

# The Changing Role of the Military in Papua New Guinea

R.J. May



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**THE CHANGING ROLE OF  
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PAPUA NEW GUINEA**

**R.J. May**

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## ABSTRACT

In the decade preceding Papua New Guinea's independence in 1975, there was a lively debate about the possible future role of the defence force. On the one hand there were many among Papua New Guinea's emerging nationalist elite who saw the defence force as a luxury and as a potential threat to an elected government. On the other hand there had already been created, under the Australian colonial administration, a well-trained Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF). In the event, the independent state of Papua New Guinea maintained the PNGDF in essentially the form in which it had been inherited from Australia. The constitution defined its primary role in terms of external defence and placed restrictions on its use for internal security purposes.

From the mid-1980s, however, the PNGDF came to play an increasingly active role in internal law and order operations and with the eruption in 1988-89 of an insurgency in the North Solomons Province (Bougainville) the PNGDF became involved, with the police, in a costly and controversial internal security operation. In 1991 changing perceptions of the role of the PNGDF were acknowledged in a redefinition of priorities, which recognised the greater significance of internal security relative to the unlikely threat of, and limited capacity to respond to, external aggression.

This monograph documents the changes which have taken place in the role of the military in Papua New Guinea and examines relations between civil and military authorities. It argues that a military coup remains a remote possibility. More likely is a gradual movement towards a significantly more *controlled* society, in which the PNGDF, though still subject to civilian control, will play an important role; in which the traditional distinction between police and army will become progressively less sharp; and in which the security forces will become increasingly politicised. Such tendencies are already in evidence.

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R.J. May

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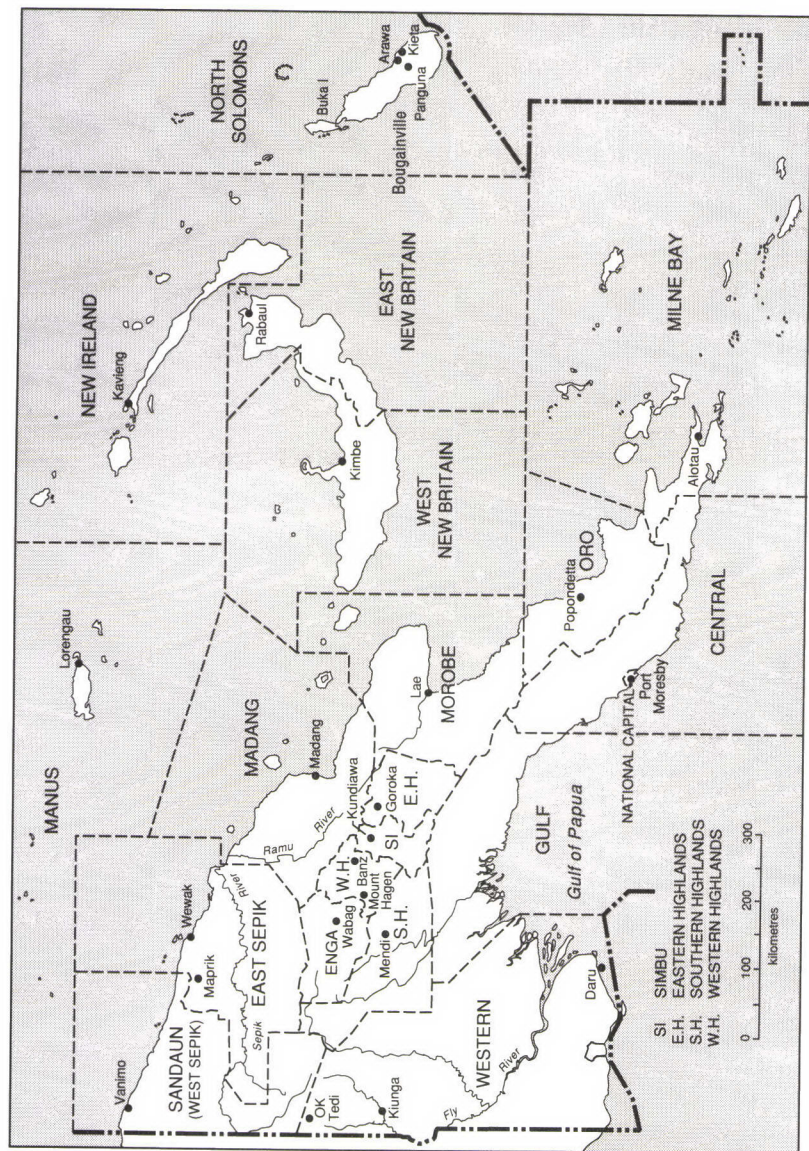


## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ABRI	Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia - Indonesian Armed Forces
ADAG	Australian Defence Assistance Group
ALP	Australian Labor Party
BCL	Bougainville Copper Limited
BLF	Buka Liberation Front
BRA	Bougainville Revolutionary Army
CAP	Civic Action Programme
CIS	Corrective Institutions Service
CPC	Constitutional Planning Committee
DCP	Defence Cooperation Programme
DEO	District Engineer's Office
DIB	Defence Intelligence Branch
HMNZS	Her Majesty's New Zealand Ship
HQ	Headquarters
LOMET	Law and Order: Murder, Entry and Tribal Fighting
MCS	Military Cadet School
MST	Multinational Supervisory Team
NCO	Non-commissioned officer
NEC	National Executive Council
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NIO	National Intelligence Organisation
NSC	National Service Corps
NSPG	North Solomons Provincial Government
NYS	National Youth Service
OCdt	Officer Cadet
OPM	Organisasi Papua Merdeka - Free Papua Movement
OR	Other ranks
PAP	People's Action Party
PIR	Pacific Islands Regiment
PNGDF	Papua New Guinea Defence Force
PPP	People's Progress Party
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
RPIR	Royal Pacific Islands Regiment
RPNGC	Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary

UN  
UPNG  
US

United Nations  
University of Papua New Guinea  
United States



## PAPUA NEW GUINEA - PROVINCES



## PREFACE

In the decade preceding Papua New Guinea's independence in 1975, there was a lively debate about the possible future role of the defence force. On the one hand there were many among Papua New Guinea's emerging nationalist elite who saw the defence force as a luxury and as a potential threat to an elected government. On the other hand there had already been created, under the Australian colonial administration, a well-trained Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF), and with the promise of continued military assistance from Australia there was a strong inclination to maintain the force, as a first recourse against external aggression and with the possibility of its being used to assist civilian authorities in the maintenance of public order and security and in the promotion of national development. In the event, the independent state of Papua New Guinea maintained the PNGDF in essentially the form in which it had been inherited from Australia. The constitution defined its primary role in terms of external defence and placed restrictions on its use for internal security purposes.

In the early post-independence years the PNGDF maintained a fairly low profile and concerns about the possibility of military intervention in politics subsided. From the mid-1980s, however, the PNGDF came to play an increasingly active role in internal law and order operations and with the eruption in 1988-89 of an insurgency situation in the North Solomons Province (Bougainville) the PNGDF became involved, with the police, in a costly, controversial and to date largely unsuccessful large-scale internal security operation. In 1991 changing perceptions of the role of the PNGDF were acknowledged in a redefinition of priorities, which recognised the greater significance of internal security relative to the unlikely threat of, and limited capacity to respond to, external aggression.

From time to time, especially on several occasions when relations between PNGDF personnel and civilian authorities have been tense, questions have been raised concerning the extent of civilian control over the military and the possibility of a military coup. In my opinion military intervention remains a remote possibility; nevertheless internal security problems in Papua New Guinea over recent years have brought about significant changes in the role of the military and its relations with government, and though Papua New

Guinea remains one of the more robust democracies in the region, the relationship of the military to civil government in the 1990s bears re-examination.

# CHAPTER 1

## THE COLONIAL HERITAGE

The origins of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force may be traced back to a Papuan Infantry Battalion formed in Port Moresby on the eve of the Pacific War, in 1940.<sup>1</sup> Subsequently a further three New Guinea Infantry Battalions were formed in New Guinea, and a headquarters Pacific Islands Regiment (PIR) was formed in Port Moresby to administer all four battalions. All commissioned officers and most non-commissioned officers (NCOs) were Australian. The PIR fought with distinction alongside Allied troops in Papua New Guinea but was disbanded in 1946.<sup>2</sup>

In 1951 the PIR<sup>3</sup> was re-formed; a battalion was recruited from Port Moresby in 1951-52 and outstations established at Vanimo, on the north coast near what was then the Dutch (now Indonesian) border, and on Manus in the New Guinea islands. (The latter was shifted to Wewak, on the north coast, in 1962.) The New Guinea Voluntary Rifles was also re-formed in 1951 as a reserve force (part of the Australian Army's Citizen Military Forces), becoming a multiracial unit in 1965 and being absorbed within the PIR eight years later.

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<sup>1</sup> An all-white New Guinea Volunteer Rifles had been authorised by the Australian administration in New Guinea in September 1939. This consisted of small scattered units, which were employed in scouting and guerilla activities before being disbanded in 1942.

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed history of the PIR, and its involvement in World War II, see D. Barrett, 'The Pacific Islands Regiment' in K.S. Inglis (ed.), *The History of Melanesia* (The University of Papua and New Guinea and the Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, Canberra, 1969), pp.493-502; N.E.W. Granter (ed.), *Yesterday and Today: An Illustrated History of the Pacific Islands Regiment from its Formation on 19 June 1940 until the Present Day* (South Pacific Post, Port Moresby, 1970); P. Mench, *The Role of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force* (Development Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1975); H. Nelson, 'Hold the Good Name of the Soldier: The Discipline of Papuan and New Guinean Infantry Battalions, 1940-1946', *Journal of Pacific History*, Vol.15, No.4, 1980; J. Sinclair, *To Find a Path: The Life and Times of the Royal Pacific Islands Regiment*. Volume I, *Yesterday's Heroes 1885-1950* (Boolarong Publications, Brisbane, 1990); and J. Sinclair, *To Find a Path: The Papua New Guinea Defence Force and the Australians to Independence*. Volume II, *Keeping the Peace 1950-1975* (Crawford House Press, Bathurst, 1992).

<sup>3</sup> The PIR became the Royal Pacific Islands Regiment (RPIR) in 1984.



## 2 *The Colonial Heritage*

Until well into the 1960s, however, the PIR was essentially a component of the Australian Army, and was there primarily to serve Australian defence interests. A former PIR commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Maurie Pears, later wrote, 'We saw PIR as Australia's Ghurka Unit'.<sup>4</sup> (From 1954 the PIR had a fraternal relation with the Hong Kong-based Duke of Edinburgh's Own Ghurka Rifles.) Until 1964 it formed part of the Australian Army's Northern Command, whose headquarters (HQ) were in Brisbane; thereafter it had its own HQ in Port Moresby, though Australian officers still predominated and orders came from Canberra. It had no naval or air units, the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) and the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) providing these elements of the defence forces.

During the early 1960s, Indonesia's campaign against the Dutch in what was then Dutch New Guinea (now the Indonesian province of Irian Jaya) and its confrontation with Malaysia sparked fears of possible Indonesian expansionism towards Papua New Guinea, and prompted a surge of activity on Australia's part to expand the military in Papua New Guinea and to strengthen security infrastructure along the Indonesia-Papua New Guinea border. Within the space of a few years the PIR was increased from about 700 'native soldiers' with Australian officers to a force of over 3000. A second battalion (2 PIR) was established in 1965 and stationed at Moem (Wewak) and a third battalion was proposed. Indigenisation of the officer corps began in 1962, the first two officers (Ted Diro and Patterson Lowa) graduating from the Australian Officer Cadet School at Portsea in 1963. A number of army specialists was brought up from Australia, including members of the Army Education Corps, and towards the end of 1964 150 PIR personnel were completing specialist courses in Australia. Command headquarters at Murray Barracks and the 1 PIR Barracks at Taurama, Port Moresby were expanded; barracks were constructed at Moem and Lae, and the Vanimo outstation was upgraded. A new training depot was built at Goldie River, outside Port Moresby, and a Military Cadet School (to prepare recruits for further training at Portsea) was established at Igam Barracks in Lae. A water transport base was established in Port Moresby and the wartime naval base on Manus was resuscitated, with plans to equip the defence force with five patrol boats. An Army Aviation Corps was centred in

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4 Sinclair, *To Find a Path*, Volume II, p.153.

