

**REPUBLIC OF FIJI MILITARY FORCES**  
Leigh Ingram-Seal

Population 810 000 in 2000

540 000 in 1979

Capital Suva [population 70 000]

Area land 18 376 square km in 300 islands [ including 120 inhabited ]

**New Zealand Military Garrison**

Army [until 1970]

In 1960s supplied 60 officers [including the R.F.M. F. commander, a Colonel] and 200 other ranks [mostly specialists] to R.F.M.F.

Air Force operated air base at Laucala Bay from WW2 until 1967 closed down

Local security forces

NB ; At least 200 ethnic Fijian men and 10 ethnic Fijian women served with regular U.K. military forces from 1970s onwards

**Fiji Defence Force** [F. D. F.] established in 1939 to 1942 renamed

in 1939 had 40 regular military personnel

1000 reserve territorials

including some New Zealand army training personnel organised in 1 part time Territorial Infantry Battalion [ understrength, with Battalion Headquarters, 3 Rifle Infantry Companies, and 1 Medium Machine Gun Company]

F.D.F. Headquarters at Suva and small Signals unit

local territorial defence force under police control

**Fiji Military Force** [F.M.F.] 1942 to 1945 disbanded

During WW2 expanded to Brigade size

At height had 8500 military personnel

Including 800 New Zealand military personnel and 5000 ethnic Fijians

Fiji Infantry Brigade Group

With Fiji Infantry Regiment of 2 ethnic Fijian Infantry Battalions

1 ethnic Fijian Artillery Battery [of 110 personnel]

1 ethnic Fijian Labour Battalion

plus 3 Independent Commando Groups [two groups were mostly ethnic Fijian and one group was mostly New Zealanders]

FMF Administration Headquarters

Base Detachment

Fiji section, N.Z.E.F.<sup>1</sup>

**Republic of Fiji Military Forces** [R.F.M.F.]

**Fiji Military Forces** 1949 re established to 1970 renamed **Royal Fiji Military Forces** from 1970 until 1987 renamed

Ethnic Fijian dominated

Internal security role, well trained

HQ in Suva [Queen Elizabeth Barracks]

Commanded by Brigadier

In 1963 organised into F.M.F. Headquarters

Small services sub unit

1 regular Infantry Company [of 2 Platoons]

1 Territorial reserve Infantry Battalion/Company [at reduced strength ,  
Company size]

---

<sup>1</sup> Editor's note. New Zealand Expeditionary Force.

small Artillery unit [Ceremonial Saluting Battery]  
F.M.F. Band

In 1968 had a small regular force with 350 military personnel [including 40 to 50 soldiers based in New Zealand under going training , Platoon sized]

organised in F.M.F. Headquarters Staff

1 Infantry Rifle Company

1 Service Group [including Construction Engineer Section]

plus 750 strong part time Territorial Army Reserve

[2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion ,Fiji Infantry Regiment]

[authorised/ actual strength was 750 personnel including a few Fijian Indians

[organised in 1 Infantry Battalion with a 5-man strong regular cadre

HQ at Queen Elizabeth Barracks [Suva]

2 Rifle Companies based at above

1 Rifle Company based at Lautoka

plus another Rifle Company established at Labasa in 1969

On mobilisation could provide total force of

HQ, 4 Rifle Companies [each Company had 3 Infantry Platoons, each Platoon had 3

Rifle Sections with 8 to 9 men] with mostly ethnic Fijian regular officers, a few part

European officers, few local European officers, and 1 Rotuman officer

equipped with WW2 weapons: .303 rifles, 9mm Sten SMG, Bren light machine guns

In 1971 organised in Regular Force with HQ unit, 1 Infantry Company [of 2 Platoons; 1 Platoon is Military Band ] and Service element

Territorial Reserve Force with 1 Infantry Battalion [of Battalion HQ, 1 HQ Company, and 3 Infantry Companies based at Suva Barracks, Labasa Barracks, and Lautoka Barracks]

In 1973 had 300 regular military personnel

In 1975 had 400 regular military personnel [90% ethnic Fijian], 560 Territorial reserves [90% ethnic Fijian] and 70 regular naval personnel

In 1978 had 700 regular military personnel including 60 officers

In 1980 had 1900 regular military personnel

In 1986 had 2600 regular military personnel [ 5% ethnic Indian] and 5000 territorial reserves

