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A member of the Australian Navy, left, helps a Solomon Islands police officer load relief supplies for the tsunami hit region of Gizo onto a ship in Honiara, the Solomons Islands, on Monday

Warning offer turned down

FIJI's mobile phone company Vodafone Fiji offered its assistance to send out SMS messages to its customers warning of a possible tsunami but was told by a government official not to bother.

Vodafone Fiji Value Added Services product manager Winston Penjueli said when the early warning came out on Monday, he called Mineral Resources Department Mineral Development director Ifereimi Dau to offer their services in sending out a broadcast to the whole 290,000 customers in Fiji, free of charge as a community service.

"He (Mr Dau) said they were still monitoring it but didn't feel there was a need," Mr Penjueli said.

"He knew it wouldn't affect us at all."

"He said not to send any now but they were still monitoring it and it wasn't a threat."

He said Mr Dau said he did not want to cause panic.

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Soldier faces death probe

POLICE have identified and hope to question a soldier this week over the death in military custody of Tailevu villager, Nimilote Verebasaga, in January.

Verebasaga died hours after being taken by armed troops from his home in Nakelo.

Acting Police Commissioner Romanu Tikotikoca confirmed yesterday police had a suspect who was soldier, saying it was just a matter of time before police interviewed him.

He refused to elaborate.

On January 5, Verebasaga died at the military camp after being taken there from his Nakaulevu

Village home at 5am. A police report said doctors at the George Mate Hospital at Queen Elizabeth Barracks, brought the man in and he was pronounced dead on arrival.

Police said they were told of the death and the body was viewed by detectives and taken to the Colonial War Memorial Hospital mortuary where a post-mortem examination was conducted.

This comes as the military in a separate case handed six soldiers to police for questioning at the weekend in connection with the death of a youth in Nadi two months ago, allegedly at the

hands of army. Mr Tikotikoca confirmed the six troopers had been interviewed in Nadi on Saturday over the death of Sakiusa Rabaka Ligaiviu, 19, of Votualevu in February.

"They have all been interviewed in Nadi concerning the incident," said Mr Tikotikoca.

The questioning follows police consultations with the military and after the completion of a board of inquiry by the army over the alleged deaths at the hands of soldiers.

Apart from the soldiers, a policeman has also been interviewed in connection with

Rabaka's alleged murder. Rabaka was allegedly brutalised by six soldiers and a police officer after being arrested during a joint operation between the two forces.

He was reportedly taken to the Black Rock military camp at Votualevu with two other youths and beaten up.

A post-mortem examination report on Rabaka showed he died of brain haemorrhage.

The tertiary student was the second civilian to die at the hands of the army since the military overthrew the Qarase Government on December 5 last year.

Mr Tikotikoca said he was pleased the military had kept its promise to release all soldiers wanted in connection with Rabaka's death.

"What happens from here is that after the compilation of the investigation file, it will be forwarded to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions for their scrutiny and assessment," he said.

He expects that to be done in a week.

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FOR THE GREATER GOOD

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IN SPORTS AFRICA CALLS STAR