Lae, with spotter planes and helicopters, and several RAAF Caribou transport aircraft were posted to Papua New Guinea; plans for an RAAF base at Wewak were announced. There was also considerable upgrading of airstrips, wharves and detention centres. By the mid-1960s, coincident with the perceived threat from Indonesia diminishing, the military build-up levelled off, though Papua New Guinea continued to occupy a significant place in Australian strategic planning.

More significant for Papua New Guinea, however, along with the increased expenditure on the military came more serious consideration of the possible future role of a Papua New Guinea defence force. In 1966 the force's incoming commanding officer said:

The Army's role in PNG falls basically into two parts - to build an Army capable of playing a major role in the defence of the Territory against external aggression, and to provide for the future a loyal and well-disciplined indigenous force capable of supporting the Government of an independent PNG.<sup>5</sup>

In the House of Assembly, at forums at the recently established University of Papua New Guinea, and elsewhere, however, a number of Papua New Guineans expressed apprehension about the growth of a well-provisioned military. In a paper published in 1967, for example, a pseudonymous Papua New Guinean school teacher questioned the Australian government's expenditure on the army, asking 'Couldn't we use the money being spent on the army for more urgently needed things?', and said: 'Until I, for one, have some answers to my questions I will think that the army is probably the biggest single threat to the peace, security and development of our country'.<sup>6</sup>

Such apprehension was not entirely unfounded. In 1957, following a brawl in a settlement in Port Moresby, several PIR personnel were arrested. Thinking that a demonstration of the judicial

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<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Sinclair, *To Find a Path*, Volume II, pp.222-23.

<sup>6</sup> Basita Heatu, 'New Guinea's Coming Army', *New Guinea*, Vol.2, No.3, 1967, pp.32-33; similarly see Kokou Warubu, 'That Army again!', *New Guinea*, Vol.3, No.2, 1968, pp.8-10; E. Olewale, 'The Impact of National Institutions on Village Communities' in M.W. Ward (ed.), *Change and Development in Rural Melanesia* (The University of Papua and New Guinea and the Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, Canberra, 1972).



#### 4 *The Colonial Heritage*

system in action would be a salutary experience for the troops, senior military officials suggested that the court be held at Taurama Barracks. However, angered by what they saw as an intrusion of civil authority, some PIR personnel staged a riot, chasing the magistrate and lawyers out of the court.<sup>7</sup> Although disciplinary action was swift, many people interpreted the event as evidence of a disregard for civil authority among military personnel. Three years later a minor rebellion by PIR personnel, following attempts to avert a strike over army wages, was put down by officers and police but again raised questions about PIR discipline.

The issue of the military's relations with civil authorities was officially addressed in 1969 by the Australian Minister for the Army, Phillip Lynch. Lynch described the 'current basic roles' of the army as being to build an efficient force capable of playing a vital part in the defence of Papua New Guinea and to provide a well-disciplined, stable and reliable indigenous force completely loyal to the government.<sup>8</sup> He went on to say:

Emphasis is placed on loyalty to legally constituted authority. This is implicit in the Australian Government's aim of developing in the Territory a sound political structure in which the Public Service, the [Police] Constabulary and the Army have all been thoroughly trained in the concept of subordination to a legally constituted democratic government.<sup>9</sup>

To this end the army was involved in a 'heavy education effort', including group discussions of 'civics and christian ethics',

... to assist in the promotion of those characteristics and beliefs which are considered essential to the development of a loyal and disciplined Army in a modern, democratic society... [and] to expose the

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7 The incident is recounted in Sinclair, *To Find a Path*, Volume II, pp.61-65. One of the civilians involved in the brawl was Albert Maori Kiki (who recounts the incident in A.M. Kiki, *Kiki: Ten Thousand Years in a Lifetime. A New Guinea Autobiography* (Cheshire, Melbourne, 1968). Kiki later became Papua New Guinea's deputy prime minister and first minister for defence.

8 P.R. Lynch, 'The Coming Army', *New Guinea*, Vol.4, No.1, 1969, p.22.

9 *ibid.*, p.23.

retarding effects of tribal exclusivism and primitivism ... and to emphasise constantly the role of the Territory Army in giving positive service to the people as a whole.<sup>10</sup>

Also, although civic action work had been carried out since 1951, from 1967 all major patrols and operational exercises by the PIR included civic action projects (roads and bridges, medical attention, repairs to radios and simple machinery, etc.) designed to 'create constructive attitudes in the minds of soldiers towards the people, and help identify the people with their Army'.<sup>11</sup> Efforts to encourage people to 'identify with their army' must have had some effect: Ryan reported that in a question-and-answer exercise at the University of Papua New Guinea in the late 1960s students 'were largely convinced that one of the first acts after independence would be an army takeover' but that 'many of the students saw no real harm in the possibility of such a military coup'.<sup>12</sup>

Ironically, the success of the civic action programme fuelled concerns about the future role of the military in Papua New Guinea. Vincent Eri (who later served as defence secretary before becoming governor-general) suggested in 1969 that the army was 'replacing the Administration in the minds of the people' and 'preparing the ground for some future action', and he warned, 'it is a very dangerous situation that we are getting into'.<sup>13</sup> Another Papua New Guinean commented,

... civic action patrols merely emphasize the fact that other agencies, whose more direct responsibility the work is, are unable to handle the situation.<sup>14</sup>

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10 *ibid.*; see also R.J. O'Neill, 'The Army in Papua-New Guinea', *New Guinea* Vol.6, No.1, 1971, pp.16-17; and Mench, *The Role of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force*, pp.136-37.

11 Lynch, 'The Coming Army', p.23; see also G. Hussey, 'Army Civic Action', *Australian External Territories*, Vol.8, No.6, 1968, pp.31-34. A former commander, Brigadier I.M. Hunter, attributed the idea of the civic action patrol programme in 1967 to Indonesian officer Sarwo Edhie Wibowo, a former student at the Australian Staff College and later ABRI commander in Irian Jaya (Sinclair, *To Find a Path*, Volume II, pp.113-14).

12 J. Ryan, *The Hot Land: Focus on New Guinea* (Macmillan, Melbourne, 1969), p.266.

13 Quoted in Sinclair, *To Find a Path*, Volume II, p.136.

14 Warubu, 'That Army again!', p.8.



## 6 *The Colonial Heritage*

And expatriate academic Ron Crocombe told a youth conference in Port Moresby that 'civic action projects ... could subvert the authority of future civilian governments'.<sup>15</sup> These concerns appear to have been quite widely shared among educated Papua New Guineans, but were countered by army commander Brigadier Hunter, who said,

It is better to have the army out with people, learning to understand them, than to be sitting in their barracks getting big heads. What Papua-New Guinea needs is a people's army, though not in the Maoist form.<sup>16</sup>

He pointed out that civic action projects were undertaken at the request of local people and with the approval of the administration, and were intended to teach people to help themselves. Hunter was supported by the Speaker of the House of Assembly, John Guise, in whose electorate the PIR had recently built an airstrip.

Not specifically mentioned in Lynch's 1969 statement was the army's possible future role in internal security. This issue was not long in surfacing. Following a disturbance in East New Britain, when police attempted to evict Tolai squatters from land on the Gazelle Peninsula, in mid-1970 the Australian government placed the army in readiness to assist the administration should the situation escalate, and troops were given a hastily arranged course in riot control. In the event the situation was resolved without the army being called in, and there was a general feeling that the administration (which apparently had initiated the call-out) had acted prematurely.<sup>17</sup> The call-out order was revoked ten months later. But the events of 1970 clearly signalled a recognition of the broader role the army might be called upon to play in an independent Papua New Guinea and, along with growing unrest on Bougainville, stimulated further debate.

In a paper on the army in Papua New Guinea, Australian defence expert Robert O'Neill wrote:

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<sup>15</sup> Reported in the *Age* and in the *Canberra Times*, 23 January 1969.

<sup>16</sup> *Canberra Times*, 23 January 1969.

<sup>17</sup> The events of 1970 are recounted in detail by P. Colebatch, *To Find a Path: The Army in Papua New Guinea* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Sussex, 1974), pp.336-56. Colebatch reproduces extracts from interviews with soldiers and administration officers at the time.

For the Army to have been used against the [Tolai Mataungan Association on the Gazelle Peninsula] would have been a disaster, both for relations between Tolais and the Administration and for the image of the Army within the community.<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless, O'Neill went on to suggest that, given the relative probabilities of external threat and internal disorder, internal law and order was likely to become the army's major preoccupation. Australian journalist Peter Hastings endorsed this view, referring to the 'inescapable similarity between Africa and Papua New Guinea', and suggested that after independence 'the Army will inevitably be involved in the political direction of the country'.<sup>19</sup> But Papua New Guinean politicians did not all share this view. Pangu Pati leader Michael Somare said in April 1972:

We are training an army for the defence of the country. We are not training them to kill our own people. It is not necessary for the army to keep law and order. That is the work of the police.<sup>20</sup>

Three months later, as chief minister, he told a group of local government councillors in the highlands (who requested action to combat a growing law and order problem), 'You can't give too much power to the police, and you can't allow the army to be used in riot control'.<sup>21</sup> By the end of the year, however, when asked about the possible use of the army to protect the Bougainville copper mine against secessionists, the chief minister allowed that the army might be used to assist police 'as a last resort'.<sup>22</sup>

In December 1972 the future role of the army was the subject of a local radio programme,<sup>23</sup> which brought together defence force personnel, politicians, and civilian commentators. The chief minister expressed the view that 'we do probably need a defence force' - for patrolling borders and territorial waters, and 'to react in the first

<sup>18</sup> R.J. O'Neill, 'The Army in Papua-New Guinea', p.15.

<sup>19</sup> P. Hastings, 'Thoughts on Taurama: The Myth of a "Non-political" Army', *New Guinea* Vol.6, No.1, 1971, p.32.  
<sup>20</sup> *Post-Courier*, 20 April 1972.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Sinclair, *To Find a Path*, Volume II, p.297.

<sup>22</sup> *Post-Courier*, 14 December 1972; also see Kiki in the *Age*, 21 August 1973.

<sup>23</sup> 'The Sword and the State', Two-part programme by Australian Broadcasting Commission, 2, 9 November 1972.



## 8 *The Colonial Heritage*

instance to any armed aggression' - but he suggested that it should be of a smaller size. Responsibility for maintaining law and order was the job of the police, not the army, he said; however,

If the Police were clearly incapable of civil incidents [sic] in a particular case, or if there is an armed uprising, then the Government might need to seek the assistance of the Army but obviously such action would not be taken lightly. It would need to be a real national emergency.

As against this, senior Papua New Guinea officer, Major Ted Diro, saw the army as having a role to play in internal security matters, and a lecturer at the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG), Ulf Sundhaussen, argued that given the very low level of national consciousness and 'already surfacing tendencies for separatism' the maintenance of internal security would be a task for the army in Papua New Guinea, as it was in Asia and Africa, and the army was 'hardly equipped to deal effectively' with such 'emergencies'. Sundhaussen recommended the indigenisation of the air transport section and the training of helicopter pilots. More significantly, however, he suggested that the army should have 'some sort of political say'. The principle of absolute civilian supremacy over the military, Sundhaussen argued, could only operate in a Western-type liberal democracy. He advocated the development of working relationships between officers and politicians and the integration of the military into the political and social structure, for example by having an army commander as minister for defence.<sup>24</sup> Somare rejected this, arguing that though the army should not feel isolated, and should be involved in community development projects, it should keep out of politics. Contributions from the Australian officer commanding the Joint Force, Brigadier Jim Norrie, and the staff officer of the Education Corps suggested that this was the view which the army itself was promulgating:

Our role as an Army ... is one of loyalty to a government ... we point out the fact that a loyal army

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<sup>24</sup> Sundhaussen's views were subsequently elaborated in U. Sundhaussen, 'New Guinea's Army: A Political Role?', *New Guinea*, Vol.8, No.2, 1973; and U. Sundhaussen, 'Australia's Future Defence Relations with Papua New Guinea: A Second Look', *Australia's Neighbours*, February-March 1973.

backing a government promotes a most efficient type of country.