In 1987 had 5000 regular military personnel

In 1989 had 2600 regular military personnel

In 1993 had 3900 regular military personnel

In 1994 had 3800 regular military personnel and 5000 reserves [2% ethnic Indian]

## **Army**

small professional regular volunteer , nearly all ethnic Fijian

well trained , well equiped , capable modern small arms

commander Colonel

in 1980 had 1900 army personnel

in 1986 had 1920 army personnel

in 1987 had 2200 to 2600 army personnel [over half deployed with United Nations] and 3000 to 5000 army reserves [ Territorials ]

in 1987 following coup increased to 6000 army personnel plus 11,000 reserves  
in 1991 had 4700 army personnel in 4 Infantry Battalions  
in 1995 had 3600 army personnel

Organised in Fijian Infantry Regiment [ F.I.R.]

3 regular Infantry Battalions [called Regiments, 2 deployed overseas with United Nations]  
1<sup>st</sup> Battalion ,F.I.R., based UN Lebanon [established in 1978 as regular unit]  
2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, F.I.R. ,based MFO Sinai [established in 1982 as regular unit; understrength 340  
personnel in 1 HQ Company, 1 Support Company, and 3 Rifle [infantry] Companies]  
3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion ,F.I.R., established in 1987 as regular unit based at Queen Elizabeth Barracks [700  
strong ,reserve unit]

4 or 5 nominal Territorial Infantry Battalions maintained at company strength ,cadre]

at Nadi: 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, F.I.R. established in 1987  
at Lautoka: 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, F.I.R. established in 1988  
Nausori  
Labasa  
6<sup>th</sup> Battalion F.I.R. [established in 1991]  
7<sup>th</sup> Battalion F.I.R. [established in 1995]  
8<sup>th</sup> Battalion F.I.R. [established in 1999]

Engineer Regiment [500 personnel]

of 1 regular Engineer Company [Squadron]  
and Rural Development Squadron [250 personnel; used on civic aid duties ,construction  
in rural areas ]

Special Operations [ Zulu ] Company of 120 personnel; part of 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Battalion[small elite special  
forces ,quick reaction unit based at Nabua Barracks]

Officer Training School [O.T.S.]

Army Training Group [A.T.G.]: annual intake of 100 recruits/ trainees

Field Maintenance Workshop [F.M.W.]

Logistic Support Unit [L.S.U.]

Maintenance Unit

1 Ceremonial Artillery Troop [Battery]

Military Intelligence [semi autonomous, internal security role]

Military Police Corps

Counter Revolutionary Warfare Unit [C.R.W.] [1<sup>st</sup> Meridian Squadron: small elite independent special  
forces unit of 60 personnel , loyal to Colonel Raubuka; based at Nabusa Barracks; disbanded in 2000]

The Force is equipped with [4] 25 Pounder Field Guns [ceremonial role]

[10 to 12] 81mm mortars

5.56mm M-16 rifles

Machine guns

Light infantry weapons

[53] French Trucks

LandRovers

#### **Air Wing of R.F.M.F.**

established in 1987; small

based at Suva [Nausori airport]: operated 2 helicopters from 1987 until 1996

### **F.M.F. Naval Division [Squadron]**

commanded by naval Commander  
established in 1975, naval base at Suva  
in 1975 had 70 naval personnel with 2 converted coastal minesweepers [ex U.S. Redwing class]  
used as Patrol craft each 370 tons, with 39 crew, built in 1951, acquired by Fiji in 1975, with [1] 20mm  
machine gun and [ 2 ] .50 cal machine guns] and 1 small survey ship [built in 1929, 100 tons , 14 crew]

in 1981 had 60 naval personnel

in 1984 had 160 naval personnel including 20 officers and 140 other ranks; 3 ex US Redwing  
class coastal minesweepers converted patrol vessels, acquired in 1975 to 1976

in 1988 had 130 naval personnel

in 1994 had 250 naval personnel

equipped with

3 Pacific Forum [Kula] class armed Patrol Boats [each 162 ton, 32 meter, 103 ft; armed with [1]  
20mm cannon and [2] 7.62mm machine guns; each with 4 officers & 15 enlisted crew]

