Public Service
  - Institutions of Integrity
  - Electoral Commission
  - National Parliament
  - Provincial Government
  - Women in Government
- **Cross-cutting Issues**
  - Capacity Development
  - Anti-Corruption
  - Advancing Gender Equality

**408** A GoSLB/RAMSI Performance Oversight Group of internal and external experts is responsible for reporting progress against these objectives informally every six months and formally at the conclusion of each calendar year to GoSolomon Islands and RAMSI. These reports form the basis of performance reporting to the PIF Ministerial Standing Committee and PIF Leaders.



*RAMSI special co-ordinator James Batley receives a gift.*

*Photo: David Jones.*

## RAMSI STRUCTURE

**409** RAMSI is led by the Special Coordinator of RAMSI, who is supported by a Deputy Special Coordinator and Assistant Special Coordinator. These three senior officers are appointed by the governments of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands Forum respectively. Together with the Commander of the PPF, the Commander of the CTF and the Development Coordinator, these officials are RAMSI's senior executive group.

**410** **Special Coordinator.** Currently Mr Nicholas Copper from Australia (since Mar 2011), he is responsible for the overall coordination and strategic direction of RAMSI's activities in Solomon Islands.

**411** **Deputy Special Coordinator.** Currently Ms Mary Thurston from NZ (since Mar 2011), she is responsible for civilian security and the RAMSI Partnership Framework.

**412** **Assistant Special Coordinator.** Currently Mr Mataiasi Lomaloma from Fiji (since Jul 2005), he is responsible for peace building and reconciliation.

**413** **Commander of Participating Police Force.** Currently Commander Wayne Buchhorn from AUS (since Jun 2009), he is responsible for the PPF, supporting and assisting the RSIPF to uphold law and order within Solomon Islands, and as part of his role he serves as the Deputy Commissioner of the RSIPF.

**414** **Development Coordinator.** Currently Ms Jane Lake from Australia (since Aug 2010), she oversees RAMSI's three civilian development programs: the Law & Justice program, the Machinery of Government program, and the Economic Governance program. Her focus is on ensuring RAMSI's aid and development contributions are delivered with strong strategic direction, and are consistent with the priorities of the GoSolomon Islands.

**415** **Commander CTF 635.** Currently LTCOL Paul Landford from Australia (since August 2010), he is commander of the RAMSI military contingent that includes troops from Australia, NZ, PNG, and Tonga.

## CTF 635

**416** The military numbers within RAMSI have varied based on the degree of stability or in response to natural disasters. The military component is led by the ADF and current force strength is 160, includes 80 from the ADF. The CTF includes a Multinational Headquarters, one platoon from the ADF, one platoon from the NZDF, and one platoon from Pacific Island nations (PNG or Tongan).

The CTF's main function is to provide the Tier 4 response to support the RSIPF and PPF to maintain a stable security environment. It is important to remember that the security environment is one of a policing nature (law & order) therefore the PPF have the lead role.

## Further Reading

### RECOMMENDED BOOK READING

- Fraenkel, J. (2004) *The Manipulation of Custom: from Uprising to Intervention in the Solomon Islands*, Pandanus Books, Sydney.
- Moore, C. (2004) *Happy Isles in Crisis: the Historical Causes for a Failing State in Solomon Islands, 1998–2004*, Asia Pacific Press, Canberra.

### RECOMMENDED ARTICLES AND MAGAZINES

- [http://rspas.anu.edu.au/papers/melanesia/working\\_papers/tarcisiusworkingpaper.htm](http://rspas.anu.edu.au/papers/melanesia/working_papers/tarcisiusworkingpaper.htm)
- <http://www.pacificpublications.biz/>
- Dinnen (2002), 'Winners and losers: politics and disorder in the Solomon Islands 2000-2002', *The Journal of Pacific History*, Vol.37, No.3, pp. 285–98.
- [http://rspas.anu.edu.au/papers/melanesia/conference\\_papers/2001/01\\_Solomons\\_Dinnen\\_Intro.pdf](http://rspas.anu.edu.au/papers/melanesia/conference_papers/2001/01_Solomons_Dinnen_Intro.pdf)
- Kabutaulaka, T (2001) *Beyond ethnicity: the political economy of the Guadalacanal crisis in Solomon Islands*, SSGM Working Paper 01/1.

### AGREEMENTS & REPORTS

- *Inquiry into the Facilitation of International Assistance Notice 2003 and RAMSI intervention*

*SLB Committee Report No 1: Nov 2009.*

Available from: <http://www.parliament.gov.sb/index.php?q=node/440>

- *Framework, Australia – Solomon Islands Partnership For Development dated 27 Jan 09 and SIG-RAMSI Partnership Framework dated 15 May 2009.*  
Available from <http://www.ramsi.org/about/partnership-framework.html> and <http://www.ausaid.gov.au/country/partnership/solomon.cfm#solomon>
- *Commission of Inquiry into the 18th April 2006 Honiara Civil Unrest*, dated 31 Mar 09.  
Available from <http://www.parliament.gov.sb/>

### OPEN SOURCE INTERNET SITES

#### General

- <https://www.cia.gov>
- <http://www.britannica.com>

#### SLB Government & Other SLB Sites

- <http://www.parliament.gov.sb>
- <http://www.pmc.gov.sb>
- <http://www.commerce.gov.sb>

#### International Agency Sites

- <http://www.ramsi.org>
- <http://www.forumsec.org.fj>

**AUS Government & Industry**

- [http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/solomon\\_islands](http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/solomon_islands)
- <http://www.usaid.gov/country/partnership/solomon.cfm>
- <http://www.afp.gov.au/policing/international-deployment-group/deployments.aspx#RAMSI>
- <http://www.defence.gov.au/op/solomonislands/index.htm>
- <http://www.austrade.gov.au>

**News Websites**

- <http://www.solomonstarnews.com>
- <http://www.solomontimes.com>
- <http://www.sibconline.com.sb>

**Travel Advice**

- [http://www.smarttraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/Solomon\\_Islands](http://www.smarttraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/Solomon_Islands)
- <http://www.solomonislands.cc>
- <http://www.visitsolomons.com.sb>
- [http://www.travellerspoint.com/guide/Solomon\\_Islands](http://www.travellerspoint.com/guide/Solomon_Islands)
- <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/solomon-islands>





New Georgia.



*Santa Isabel.*



*Choiseul.*





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