Norrie went on to say that he had seen 'no sign whatsoever of any real political discussions so far from within the force'. His education staff officer, on the other hand, said that the subject of army takeovers was considered in group discussions but 'as far as we can ascertain' was never discussed as a possibility in Papua New Guinea. The Joint Force's other senior Papua New Guinean officer, Major Patterson Lowa, added the somewhat ingenuous assurance: 'I personally don't think the Army will take over the government'.

The future role of the military remained a topic of discussion during the next two years.<sup>25</sup> There was some debate over Sundhaussen's suggestion that the military be represented in cabinet,<sup>26</sup> and there were proposals, supported by Australian External Territories Minister Morrison, to combine the army and police in a paramilitary

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25 The major contributors to the discussion in the 1960s and 1970s of the future of the military in Papua New Guinea included T.B. Millar, 'The Defence of New Guinea', *New Guinea*, Vol.1, No.1, 1965; Heatu, 'New Guinea's Coming Army'; H. Bell, 'Integrating the P.I.R.', *New Guinea*, Vol.2, No.2, 1967; J. Kerr, 'From the Defence Angle', *New Guinea*, Vol.1, No.8, 1967; Warubu, 'That Army again!'; Lynch, 'The Coming Army'; P. Hastings, 'Comment' [on P.R. Lynch, 'The Coming Army'], *New Guinea*, Vol.4, No.1, 1969; P. Hastings, *New Guinea: Problems and Prospects* (Cheshire, Melbourne, 1969); Hastings, 'Thoughts on Taurama'; Ryan, *The Hot Land*; A.D. Gilbert, 'Papua-New Guinea: The Army Threat', *Canberra Times*, 4, 5, 6 June 1969; F.A. Mediansky, 'New Guinea's Coming Army: Acquiring Politically Useful Skills', *New Guinea*, Vol.5, No.2, 1970; R.J. O'Neill, 'The Army in Papua New Guinea'; R.J. O'Neill, 'The Australian-PNG Defence Relationship', *New Guinea*, Vol.10, No.4, 1975-76; Olewale, 'The Impact of National Institutions'; H. Nelson, *Papua New Guinea: Black Unity or Black Chaos?* (Penguin Books, Ringwood, Victoria, 1972); Sundhaussen, 'New Guinea's Army'; Sundhaussen, 'Australia's Future Defence Relations with Papua New Guinea: A Second Look'; R. Premdas, 'A Non-political Army', *New Guinea*, Vol.9, No.1, 1974; C. Ashton, 'The "Disciplined Forces" Fight out Constitutional Problems - Nil all', *The National Times*, 23-28 September 1974; Colebatch, 'To Find a Path'; P. Mench, 'Australian Military Involvement', *New Guinea*, Vol.9, No.4, 1975; and Mench, *The Role of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force*. Mench's monograph, *The Role of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force*, written on the eve of independence, gives a comprehensive account of the subject and contains a perceptive discussion of external and internal contingencies facing the PNGDF in 1974. There is also a collection of Australian government documents from this period, in R. Walsh and G.J. Munster (eds), *Documents on Australian Defence and Foreign Policy 1968-1975* (Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1982), chapter ix.

26 See, for example, Mench, *The Role of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force*, chapter 5, and Premdas's 1974 critique of Sundhaussen.



## 10 *The Colonial Heritage*

force (Morrison advocated a Malaysian-style field force).<sup>27</sup> But when in 1974 the Constitutional Planning Committee (CPC) presented its report, its recommendations followed closely the approach outlined by Somare.

The CPC began by emphasising its belief in the general principle:

... that where the people of a country wish to maintain a democratic parliamentary system, it is vital that the disciplined forces should at all times be subject to the control of the elected government through a civilian Minister ... Senior members of these Forces may be required to advise the government, through their respective Ministers ... but ... their function is not to make policy themselves, but to implement policy decided upon by the government.<sup>28</sup>

It went on to observe that, for varying reasons, military coups had occurred in a number of countries; 'We are not pessimistic about the future role of the Defence Force in an independent Papua New Guinea', the report said, 'But we think it would be folly to ignore entirely experience elsewhere'.<sup>29</sup>

In outlining the desirable functions of the defence force, the CPC expressed the view that the defence force should be 'firmly oriented towards external defence'.<sup>30</sup> Noting a recent statement by the Papua New Guinea Minister for Defence, Foreign Relations and Trade, Albert Maori Kiki, which acknowledged the military's possible role in maintaining internal security,<sup>31</sup> the CPC stated:

... we have very serious reservations about the possibility of a future Papua New Guinea Government

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<sup>27</sup> See Walsh and Munster, *Documents* ..., pp.304-5, 311-14.

<sup>28</sup> Constitutional Planning Committee (CPC), Papua New Guinea, *Final Report* 1974, chapter 13, p.1.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, chapter 13, p.2.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, chapter 13, p.3.

<sup>31</sup> In a statement to the House of Assembly on 25 April 1974 Albert Maori Kiki described PNGDF responsibilities as threefold: 'To defend the nation against attack; to assist the police in the maintenance of public order and security as a last resort if the police cannot reasonably be expected to cope; and to contribute as required to economic development and the promotion of national administration and unity'.

using the army against its own people in any but the most extreme cases of civil disorder, and then subject also to specific conditions.<sup>32</sup>

Its reservations on this issue were reinforced by concerns about what it saw as the provision of installations and equipment 'at a standard that has little relevance to the circumstances of Papua New Guinea' and about 'the elitist nature of the Defence Force'.<sup>33</sup> In a section devoted to 'internal security', the CPC argued that the defence force should not have a political role:

... if [the defence force] is called upon to restore peace and order, it is carrying out a political role - and it is made clear to all that the government is dependent upon the use of the army to maintain its authority ... We feel sure that the people of this country would react with bitterness and horror at the use of 'military methods' in such situations, and that irreparable damage could be done to the standing of any government which allowed this to happen except in extreme circumstances.<sup>34</sup>

Accordingly, the CPC's view was that the great majority of disturbances, including urban rioting and inter-tribal fighting, should be dealt with by police and that only in circumstances warranting the proclamation of a state of emergency should the defence force be called in 'as a last resort'. It went on to recommend an expansion of the police force and the appointment of a commission of inquiry to recommend on the relative sizes of, and allocation of resources between, the police and the military.

A government paper on the CPC proposals broadly endorsed the recommendations of the CPC report, though it argued for a non-combative military role in assisting police in localised situations short of a declaration of state of emergency. With this and a few other minor modifications, the CPC's recommendations on the disciplined forces were accepted by parliament and were written into the constitution of

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32 Constitutional Planning Committee (CPC), Papua New Guinea, *Final Report* 1974, chapter 13, p.3.

33 *ibid.*

34 *ibid.*, chapter 13, p.6.



## 12 The Colonial Heritage

the independent state. Section 202 defines the functions of the defence force:

- (a) to defend Papua New Guinea and its territory; and
- (b) to assist in the fulfilment by Papua New Guinea of its international obligations; and
- (c) to provide assistance to civilian authorities -
  - (i) in a civil disaster; or
  - (ii) in the restoration of public order and security on being called out in accordance with Section 204 (*call-out in aid to the civil power*); or
  - (iii) in accordance with an Act of the Parliament during a period of declared national emergency under Part X (*emergency powers*); and
- (d) to perform, as directed, functions and services of a civil nature so as to participate to the maximum in the task of national development and improvement, either within the country or outside it, in accordance with this Constitution and Acts of the Parliament.

Section 204 stipulates that the military can be called out only by the head of state (the governor general) acting on the advice of the National Executive Council (NEC, cabinet), and in accordance with a request by the civilian authority embodied in an act of parliament.

The supremacy of the civilian authority is laid down in Section 201, which states that the force is subject to the 'superintendence and control' of the NEC through the minister responsible for the defence force (who may not be a serving member of the force). The minister has no power of command within the force. Following the CPC's recommendation that there be 'a dual but integrated structure by which the Minister would be advised by senior civilian and military

officers of equal status',<sup>35</sup> the constitution recognised the defence force commander as principal military adviser on matters relating to the defence force, and an officer of the national public service (in practice the secretary of the Defence Department) as the civilian adviser, with powers prescribed by legislation. Contrary to the CPC's recommendation, the constitution specifically excluded the office of commander-in-chief. Subsequently, effect was given to this provision by the creation of a Defence Council (comprising the minister, defence secretary and PNGDF commander). Broader questions of national security policy are referred to a ministerial National Security Committee, and a National Security Advisory Committee.

The question of the relative size of the police and the army was not taken up, the level of military expenditure being effectively underwritten by an Australian military assistance programme (see below).

Meanwhile, as the nature and role of the military in post-independence Papua New Guinea was being discussed, arrangements were being made for the transfer of defence powers to the new state. A 'planning cell' was established as early as 1969, but until 1972 it tended to be dominated by Australian military and administration personnel. Early in 1973 what had become the Joint Force Papua New Guinea was redesignated Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF), and shortly after a steering committee was created to draw up a programme for the formal transfer of defence powers. In August 1973 the Papua New Guinea cabinet endorsed a proposal for an integrated defence force, with a strength of 3500, comprising two battalions, an engineering company, and a patrol boat squadron.<sup>36</sup> A Defence and Foreign Relations portfolio was established at the same time, and the following year a separate Department of Defence was created. A Defence Act was passed by the Papua New Guinea House of Assembly in December 1974 and the formal transfer of defence powers took place the following March - six months before independence. Just before independence in September 1975, Brigadier-General Diro became the PNGDF's first Papua New Guinean commander.

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<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, chapter 13, p.4.

<sup>36</sup> Details of the 1973 reorganisation are given in Mench, *The Role of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force*, and Sinclair, *To Find A Path*, Volume II.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE ROLE OF THE MILITARY IN POST-INDEPENDENCE PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Papua New Guinea had an easy transition to independence in 1975. Indeed it has frequently been observed that the absence of a significant anti-colonial nationalist struggle in Papua New Guinea meant not only that Papua New Guinean soldiers had no heroic role to play in the winning of independence but that the new state was deprived of the unifying effects which such struggles were seen to have provided in many post-colonial societies.

The government which emerged from pre-self-government elections in 1972, under the leadership of Michael Somare, was a coalition government, and in the first post-independence elections in 1977 it was returned to power. Since then there have been three national elections and five changes of government. All changes of government have taken place through normal constitutional channels (three as the result of votes of no confidence and two through elections) and all have been smooth transitions. All governments have been rather fluid coalitions. The two-party Westminster-style politics envisioned by some in the 1970s has not materialised; but neither has a tendency to one-party or military regime. Papua New Guinea remains a robustly competitive political system. Separatist movements which emerged on the eve of independence, and resulted in unilateral declarations of independence in Papua and in the North Solomons (Bougainville),<sup>1</sup> were dealt with by a combination of disregard and political negotiation. That in the North Solomons (where disputes had arisen over a large gold and copper mine) precipitated moves for political decentralisation recommended in the CPC report but dropped from the constitutional draft. Following the establishment of provincial governments and with the renegotiation of the Bougainville mining agreement this problem seemed to have been solved.