“Kula”, acquired new in 1994

“Kikau”, acquired new in 1995

“Kiro” , acquired new in 1995

4 Israeli Dabur [Vai] class armed Inshore Patrol Craft [each 39ft, 25 tons ,acquired in 1991; armed  
with [2] 20mm cannon and [2] 7.62mm machine guns; each with 2 officers & 7 enlisted crew]

“Vai”

“Ogo”

“Saku”

“Saqa”

2 Levuika class armed inshore Patrol Craft [each 97ft, acquired in 1987, total cost \$1.81 million:  
former oilfield support vessels; armed with [1] 12.7mm machine gun]

“Levuika”

“Lautoka”

1 Kiro class Training Vessel [converted U.S. Redwing class coastal minesweeper/ Patrol craft]

1 Presidential Yacht [Cagidonu class]

1 Survey Boat [Babale class; built in 1978 , 30 meters]

### **Fiji Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve**

established during WW2 and disbanded in 1945

re-established in 1955 and disbanded in 1959

### **Royal Fiji Police Force [ R.F.P.F.]**

poorly equipped, understaffed, disciplined militarised paramilitary national force under command  
of Police Commissioner

originally established as **Fiji Police Force**

in 1970s renamed **Royal Fiji Police Force**

normally unarmed but weapons available

low morale, racially balanced

Police weapons include .22 rifles

.303 rifles

9mm SMG

shotguns

.32 pistols

.38 revolvers

In 1968 had 740 regular police personnel, including 90 officers and 650 other ranks [of which 440  
were ethnic Fijians], plus 70 civilian staff

In 1970 had 840 police personnel [all ethnic Fijian] plus 80 civilian staff

in 1971 had 940 regular police personnel: authorised strength was 1090 personnel; including 550 ethnic Fijians, 330 ethnic Indians , and 8 women, plus 100 civilian staff

in 1972 had 1100 police personnel

in 1975 had 1130 police personnel [40% ethnic Indian]

in 1979 had 1460 police personnel including 80 civilian staff

in 1984 had 1500 police personnel [including 110 women]: 650 ethnic Indian, 770 ethnic Fijian, and 80 other races

in 1988 had 1410 police personnel, including 40 officers, plus 100 civilian staff

in 1990 had 1700 police personnel

Organisation include *Riot Squad [Police Mobile Force]*: internal security role used for riot control [based at Nasinv; established in 1972 with authorised strength of 110 personnel; in 1980 had 110 personnel] ]

Police Training School at Nasese , near Suva

Immigration Branch

Police Band: based at Suva; trained and equipped as riot unit in emergency situations before formation of Police Mobile Force

C.I.D.: responsible for serious crimes investigation with Special Branch [internal security role], Criminal Records Office, Photographic Section, and Police Dog Section

### **Special Constabulary**

part time police reserve auxiliary

in 1967 had 640 part time personnel

in 1971 had 380 part time personnel

### **Fiji Prisons Service**

uniformed quasi military; operates 8 prisons; in 1972 had 200 personnel

### **Customs & Excise Department**

In 1968 had 100 personnel plus 30 Customs Guards and 20 civilian staff

### **Conservation Corps**

part of armed forces [R.F.M.F]: established in 1975 with 30 regular military made up of unemployed labour used on civic aid and construction duties organised into Rural Development Squadron [250 personnel]

REFERENCES:

- “Pacific Islands Yearbooks” [various]
- “Handbook of Fiji , Third Edition 1968”  
Fourth Edition 1972”
- “Pacific Islands Monthly” magazines [various]
- “ Fiji-Shattered Coups”
- “Fiji Lonely Planet Guide” ,1997
- “Rabuka: No Other Way”, Eddie Dean 1988
- “The Guns of Lautoka”, Christopher Harder ,1988
- “Politics In Melanesia”, 1982
- “Police of the World”, Roy D. Ingleton 1979
- “Fighting Ships of Australia, New Zealand and Oceania “ 1980 Graeme Andrews
- “Regular Soldier: A Life in the New Zealand Army”, Colonel Frank Rennie ,1986  
[former commander R.F.M.F. 1966 to 1970]
- “New Zealand Defence Quarterly “magazine Spring 1988 and Spring 1994
- “Defending New Zealand; Ramparts in the Sea 1840-1950” Chapter 13;The Pacific Garrisons ]
- “Bharat Rakshak Monitor” Volume 3 [2]
- www.orbat .com