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See J. Griffin, 'Secessionist Movements and their Future in Papua New Guinea', *World Review*, Vol.15, No.1, 1976; R.J. May (ed.), *Micronationalist Movements in Papua New Guinea*, Political and Social Change Monograph 1 (Department of Political and Social Change, Australian National University, Canberra, 1982).



Preoccupied with the problems of policy making in the new state, and facing no serious external threat, Papua New Guineans were not greatly concerned about the role of the army, which maintained a fairly low profile. It was not until the 1980s, with a progressive breakdown in law and order nationally and the re-emergence of friction on Bougainville, that the role of the PNGDF again came under serious scrutiny.

### **Structure, Organisation and Funding**

At the time of the transfer of defence powers in 1975, the PNGDF had a posted strength of 3614, slightly above the targetted 3500.<sup>2</sup> This included a Land Element, based on 1PIR at Taurama and 2PIR at Moem (the idea of a 3PIR had been finally rejected in 1973), and a Maritime Element, split between the Patrol Boat Squadron, with five Attack Class patrol boats based at Manus, and a Landing Craft Squadron, with two heavy landing craft based in Port Moresby. Subsequently an Air Element was added, following the offer of four Dakota aircraft from Australia; the first ground crew and pilots graduated from their courses in 1974. An Engineer company, created within PIR in 1973 and heavily engaged in civic action work, was upgraded to battalion status in 1976.

Of the 3614 personnel in 1975, 490 (14 per cent) were Australians, mostly officers and specialist NCOs. Less than 35 per cent of the 375 officer positions had been localised. A localisation programme aimed to reduce this number by 120 per year. By 1979 the number of loan personnel had fallen to 141 and by 1988 to 30, most of whom were with the Air Transport Squadron. There were by 1979 almost 300 Papua New Guinean officers, and although the localisation programme was said to have 'created a number of problems' it was progressing 'satisfactorily'.<sup>3</sup>

Given the high level of expenditure on the PNGDF, it was clear that if defence spending were to be maintained after independence at anything like its pre-independence level, Australian

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<sup>2</sup> In 1977 this was effectively raised to 3750 by a 'determination' which allowed for an additional 250 trainees.

<sup>3</sup> Defence General Board of Inquiry, *Report of the Defence General Board of Inquiry into Administration and Management of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force and the Defence Department* (Department of Defence, Boroko, 1989).

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assistance would be required; an undertaking to support an independent Papua New Guinea defence force was given by the Australian defence minister in 1972. Since independence, military assistance has been provided through the Australian Defence Cooperation Programme (DCP). This has met the salaries of Australians serving with the PNGDF, the costs of Papua New Guinea service personnel training in Australia, and certain mutually agreed major projects.<sup>4</sup> In 1991 Australian defence sources estimated that some 3000 PNGDF personnel had undertaken some form of training in Australia since 1975, and that about 90 per cent of the officer corps had trained or studied in Australia.<sup>5</sup> The two countries have regularly carried out joint exercises. The Australian Army has also maintained an engineering unit in Papua New Guinea (see below). An Australian Defence Assistance Group (ADAG) was established in Port Moresby to manage these cooperative arrangements. (In 1985 the ADAG was replaced by an Australian Training and Technical Support Unit; it was disbanded four years later and replaced by a Defence Cooperation Management Team.) The arrangements drawn up in 1974-75 were formalised in 1977 in a series of agreements: a Status of Forces Agreement; a Consultative Agreement, covering the use of loan personnel in politically sensitive situations; a Supply Support Agreement, formalising arrangements for giving Papua New Guinea access to materiel procurement through the Australian Defence Department; and a Statement of Understanding covering common security interests (see below).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The amounts of payments under the DCP are set out in Appendix 1.

<sup>5</sup> Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, *Australias Relations with Papua New Guinea* (Senate Publishing and Printing Unit, Canberra, 1991), p.174; and Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Hearings, 22 October 1990, p.733.

<sup>6</sup> More recent developments in Papua New Guinea's security relations with Australia are discussed below. For a general overview of Papua New Guinea-Australia security relations see Mench, 'Australian Military Involvement?'; O'Neill, 'The Australian-PNG Defence Relationship'; D. Hegarty, *South Pacific Security Issues: An Australian Perspective*, Working Paper No.147 (Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1987); D. Ball, *The Internal and External Security of Papua New Guinea: Concluding Summary*, Reference Paper No.80 (Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1992); R. Babbage, 'Australia and the Defence of Papua New Guinea', *Australian Outlook* Vol.41, No.2, 1987; N. Raath, *Moral Support? Australia's Response to Papua New Guinea's Internal Security Problems*, Parliamentary Research Service Background Paper (Parliament of Australia, Canberra, 1991); Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, *Australia's Relations with Papua*



Since the early 1970s the PNGDF has received assistance from New Zealand, from 1978 under a Mutual Assistance Programme; a Status of Forces Agreement was signed in 1991. Papua New Guinea also has a Status of Forces Agreement and a Memorandum of Understanding with the United States, under which Papua New Guinea is included in the US Foreign Military Sales List and the International Military Education and Training Program, and has exchanged personnel.

As early as 1985 newly appointed PNGDF commander Tony Huai called for a diversification of Papua New Guinea's defence relations,<sup>7</sup> and the following year, after unilateral cuts in Australian aid to Papua New Guinea had caused some strains in relations between the two countries, the *Defence Report 1986* commented on the desirability of diversification. Apart from sending officers to training courses in New Zealand, the United States, Indonesia and Malaysia, the PNGDF broadened its sources of supply, purchasing three Israeli Arava aircraft in 1984 and two Spanish CASA aircraft in 1992 as well as smaller materiel from a variety of sources. In 1990 Papua New Guinea sought formal defence ties with Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore; status of forces agreements were signed with Indonesia and Malaysia two years later. At a 1992 seminar in Australia,<sup>8</sup> Defence Secretary Peipul said, 'We may be able to learn from Malaysia on handling domestic security and from Indonesia on civic action'.

Basic military training was provided at the PNGDF Training Depot at Goldie River and, from 1968, at the Military Cadet School (MCS) at Igam Barracks, Lae, from whence recruits completed their officer training at Portsea, Australia. In 1974 the MCS was replaced by a Joint Services College, which also catered for the police (the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary, RPNGC) and Corrective Institutions Service (CIS) officers. From then until 1983, when training at Portsea was revived, PNGDF officers completed their training in Lae. In 1985 Brigadier-General Huai announced that a major review of the defence force's academic syllabus was underway. Three years later the RPNGC and CIS withdrew from the college, which it was alleged was dominated by the PNGDF and heavily oriented towards military

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*New Guinea*, chapter 10; and Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Hearings, 21 October 1990, pp.1580-1704, 22 October 1990, pp.714-64.

7 *Post-Courier*, 23 December 1985.

8 Australian National University, 19 June 1992.



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training; the college was re-established as the Papua New Guinea Defence Academy. However in 1992, following a review of national security needs (see below), proposals were being considered for a revival of a Joint Services College.

Former PNGDF chief of staff (and director in 1972 of the joint planning cell), Colonel Colin East, writing in 1985, was critical of what he described as the Australian government's having taken 'the line of least resistance' at independence in carrying out 'cosmetic surgery to the existing Australian service components', saying:

The result is the present PNGDF, its individual elements meaningful in the framework of the Australian Defence Force of a decade ago, tailored in the Australian military tradition and reflecting that approach. As a separate force, it is militarily unbalanced, expensive and non-viable.<sup>9</sup>

Notwithstanding this, the basic structure of the PNGDF has undergone little change since independence. The Defence Department initiated a review of the PNGDF in 1978, and subsequently received assistance under the Australian DCP to carry out specialist studies of the maritime and air transport elements and of special forces. A review report, completed in 1982, provided the basis for the government's first post-independence defence policy statement. This endorsed the PNGDF's 'prime role in defending the nation'<sup>10</sup> and placed emphasis on the defence force's greater participation in national development and on the increased importance both of maritime surveillance (since the declaration of 200-mile exclusive economic zones in 1978 Papua New Guinea and other Melanesian states have had particular difficulty maintaining surveillance over foreign fishing vessels) and of patrolling the border with Indonesia (see below).

Following this, a review of defence policy was undertaken by a ministerial committee. Its 1983 report resulted in several policy changes, including decisions to shift the patrol boat base from Manus to Port Moresby (a decision reversed the following year) and the Air Transport Squadron from Lae to Nadzab (a wartime strip 40 km

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<sup>9</sup> C. East, 'PNGDF: Colonial Legacy, or Independent Force?', *Pacific Defence Reporter*, Vol.12, No.5, November 1985, p.11; see also Sinclair, *To Find A Path*, Volume II, pp.298-99.

<sup>10</sup> *Defence Report* 1982, p.1.

outside Lae which was upgraded in the 1980s and became Lae's main airport); the establishment of a forward infantry company base near the Indonesian border at Kiunga, the port site for the large Ok Tedi gold and copper mine; the upgrading of the Vaimo outstation; a decision to relocate the Engineer Battalion from Port Moresby to Lae, with detachments at Vaimo and Kiunga; formation of a special forces unit to be based at Nadzab; commitment to a long-term re-equipment programme, including the purchase of helicopters; and, most significantly, reduction of the force strength ceiling, for budgetary reasons, to 3050. The NEC also endorsed a set of PNGDF 'priority functions', which followed the 1982 policy statement in placing security against external threat, securing the nation's borders, and maritime surveillance at the top, and putting assistance to the police when required in maintaining internal security last of the six priority functions listed.<sup>11</sup> In fact, few of the decisions were implemented at the time, though steps were taken to reduce the size of the force.<sup>12</sup>

The cut in force size was bitterly received within the defence establishment, which had been complaining of inadequate resources for some years, and within which morale was said to be already low.

Notwithstanding the continuing high level of Australian assistance under the DCP, as early as 1977-78 the *Defence Report* contained complaints about deficiencies in the size and structure of the PNGDF, notably the undermanning of the infantry battalions, lack of adequate reserves of materiel, and inadequate mobility, especially with regard to air transport. Such complaints were repeated in subsequent years; the *Defence Report 1980* commented that with its present budgetary allocation the PNGDF could not meaningfully achieve its primary object of defending the country from external attack, and the following year the assistant secretary, Finance and Programming Branch vented his frustration in more colourful language:

The 'Waigani Wisdom' is that we have to do the impossible by maintaining this deplorable status quo with less funds and hope and pray to God that Papua New Guinea's sovereignty and security is not in any

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<sup>11</sup> East, 'PNGDF: Colonial Legacy, or Independent Force?', p.13.

<sup>12</sup> For more detail see I. Glanville, 'The Changing Face of PNG's Defence Force', *Pacific Defence Reporter*, Vol.10, No.10, April 1984, and Defence General Board of Inquiry, *Report ...*, attachment 1.



way tampered with! One wonders how a few people in Waigani [the location of the government offices in Port Moresby] can determine for this country that the secure and peaceful existence of human lives is no more important than the secure and peaceful existence of coconut or coffee trees or even cattle! <sup>13</sup>

With limited manpower and deteriorating equipment capability, the assistant secretary said, there was no way that the defence force could effectively meet any serious contingency. In a 1985 review of the PNGDF, East observed that the 'acute shortage of funds over recent years' had resulted in a major reduction in patrolling and training of soldiers, restrictions on flying time and naval operations, and obsolescence of vehicles, weapons and equipment. Coinciding with an increased demand for active operations on the border with Indonesia's Irian Jaya province, East said, 'these limitations ... [have] posed questions of morale and leadership'.<sup>14</sup> The previous year a defence manpower review had revealed a wastage rate among officers of 7.7 per cent (which was described as 'acceptable') and among other ranks of 15.8 per cent,<sup>15</sup> and the *Defence Report 1984-85* reported that the standard of discipline during 1985 was 'below the required standard'.<sup>16</sup> This growing frustration within the PNGDF coincided with demands for increased operations on the Irian Jaya border (where a massive influx of border crossers had occurred in 1984) and the first call-out of the PNGDF to assist police in 1984.

Figures of defence expenditure are shown in Table 1. Although the inconsistency of published figures makes it difficult to discern trends, there appears to have been a fairly steady decline in defence spending as a proportion of total government expenditure from independence to the early 1980s. The proportion increased in 1983-84, notwithstanding the announced cut in force strength.

In 1985 Prime Minister Somare promised an increase in defence spending, but his government lost office that year. In 1987 the new Defence Minister, former PNGDF officer James Pokasui, moved to

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<sup>13</sup> *Defence Report 1980-81*, p.4.

<sup>14</sup> 'PNGDF: Colonial Legacy, or Independent Force?', p.11.

<sup>15</sup> *Defence Report 1984-85*, p.44.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, p.39.

Table 1

**Papua New Guinea, Defence Expenditure**

	Appropriation	Actual expenditure	Actual expenditure as percentage of total government expenditure
1976/77	17.5	17.2	4.2
1978	18.0	18.7	4.1
1979	19.8	20.4	3.9
1980	22.5	24.8	4.2
1981	23.5	23.3	3.5
1982	22.4	24.0	3.6
1983	27.4	32.1	4.5
1984	37.4	34.6	4.6
1985	31.2	34.6	4.5
1986	35.2	35.6	4.3
1987	32.9	36.9	4.2
1988	33.4	39.6	4.3
1989	41.2	48.0	4.7
1990	43.2	67.3	6.2
1991	50.8	92.0	7.7
1992	56.5		(4.5) <sup>a</sup>
1993	54.4		(3.3) <sup>a</sup>

(a) appropriation as per cent of estimated expenditure.

Source: *Defence Reports* (defence spending to 1990); *Bank of Papua New Guinea Quarterly Economic Bulletins* (total government expenditure to 1990); *Budget Papers* 1993.

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increase force strength to 5000, improve salaries, initiate a review of military equipment, and deploy PNGDF troops overseas; but before these proposals had passed through cabinet there was a further change of government. In 1988 the annual *Defence Report* noted that most operational units were 70 per cent below strength and that the PNGDF was having difficulty retaining specialists. That year, however, a *Defence Policy Paper* outlined proposals for a ten-year programme to replace major equipment, reorganise force structure to emphasise operational mobility, and enhance capabilities in several areas.<sup>17</sup> Although cabinet approval for the PNGDF's Ten-Year Development Plan did not come until late 1991, after the government had undertaken a review of internal security, several policy changes were initiated in 1988-89, against the background of the emerging conflict between the security forces and rebels on Bougainville (see below). These included decisions to increase the strength of the force to 5200 by 1995, and to proceed with plans (approved in 1985) for the development of a reserve force. In 1989 the Australian government finally acceded to requests for the delivery of four Iroquois helicopters promised earlier, though with conditions attached to their use in the Bougainville conflict.<sup>18</sup> Australia also provided assistance, through the

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<sup>17</sup> See also *Defence Report 1988*.

<sup>18</sup> These conditions later became a source of contention. Initially it was intended that helicopters be provided for troop and supply transport and border surveillance work. There were delays in finalising the helicopter assistance project, and in June 1989, with the Bougainville conflict escalating, Defence Minister Sabumei told the Australians to deliver the helicopters now or forget about them. 'This is the same sort of nonsense the Australians have been dishing out under the so-called Joint Defence Program for years', he said, 'We are not going to take it anymore' (*Post-Courier*, 29 June 1989). The helicopters were handed over soon after, but with conditions attached. In a subsequent statement (quoted in *Post-Courier*, 25 June 1991) the Australian foreign minister said that they had been given for transportation of troops and supplies and [were] not to be used for other purposes; specifically, according to Australian defence sources, they were not to be used as 'gunships' (a term which later proved difficult to define). Under the helicopter assistance project the Australian government undertook to provide training for helicopter pilots and a spare parts support package, and to fund, but not to provide, pilots. A contract for the supply of pilots was arranged between the PNGDF and a local company. Civilian Australian and New Zealand pilots (some with military experience) were recruited locally. In 1991 it was admitted that the helicopters had been used in military offensives and that submachine guns and grenade launchers had been fired from the helicopters. The helicopters had also been used to dump bodies at sea. Despite the ensuing controversy, on a visit to Papua New Guinea in August 1991 Australia's defence minister said that Australia 'had taken a practical view of the helicopter incident', adding, 'It's a complex world we live in'. Subsequently the minister said that Australia would give or sell



DCP, to bring the infantry battalions up to strength and improve recruit training. It was further announced in 1991 that a military base was to be established, for a proposed engineer and infantry unit, in the highlands at Banz, and that from 1992 women would be recruited to the PNGDF.<sup>19</sup>

Between 1988 and 1992, the defence appropriation rose from K33.4 million to K56.5 million, and its proportion of total government spending from 3.7 to 4.5 per cent. More dramatic, however, has been the increase in actual spending: since 1987 defence spending has been substantially over budget; by 1991 defence spending had risen to K92.0 million, an overbudgeting of 81 per cent. The Defence Department has justified this by arguing that budget support has been inadequate to its tasks, especially in view of the Bougainville operation and the fact that in the restoration of government services in the North Solomons Province many of the costs attributable to other departments (Health, Education, Provincial Affairs, and so on) have been met by the Defence Department.<sup>20</sup> By 1993 this had become a source of some tension in civil-military relations. Moreover, from at least 1990, there were complaints from local suppliers that PNGDF accounts were not being paid. In August 1993 the PNGDF was said to be owing more than K3 million to business houses in Rabaul,<sup>21</sup> and the following month it was reported that naval and air craft could not be used because of lack of funds.<sup>22</sup> In Port Moresby soldiers returning from Bougainville attacked the pay office when they failed to receive due pay and allowances; at this stage unpaid special allowances and compensation payments were said to total K4.8 million.

By 1992 PNGDF force strength had risen to around 4200. But in presenting the 1993 budget, the minister for finance announced new

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defence equipment to Papua New Guinea without strings, or not at all. (For a more detailed discussion of the issues raised by this incident, see *Post-Courier*, 29 June 1989, 25, 26 June 1991, 12 August 1991; *Times of Papua New Guinea*, 15-21 June 1989; Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Hearings, 21 October 1990, pp.1699-1702, 22 October 1990, pp.741-51; Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, *Australia's Relations with Papua New Guinea*, pp.193-96.)

19 For a summary of the Ten-Year Development Plan see *Times of Papua New Guinea*, 27 June 1991, *Post-Courier*, 1 October 1991, 24 January 1992, 11 February 1992; *Draft Hansard*, 10 March 1992.

20 *Defence Report* 1990, p.32.

21 See *Times of Papua New Guinea*, 12 August 1993.

22 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14, 15 September 1993.

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strategies in the law and order sector, which recognised 'that there are limitations on the ability of the agencies concerned to control the current situation'.<sup>23</sup> With respect to the PNGDF:

... it is recognised that the Defence Force needs to be scaled down, become more involved in civic action, more involved with the village and community, more coordinated with other agencies in both the law and order and other sectors, and better disciplined.<sup>24</sup>

This was to be achieved through an expansion of the civic action programme (CAP) and a shift in training to engineering, construction, infrastructural development and community relations. The 'move into Civic Action' was to be accompanied by a reduction in force strength, through attrition, from 4200 to 2500-3000, 'most of whom will perform CAP activities at the village level'; a core group of 1000 to 1500 'will receive specialized combat training to prepare them to effectively counter any major internal threat'.<sup>25</sup>

As of mid-1993, it remains to be seen how the conflicting pressures, on the one hand for an enlarged, better equipped fighting force and on the other for a reduced civic-action-oriented force, will be resolved. At the same time as the finance minister was announcing a proposed cut in defence spending the PNGDF commander was announcing plans for a major programme of infrastructure development and a review of training methods.<sup>26</sup> Past experience suggests that a radical change in force size and structure is unlikely in the short run.

## Regional Representation

Papua New Guinea's ethnic diversity (over 700 language groups) is legendary, and in the period leading up to independence the possibility of ethnic fragmentation was a major concern both of the Australian administration and of the rising nationalist politicians.<sup>27</sup>

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23 1993 *Budget Documents*, Volume I, *Economic and Development Policies*, p.122.

24 *ibid.*

25 *ibid.*

26 See *Post-Courier*, 27 April 1993.

27 Colebatch ('To Find a Path', p.358) quotes an Australian newspaper report (*Age*, 4 May 1972) that in a survey of nearly 1000 trainee teachers in Papua New Guinea 80 per cent expected 'serious inter-tribal fighting or civil war at some time after



The emergence of a number of subnationalist or 'micronationalist' movements in the late 1960s and early 1970s - notably the Mataungan Association in East New Britain and separatist movements in Papua and the North Solomons (Bougainville) - exacerbated these fears.<sup>28</sup>

Recognising this (and bearing in mind that ethnic tensions had been a reason for the disbanding of the PIR in 1946), as early as 1951 the army's recruiting policy was carefully designed to achieve a regional balance. Initially the PIR sought to recruit equal numbers from Papua, the New Guinea islands, and the New Guinea mainland; but with the highlands closed to labour recruitment and difficulties of reaching more remote areas, in fact recruitment was biased towards the groups closest to Port Moresby (coastal people from Central, Gulf, and Northern [Oro] provinces), Lae (Morobe Province) and Rabaul (especially the better educated Tolai). Senior NCOs were predominantly Papuans from the wartime Papuan Infantry Battalion. In an article on 'Integrating the PIR' published in 1967, Harry Bell, an Australian major serving with PIR, noted:

Mutual suspicion remained high and clashes between tribal factions could, and did, flare up at any time. In particular the two largest groups, the Tolais and the Elema (Kerema) were in a state of constant friction.<sup>29</sup>

Following a fight between Kerema soldiers and Tolai military police in 1952, twelve Kerema soldiers were discharged.<sup>30</sup>

However, in the 1957 incident described above, in which the conflict was initially between civilian 'Keremas' and soldiers, the PIR soldiers 'displayed a unity which up to that time their officers had hardly believed possible'<sup>31</sup> - though Kiki<sup>32</sup> claims that Kerema soldiers 'were secretly on [the civilian Kerema] side'. Subsequently, particular efforts were made to recruit more widely and 'to prevent aggregations of any particular district group'.<sup>33</sup> Balanced representation was said to be pursued down to census division level (including the highlands),

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independence' and that some parts of the country would secede.

28 See May, *Micronationalist Movements*.

29 Bell, 'Integrating the P.I.R.', p.50.

30 Sinclair, *To Find a Path*, Volume II, pp.50-51.

31 *ibid.*

32 Kiki, *Ten Thousand Years in a Lifetime*, pp.87-89.

33 Bell, 'Integrating the P.I.R.', p.50.

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even though this sometimes meant taking on less qualified applicants.

The expansion of the PIR in 1963-65 gave the army the opportunity to achieve a better regional balance, although the fact that the army now sought higher education levels, for technical and officer training, meant that some coastal groups were still over-represented. Thus, five of the first six officers commissioned were from the Rigo district of Central Province, and NCO ranks were said to be dominated by 'Bukas' from the North Solomons.

Colebatch<sup>34</sup> gives the following figures of force strength for 1969:

	<u>recruiting</u> <u>quota</u>	<u>actual</u> <u>strength</u>
	%	%
New Guinea islands	17	30
Papua (excluding Southern Highlands)	25	22
New Guinea mainland	27	25
Highlands	30	22

These reveal a heavy 'over-representation' from the New Guinea islands and a corresponding 'under-representation' from the highlands. Later figures from Mench<sup>35</sup> show a reversal of the shares of the New Guinea islands and Papuan regions (22 and 30 per cent respectively) with the highlands even more disadvantaged (21 per cent). The regional imbalance was even more pronounced among the group of thirty senior officers, half of whom were Papuan (mostly from Central Province) and only one a highlander.

Initial fears of an ethnically divided army seem to have fairly quickly dissipated. In 1969, following clashes between police and landowners on Bougainville, and with the prospect of a military call-out, several Bougainvillean soldiers were sent back to their province to talk with people and report back to other Bougainvillean soldiers. 'This', it was said, 'reassured the soldiers'.<sup>36</sup> And in the following year, when troops were put on standby in East New Britain, a Tolai NCO

<sup>34</sup> 'To Find a Path', p.101.

<sup>35</sup> *The Role of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force*, pp.130-31.

<sup>36</sup> Colebatch, 'To Find a Path', p.346.



who was omitted from the draft complained and was included.<sup>37</sup> In fact, Bell observed in 1967 that with the new generation of 1960s recruits came a breakdown of 'tribal loyalty' and a rise in Papua New Guinea nationalism, even though some 'inter-tribal prejudices' remained.<sup>38</sup> Bell welcomed this, with the reservation that 'Perhaps we are merely creating yet another tribe'.

The achievement of integration in the PIR - the creation of what Olewale<sup>39</sup> described as 'a sort of super-tribe' - did not go unnoticed among those apprehensive about the future role of the military, who saw the unity of the army in an emerging state characterised by fissiparous tendencies as a potential threat to democratic rule.<sup>40</sup>

Soon after independence, the *Defence Report 1977-78* noted that although recruiting teams could no longer afford to visit every province,

... care is still taken to adjust numbers recruited from each region to maintain a reasonable balance within the Force *vis-a-vis* the population distribution throughout PNG.<sup>41</sup>

This comment was repeated ten years later. However 1990 figures of force strength by rank and province (see Table 2) suggest that regional representation is by no means balanced. In particular, they show a marked 'under-representation' of the populous highlands provinces, particularly at senior officer level,<sup>42</sup> and a significant 'over-representation' of coastal Papuans and New Guinean islanders at senior levels.

In the latter part of the 1980s there was a hint of regionalism in rumours of collaboration between some Papuan colonels and PNGDF-commander-turned-politician Ted Diro, and there was certainly regional sentiment evident in reaction outside the force to the sacking

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37 *ibid.* p.345.

38 Bell, 'Integrating the P.I.R.', p.56.

39 'The Impact of National Institutions on Village Communities', p.223.

40 For example, see Hastings, 'Thoughts on Taurama'.

41 *Defence Report 1977-78*, p.32.

42 Anecdotal evidence suggests that a number of highlander officers, dissatisfied with their rate of progress, have left the army and taken private employment.

TABLE 2  
Force Strength 31 December 1990, by Rank and Province

Province	Rank	Brig.Gen.	Col.	Lt.Col.	Major	Capt.	Lt(1, 2)	WO, Sgt	OR	OCdt/ Recruit	Total %	Percent of national population 1990**
Southern Region*	Central	1	5	5	37	43	39	172	927	4	1233	32.4
	Gulf	1	1	3	18	14	14	35	255	3	344	9.0
	Western		1		4	6	2	36	203		252	3.8
	Milne Bay			4	4	4	11	138		161	4.2	1.8
	Oro		2	1	6	12	15	50	169	1	256	6.7
		1	1	1	5	7	4	40	162		220	4.3
												5.8
New Guinea Islands Region	East New Britain	1	2	12	21	34	30	120	525	3	748	19.6
	West New Britain		2	1	7	4	6	40	172	2	234	6.1
	New Ireland				2	4	4	20	89		119	3.1
	North Solomons	1		6	6	9	12	19	106		159	4.2
	Manus			2	2	13	4	7	48		76	2.0
			3	4	4	4	4	34	110	1	160	4.3
												0.0
Highlands Region	Eastern Highlands		2		11	17	25	94	602	11	762	35.6
	Simbu			1	2	3	7	16	116	3	147	3.9
	Western Highlands				5	5	5	26	172	2	211	5.5
	Erga			1	1	3	1	22	103	2	137	3.6
	Southern Highlands				1	6		21	62	1	92	2.4
					3		11	9	149	3	175	6.5
												8.2
Morobe Region	Morobe		1	4	27	30	50	161	753	16	1042	27.4
	Madang			3	8	3	13	61	196	3	287	7.5
	East Sepik			2	7	9	26	166	2	212	5.6	9.9
	West Sepik	1		1	12	18	22	56	285	9	404	10.6
					5	2	6	18	106	2	139	3.7
National Capital District					1	3	3	1	15		23	0.6
	TOTAL	2	8	23	97	127	147	548	2822	34	3808	100.0

(Source: compiled from *Defence Report 1990*, p.31 [corrected for errors in original table] and 1990 National Census figures)

\* Southern Highlands Province, included for most purposes in the Southern (Papuan) Region, is included here in the Highlands Region, with which it has greater cultural and developmental affinity.

\*\* The national census could not be conducted in the North Solomons Province 'due to prevailing political situation'; an estimated figure of 160,000 has been used and the total calculated using this figure.

of three Papuan colonels (see below); however this does not appear to have reflected any serious ethnic division within the force. The Bougainville conflict, from 1988, posed a more serious test of ethnic sentiments, and indeed a few members of the force from the North Solomons apparently left in 1988-89; at least three former PNGDF officers (Sam Kauona, Joe Pais and Aloysius Makese) became prominent in the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA - see below). But, although Kemelfield suggests that, as the conflict escalated, 'racial trouble' developed - 'you began to see the ethnic trouble between black-skinned Bougainvilleans and so-called red-skinned Papua New Guineans; it became quite intense'<sup>43</sup> - there is no evidence that Bougainvillean ethnic attachments have posed a significant problem for the PNGDF's command structure.<sup>44</sup>

### Civic Action

Despite early concerns in some quarters that the defence force's civic action programme might subvert the authority of the civilian government (see above), civic action continued to be an important aspect of the PNGDF's role. Much of the civic action programme was carried out by the Engineer Battalion, whose functions, after 1973, included assistance to the government in civil emergencies and projects of national importance. But the army's Preventative Medicine Platoon also played a significant role and PIR patrols regularly undertook minor civic action work.

For several years projects under the civic action programme received specific budgetary assistance through the government's National Public Expenditure Programme. Following budgetary cuts, however, in 1981 the *Defence Report* complained that no allocation had been received for civic action work. Though civic action funding was restored in 1987, an allocation of K3 million was diverted the following year from civic action to the National Development Fund (the so-called

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<sup>43</sup> Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Hearings, 22 October 1990, p.793. The 1989 Bika Report also accused the security forces of racism (North Solomons Provincial Government (NSPG), *Provincial Select Committee Report on the Bougainville Crisis* (Bika Report) (Arawa, 1989), pp.15, 36.

<sup>44</sup> In a reported interview in *Islands Business Pacific*, April 1993, a survivor of a PNGDF attack on a group from the BRA said: 'There was a Bougainvillean among the army and two of my companions were from the same village as him, so they pleaded with him to spare us alive but he never helped. He never listened' (p.25).



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politicians' 'slush fund'). In 1989 a Defence General Board of Inquiry observed that there had been a decline in civic action programmes since 1983, and in 1989 and 1990, with the PNGDF's commitment in Bougainville, no civic action work was undertaken.<sup>45</sup>

Following efforts to restore services in the North Solomons Province (see below) some civic action work has been recently undertaken on Bougainville, and the engineer units involved - unlike their RPIR comrades - appear to have been universally well received.

In 1992, Defence Secretary Peter Peipul suggested that there was a renewed commitment to civic action. Under a Regional Engineer Project it was proposed to relocate the Engineer Battalion headquarters from Port Moresby to Lae, with a detachment remaining in Port Moresby, and to establish a base at Banz in the highlands,<sup>46</sup> further bases were planned for the Momase (north coast), New Guinea Islands, and Papuan (south coast) regions. 'The PNG Defence Force is moving away from the traditional practice of "sit back and respond as required" to a more adventurous approach of moving out to seek jobs', Peipul said;

... the overall function of the concept is to gain acceptance for the PNG Defence Force back in rural communities, so that the PNG Defence Force can be identified as an integral part of PNG society.<sup>47</sup>

Australian Army engineers had become involved in civic action projects in the 1960s. In 1963, under an agreement between the Australian Army and the Papua New Guinea administration, a District Engineer's Office (DEO) was created to carry out civic action work for the civilian Public Works Department. The DEO was initially based in the Northern (Oro) Province, where it installed a town water reticulation system and electricity supply, built a hospital and extended the road system. Later the DEO moved to the Southern Highlands, where it was engaged in a number of development

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<sup>45</sup> *Defence Report 1989*, p.12, *Defence Report 1990*, p.32.

<sup>46</sup> In May 1993 Defence Minister Tohian told parliament that plans to establish an engineer unit at Banz had been postponed because of the Bougainville crisis.

<sup>47</sup> Peter I. Peipul, *Papua New Guinea-Australia Defence and Security Relations*, Working Paper No.261 (Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1992) p.6.

projects, including the extension of the highlands highway. Sinclair<sup>48</sup> recalls that in the Southern Highlands in the 1970s 'DEO virtually operated as an office of Public Works Department' and employed a large civilian workforce. Following the creation of an engineer unit in PIR/PNGDF the Australian engineer unit remained in the Southern Highlands. In 1990 the Australian Army agreed to assist in the establishment of an engineer unit at Vanimo; two Australian Defence Force personnel were posted there in 1991 and the unit was established the following year.

In 1988 a US engineer unit assisted the PNGDF in civic action work in Central and North Solomons provinces, in what appears to have been the first of several such joint exercises. Four years later, as part of Papua New Guinea's defence 'diversification policy', a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with Indonesia, securing Indonesian military assistance for a water reticulation project in the Eastern Highlands (in the electorate of the defence minister of the time) as part of the civic action programme, though to date (1993) the project has not materialised.

As noted above, a statement by the minister for finance and planning late in 1992 announced a new law and order strategy which would substantially increase the defence force's commitment to civic action. Such a strategy, however, is bound to meet some resistance from those within the PNGDF who see the force's principal role as being a fighting unit.

### **Defence Intelligence**

Until 1988 separate intelligence sections existed within the PNGDF and the Department of Defence. These appear to have had their own sources of intelligence, especially along the Irian Jaya border, and to have received information from Australia. There was also, from 1981, a National Intelligence Organisation (NIO) within the Prime Minister's Department. In 1987-88 growing antipathy between defence intelligence and the NIO<sup>49</sup> provided the occasion for a 'rationalisation' of intelligence capability under a Defence Intelligence Branch (DIB). The DIB is located within the Defence Department,

<sup>48</sup> To Find A Path, Volume II, pp.29-30.

<sup>49</sup> For example see Poang's comments in the *Post-Courier*, 29 September 1988: 'NIO is



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headed by a civilian, and is responsible to the Defence Council; within the DIB are a civilian Directorate of Strategic Defence Intelligence, responsible for providing strategic assessments, and a Directorate of Military Intelligence which directly supports PNGDF operations.<sup>50</sup> Following a reorganisation of the NIO, with Australian assistance, and the appointment of former PNGDF commander Ken Noga to head NIO, relations between defence intelligence and NIO appear to have improved, though some observers suggest that the quality of intelligence leaves something to be desired. There have also been occasional complaints that Australian intelligence sources have unduly influenced decisions in Papua New Guinea, specifically in relation to the rumours of coups in 1977 (which led to Poang's resignation - see below) and 1987 (which resulted in Brigadier-General Huai's dismissal), and to the removal of Brigadier-General Mamae in 1983 and the sacking of Colonel Nuia in 1991 (see below).

### Youth Service

In the pre-independence period the Australian Army maintained a school cadet corps in Papua New Guinea. A number of the PNGDF's first Papua New Guinean officers came to a military career through this path. In 1973, however, the cadet corps became a casualty of the reorganisation of the defence forces, and though there have been occasional calls for the reintroduction of a cadet corps<sup>51</sup> it seems unlikely to be revived. There were also proposals in the immediate pre-independence years for some form of national youth service, usually combining military training with vocational or rural skills training and community service; indeed the year before independence a government committee was set up to look at such proposals, but nothing came of its report. In 1981 the government established a (non-military) National Youth Movement Programme, intended to engage young men in training programmes and community development work. Over the next few years several youth service schemes were pursued, fitfully, within this programme with varying degrees of success.<sup>52</sup> Four years later Brigadier-General Huai

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just a joke'.

<sup>50</sup> *Defence Report 1988*, p.50.

<sup>51</sup> For example, see *Post-Courier*, 16 November 1984.

<sup>52</sup> See M. O'Collins, *Youth in Papua New Guinea: With Reference to Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu*, Political and Social Change Monograph 3 (Department of Political



supported the idea of a national youth service (NYS), but warned that young people must be guaranteed a future beyond the NYS, 'Otherwise I see the service as a dangerous element'.<sup>53</sup> Subsequently the creation of a NYS was included in the Pangu Pati's election platform. In 1988 the recently elected Wingti government appointed a task force to formulate a structure for a national youth scheme within the Department of Home Affairs and Youth, and the NEC approved a proposal for a voluntary NYS, to commence in 1991. Also in 1988 the Defence White Paper recommended a compulsory two-year military training scheme for young men, oriented towards an expanded civic action programme, though given the budgetary constraints under which the PNGDF had been operating a national service scheme never seemed likely to be implemented.

Early in 1991 proposals for a youth national service scheme emerged yet again, this time in the context of a national crime summit called by Prime Minister Namaliu. A submission from Forests Minister Karl Stack called for the introduction of national service and the formation of a National Guard.<sup>54</sup> Stack proposed a twelve-month period of civil and military training, which would be a prerequisite for entry into the public service, PNGDF and tertiary educational institutions; such training, he said, would 'instil a sense of patriotism in our youth and ... give them basic military skills and civic skills'. Stack also suggested that ex-Gurkha troops be employed to help set up and train the National Guard: 'They have extensive experience in civil order control situations [and] their construction and civic actions capabilities are legendary'.<sup>55</sup> The NEC subsequently approved in principle a slightly modified version of Stack's proposal. In announcing plans for the introduction of the National Guard, Namaliu said:

About half the training will be military and discipline oriented, with the balance being actual community

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and Social Change, Australian National University, Canberra, 1984).

53 *Post-Courier*, 23 December 1985.

54 For details of the 1991 proposals, their critics, and subsequent modifications, see T.M. Boyce, *The Introduction of the Civilian National Service Scheme for Youth in Papua New Guinea*, Working Paper No.237 (Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1991).

55 *Post-Courier*, 20 March 1991.

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work in constructing roads, repairing buildings and facilities, and delivering services to the community.<sup>56</sup>

A new Ministry of the Interior (as proposed by Stack) was created, and a task force, headed by former PNGDF colonel, Ian Glanville, was appointed to recommend on the implementation of the proposals. Moves to recruit ex-Gurkhas were set in train through a Nepalese recruiting agency.

The announcement of the government's intention to establish a National Guard evoked widespread and frequently strong criticism. The shadow minister for police and defence described the proposal as 'dangerous' and suggested (it being at the time of the Gulf War) that 'the government is trying to set up an elite army similar to Saddam Hussein's Republican Guard'.<sup>57</sup> Others criticised the military orientation of the scheme, its likely cost, and the fact that it cut across existing policy initiatives. The Department of Home Affairs and Youth pointed out that the NEC had already agreed to the creation of a NYS, and the Defence Department argued that a youth national service programme, linked to the PNGDF, was already under consideration. PNGDF officers also appear to have been generally opposed to the National Guard proposal and specifically to the importation of Gurkhas as training officers. The Papua New Guinea Council of Churches suggested that 'The use of military force or a paramilitary service ... in rehabilitating young people ... only encourages aggressive mentality'.<sup>58</sup> and several provincial leaders said that they would not have National Guard units in their provinces (though Glanville [in an interview in November 1991] said that, after briefing, provincial opposition had been largely withdrawn).

In response to this opposition, the term 'national service corps (NSC)' replaced 'national guard', it was announced that national service training would not be military-oriented, and plans for recruiting Gurkhas were dropped.<sup>59</sup> Rather, national service was to place emphasis upon basic trade skills, human development (including sex and drug guidance, Christian ethics, respect for authority, and patriotism and loyalty to the state), discipline training, and survival

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<sup>56</sup> *Post-Courier*, 15 March 1991.

<sup>57</sup> *Post-Courier*, 21 March 1991.

<sup>58</sup> *Times of Papua New Guinea*, 11 April 1991.

<sup>59</sup> *Post-Courier*, 12 July 1991, 7 August 1991.



and search and rescue training. Training was to be done largely by former teachers and security forces personnel, with active involvement by church and community organisations.<sup>60</sup> National service training was to begin on a trial basis in 1992.

Meanwhile, in early 1992 a photograph in the *Post-Courier* showed 'the country's first Crime Prevention Brigade', comprising about one hundred young men from a settlement in Port Moresby, who were members of the National Youth Service of the Department of Home Affairs and Youth (soon after transferred to the Department of Education); their role was described as being to 'help police monitor criminal activity'.<sup>61</sup>

Following a change of government in the mid-1992 national elections, however, and the establishment of a new Village Services Programme, it was announced that the NSC would cease; its infrastructure and resources, along with those of the NYS, were taken over by a newly created Department of Village Services and Provincial Affairs.

### **External Threat versus Internal Security**

In the early discussion of the role to be played by a defence force in independent Papua New Guinea, primary emphasis was placed on its function of defence against external threat. Yet it was frequently observed that Papua New Guinea was unlikely to be able to defend itself against an external aggressor; it was generally assumed that the most a PNGDF could do would be to mount a holding operation until assistance arrived from Australia. As Somare said in 1972:

... if we align ourselves with powerful allies like Australia, New Zealand and the US, we should have nothing to fear from an external aggressor. I can't see Australia just sitting down doing nothing if the Vietnamese start down the corridors of West Irian and walking in here.<sup>62</sup>

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60 Boyce, *The Introduction of the Civilian National Service Scheme*; *Post-Courier*, 7 August 1991; interview with Glanville, November 1991.

61 *Post-Courier*, 13 February 1992.

62 *Post-Courier*, 20 April 1972. Twenty years later Defence Minister (and former



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Somare clearly expected a defence treaty with Australia,<sup>63</sup> but as O'Neill<sup>64</sup> argued at the time: 'such a linkage could prove very embarrassing ... formal treaties are out'. Instead, in an exchange of letters and a joint statement in 1977 the two countries affirmed that their governments 'attached high importance to continuing the close co-operation between their two countries in defence matters' and declared their intent 'to consult, at the request of either, about matters affecting their common security interests'. Ten years later the two countries signed a new Joint Declaration of Principles Guiding Relations Between Papua New Guinea and Australia. This reaffirmed the commitment to consultation, adding,

In the event of external armed attack threatening the national sovereignty of either country, such consultation would be conducted for the purpose of each Government deciding what measures should be taken, jointly or separately, in relation to that attack.

The changed wording of the Joint Declaration seemed superficial, but Prime Minister Wingti welcomed it as 'an improvement' on the 1977 undertaking<sup>65</sup> and Papua New Guinea's Defence Secretary Stephen Mokis considered 'that the undertakings reflected in the 1987 JDP [Joint Declaration of Principles ...] provide an effective guarantee of Australian commitment'; indeed, he said bluntly, 'Papua New Guinea considers Australia as a security guarantor in the event of uncertainty and threats'.<sup>66</sup>

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diplomat) Sabumei suggested that this general view still prevailed: the PNGDF did not have the capacity to match any foreign force, he said; 'It would now seem that the use of diplomacy as a means to protect our national sovereignty and integrity is the only tool available to us' (*Post-Courier*, 26 November 1992).

63 In 1972 an Australian Labor Party (ALP) policy statement said that the ALP would seek a defence treaty with Papua New Guinea; Labor won the Australian elections in 1972 but dropped the proposal soon after taking office. (See Mench, *The Role of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force*, pp.50-51.)

64 'The Australian-PNG Defence Relationship', p.70.

65 *Post-Courier*, 15 December 1987.

66 Stephen P. Mokis, 'A Papua New Guinea Security Viewpoint and its Implications on PNG/Australia Relations', Paper presented to Bicentennial Conference, 'Australia and the World: Prologue and Prospects' (Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1988), published as 'Papua New Guinea and Australia' in Desmond Ball (ed.), *Australia and the World: Prologue and Prospects* (Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1990), p.309. According to Mokis, following cuts in Australian aid to Papua New Guinea in 1986, Papua New Guinea sought a mutual defence treaty.

In fact, Papua New Guinea has faced no real external threat. On independence the Papua New Guinea government adopted a 'universalist' foreign policy, based on the principle of friendship to as many countries as possible and hostility to none except racist regimes. There have been minor changes in this policy, to reflect the relative importance of Papua New Guinea's relations with other countries, but without any significant defence implications.

If there has been any perceived external threat to Papua New Guinea's security, it has been seen as coming from the immediate west. Not only has Indonesia's history of expansionism occasionally worried Papua New Guineans (one minister for defence losing his portfolio for publicly expressing such fears), but the existence of a separatist movement, the Organisasi Papua Merdeka (OPM, Free Papua Movement), in Indonesia's neighbouring province of Irian Jaya has caused problems along the border.<sup>67</sup> Since the mid-1960s the OPM has operated in the rugged terrain of the border area and from time to time both OPM guerillas and non-belligerent villagers have crossed into Papua New Guinea to escape Indonesian army patrols. In 1984 some 13,000 refugees crossed in the wake of heavy-handed Indonesian action against suspected OPM sympathisers, causing heightened tension in the relations between the two countries, and there have been several incursions by the Indonesian military - during one of which, in 1988, shots were exchanged with PNGDF soldiers. Papua New Guinea has continued to deny Indonesia any right of hot pursuit across the border and has declined Indonesian suggestions that the two countries conduct joint patrols on the border; but it has also refused sanctuary to the OPM and has destroyed OPM camps found within its territory.

After 1978 the PNGDF conducted regular patrols along the border, though responsibility for border control has been formally in the hands of the departments of Foreign Affairs or Provincial Affairs

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This was apparently supported in Australian defence circles but opposed by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (see P. King, 'Breaking Deadlocks: Peace-making Opportunities for Australia in East Timor, West Papua and Papua New Guinea' in G. Smith and St.J. Kettle (eds), *Threats Without Enemies: Rethinking Australia's Security* (Pluto Press, Sydney, 1992), p.219.

<sup>67</sup> See R.J. May (ed.), *Between Two Nations: The Indonesia-Papua New Guinea Border and West Papuan Nationalism* (Robert Brown & Associates, Bathurst, 1986); and R.J. May, "'Mutual Respect, Friendship and Cooperation'? The Indonesia-Papua New Guinea Border and its Effects on Relations between Papua New Guinea and Indonesia', *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, Vol.19, No.4, 1987.



and seen essentially as a police function.<sup>68</sup> As will be seen below, the Papua New Guinea government's relations with Indonesia and its handling of the border situation became one of the main points of contention between military personnel and politicians in the late 1970s and 1980s. With the commitment of troops on Bougainville from 1988, however, border patrolling has been minimal.

In 1986 Papua New Guinea and Indonesia signed a Treaty of Mutual Respect, Friendship and Cooperation, which did little to change the substance of the relationship between the two countries<sup>69</sup> but formalised existing arrangements, including a commitment to consultation and to 'not threaten or use force against each other'. More recently the two countries have established closer defence relations (see above), which were reported to include the possibility of 'coordinated patrols' in the border area.

In the absence of external threat, the PNGDF's most celebrated action came in 1980 when, on gaining independence, the neighbouring Melanesian state of Vanuatu requested Papua New Guinea's assistance in putting down a separatist rebellion on the island of Espiritu Santo. Although the PNGDF's involvement was opposed by the then opposition leader, Somare, the Papua New Guinea government quickly responded and defeat of the rebel force was achieved in a brief, efficient and almost bloodless operation (made possible by Australian logistic support). The venture brought considerable satisfaction to both the PNGDF and the Papua New Guinea government of Sir Julius Chan. Papua New Guinea subsequently provided assistance to Vanuatu (with DCP funding) in the training of a paramilitary mobile force.

Inspired by the PNGDF's success in Vanuatu, Chan subsequently proposed participation in a regional peacekeeping force. He received little support in this either from the PNGDF or from

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68 For details on the handling of the border situation and its security implications see May, *Between Two Nations*; E.P. Wolfers (ed.), *Beyond the Border* (University of Papua New Guinea Press, Port Moresby, and The Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, Suva, 1988); B. Blaskett, *Papua New Guinea-Indonesia Relations: A New Perspective on the Border Conflict*, unpublished PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1989; and T.M. Boyce, *Infrastructure and Security: Problems of Development in the West Sepik Province of Papua New Guinea*, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence No.93 (Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1992).

69 See May, "Mutual Respect, Friendship and Cooperation"?



politicians, though the concept continues to be revived from time to time (see, for example, Peipul's 1992 support for a rapid [regional] deployment force). There has also been occasional support for PNGDF participation in UN peacekeeping operations.<sup>70</sup>

While early discussions of the PNGDF emphasised its external defence role there was ambivalence about its possible use in maintaining internal security. As early as 1971, in the wake of increasing lawlessness in the highlands, highlands politicians called for the use of the PIR 'for security purposes' and supported proposals for the secondment of PIR officers to train police, particularly police riot squads.<sup>71</sup> Pangu Pati opposition leader Somare opposed the secondment of PIR officers and was supported in this by the Police Association.<sup>72</sup> In the event, Australian police officers were brought up for the task. Two years later, however, Somare, as chief minister, in the face of Police Association opposition, approved the secondment of four Australian Army officers to assist in police training and administration, three of whom were posted to riot squads. At a PNGDF passing out parade that year Somare told recruits that the army could be used against Papua New Guineans after independence, but only as a last resort.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, according to Mench, following the call-out of troops in 1970, 'internal security training [had] been emphasised by the Defence Force'; in 1974 25-30 per cent of the training time of the infantry battalions was devoted to internal security training.<sup>74</sup>

Apart from concerns about the threat to the perceived authority of the civil government, reservations about military involvement in what was seen as essentially police work had to do with doubts about soldiers' willingness to confront their fellow citizens, especially those from their home provinces (though this apparently had not been a significant problem for the police). In recent years commentators have suggested that 'the performance of the

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<sup>70</sup> For example, see *Post-Courier*, 20 October 1988.

<sup>71</sup> See *Post-Courier*, 18 October 1971, 23 December 1971.

<sup>72</sup> *Post-Courier*, 28 December 1971, 7 January 1972.

<sup>73</sup> *Post-Courier*, 14 December 1972.

<sup>74</sup> *The Role of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force*, p.117. See also the discussion of this issue in Australian official documents (Walsh and Munster (eds.), *Documents ...*, chapter ix) - especially the comment by Defence Minister Barnard in 1973: 'Australia would not want the defence force involved in internal security ... ever during the next two years' (p.309).

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internal security role is not popular with officers'.<sup>75</sup> A 1972 interview cited by Mench,<sup>76</sup> on the other hand, suggested strong support among defence force officers, at that time, for an internal security role, and interviews conducted by Peta Colebatch with PIR soldiers in the early 1970s concerning their involvement in internal security operations suggested that opinions varied: while some feared a loss of civilian respect others were 'excited' about the prospect of action on the Gazelle Peninsula.<sup>77</sup> My own recent discussions with a random group of soldiers suggests that attitudes towards internal security operations remain mixed.

Another cause of concern has been a long-standing antipathy between police and army. Just before independence hundreds of police and soldiers had been involved in a brawl in Port Moresby in which tear gas was used, and another major confrontation took place in 1982. Such antipathy has been fuelled over the years by police perceptions of the army as a favoured elite and by army resentment over occasional police actions against off-duty soldiers. (One effect of the Bougainville conflict, and perhaps recent joint action in the highlands, seems to have been to bring the police and army closer together.)<sup>78</sup>

As the general law and order situation in the country deteriorated, and particularly after the declaration of a state of emergency in the five highlands provinces in 1979, opposition to the use of the army for internal security purposes diminished. From as early as 1977 there were calls for the deployment of the PNGDF to assist police in dealing with tribal fighting and criminal activity in the highlands<sup>79</sup> and in 1983 an examination of the role of the PNGDF in maintaining internal security was being undertaken in conjunction with the minister for police.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Y. Saffu, 'Military Roles and Relations in Papua New Guinea', in V. Selochan (ed.), *The Military, The State, and Development in Asia and the Pacific* (Westview Press, Boulder, 1991), p.227. Saffu cites the evidence of PNGDF personnel to a Defence General Board of Inquiry, reported in *Post-Courier*, 30 March 1989; the main objection here, however, was to 'small-scale police operations'.

<sup>76</sup> *The Role of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force*, pp.154, 209-10.

<sup>77</sup> Colebatch, 'To Find a Path', pp.347-48.

<sup>78</sup> See Peipul, *Papua New Guinea-Australia Defence and Security Relations*.

<sup>79</sup> For example, see *Post-Courier*, 22 March 1978, 2, 3 May 1978, 19 July 1979, 11 April 1980, 23 September 1980, 19 January 1981, 7, 12, 13 August 1981.

<sup>80</sup> See Defence General Board of Inquiry, *Report ...*, attachment 01, p.4.



The first actual post-independence call-out in aid of the civilian authority, however, did not occur until 1984. (In 1983 and 1984 the Air Transport Squadron had been used to airlift police mobile squads in the highlands but PIR units were not involved.) Towards the end of 1984 the government announced a list of measures to deal with law and order problems, including call-out of PNGDF personnel to assist police. Diro, by then a member of parliament, supported the use of troops.<sup>81</sup>

In the last days of 1984 the PNGDF was called out to assist police following the declaration of a state of emergency occasioned by rising urban crime and violence in Port Moresby. 'Operation Green Beret', as the exercise was called, lasted for about four months and was generally regarded as a success, though the urban crime rate quickly rose when the state of emergency ended, and two months later the troops were called out again in the National Capital District, in 'Operation Hot Spot', which lasted five months.

On several occasions in the early 1980s there were demands from national politicians to use the PNGDF to quell tribal fighting, particularly in Enga Province. In a *Post-Courier* article in 1985 former PNGDF officer Ian Glanville opposed such suggestions, arguing

... the deeply ingrained problems of tribal animosity and confrontation will not be solved by the injection of yet another 'tribe' into the conflict, especially one that can outgun, outthink and outrun the rest ... To have a disciplined, armed and trained Papua New Guinean in uniform, shooting other Papua New Guineans in a situation other than where the 'national security or the preservation of public order exists' [sic] will forfeit any claim we might have to being a Christian, democratic, and enlightened country, and destroy forever our fragile national unity.<sup>82</sup>

However, in 1987, a year in which national elections were held, the PNGDF was called out to assist police in law and order operations in

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<sup>81</sup> *Post-Courier*, 24 October 1984.

<sup>82</sup> *Post-Courier*, 10 December 1985. In this article Glanville refers to a 1981 report on tribal fighting in Enga, prepared by Glanville and Huai, which recommended against PNGDF intervention and proposed a restructuring of the provincial government.



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Morobe, Madang and Eastern Highlands provinces ('Operation Coolex'), and the following year it was mobilised to assist in 'Operation LOMET 88' ('Law and Order: Murder, Entry and Tribal Fighting') in the highlands provinces, Morobe and Madang, and later East Sepik. LOMET 88 lasted for over three months and it attracted a great deal of publicity (see below); but the PNGDF's role in it, though conspicuous, was limited - of 519 security forces personnel involved (including 308 from the Police Mobile Squad) only 33 were from the PNGDF.<sup>83</sup> The *Defence Report 1988* also recorded a four-day 'Operation Iron Foot' during an industrial dispute at the Ok Tedi gold and copper mine near the Irian Jaya border (though troops were apparently not in fact deployed).<sup>84</sup>

Late in 1988 there was a further request, from the Morobe provincial law and order committee for PNGDF assistance to counter serious crime in Lae and Garaina.<sup>85</sup> But by this time the force was on standby awaiting a government decision on whether it was to be called out to assist the police on Bougainville. (The subsequent role of the PNGDF in the Bougainville crisis is discussed in more detail below.) A Defence General Board of Inquiry appointed to investigate a riot by PNGDF personnel in 1989 was critical of what it referred to as 'previous premature deployment of the PNGDF ... to assist the police to contain civil disorders', alleging that this had demoralised the RPNGC and had been done without any clear definition of the roles and functions of the soldiers deployed.<sup>86</sup> Notwithstanding this, PNGDF personnel were used again 1991 to provide additional security during the South Pacific Games in Port Moresby and to assist police in 'crime busting operations' in Morobe Province.

In 1992 it was something of a measure of the extent to which the army had come to be accepted as having a 'law and order' role that in outlining arrangements for the conduct of the national election it was said to be 'necessary to call upon the services of the Defence Force ... to assist the Electoral Commissioner before, during and after the election'.<sup>87</sup> On the eve of the elections some 1300 police and 50 soldiers paraded through Mount Hagen in a display of force.

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<sup>83</sup> Draft Hansard, 10 November 1988, p.28.

<sup>84</sup> *Defence Report 1988*, p.5.

<sup>85</sup> *Post-Courier*, 20 December 1988.

<sup>86</sup> Defence General Board of Inquiry, *Report ...*, p.54.

<sup>87</sup> *Post-Courier*, 24 March 1992.

Despite the general acceptance of the PNGDF's role in internal security situations, however, the acceptance was slow to be recognised in official statements. In 1984, shortly before the first call-out of the PNGDF to aid the civil authority, the NEC's list of priority functions put internal security last. The *Defence Report 1984-85*, however, stated that 'national security and development was foremost in our activities'.<sup>88</sup> In 1987, in a statement delivered on resigning from cabinet (see below), Diro said:

Clearly a military option for the defence of Papua New Guinea is out. The Defence Force must now be tailored to give priority to training in low intensity type of operations, civil aid tasks, internal security problems, rapid deployment to assist police or in instances of hijacking and of course surveillance of both land and sea boundaries.<sup>89</sup>

And the following year Defence Secretary Mokis told an Australian seminar that his department's view was that 'there is a far greater prospect of PNG being troubled seriously by internal rather than external security problems', confirming (unsourced) 1980 predictions that the most likely use of the defence force would be to deal with internal security problems. Interestingly, he saw the main challenges coming not from tribal fighting or separatism but from increasing criminal activities:

... concentrations of unemployed people, many of whom are young and smarting from unfulfilled expectations, have provided a fertile breeding ground for criminal activities. These trends have coincided ... with a general decline in the efficiency of PNG administration and, perhaps most notably in this context, a significant weakening of the system of justice - the police, the courts and the gaols. Other potential sources of internal insecurity, such as tribal fighting and separatism, have caused difficulties in the past but at present seem of far less concern.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> *Defence Report 1984-85*, p.54.

<sup>89</sup> *Times of Papua New Guinea*, 19-25 November 1987.

<sup>90</sup> Mokis, 'Papua New Guinea and Australia', p.304.



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Yet in 1989, having noted the PNGDF's responsibility for defending the nation from 'external threats and internal uprisings', the defence minister went on to say that 'internal uprising and internal security [was] the responsibility of the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary'.<sup>91</sup>

In 1990, facing an escalating law and order problem across the country, and with a crisis in Bougainville still unresolved, the Namaliu government set up a Security Review Task Force and, shortly after, convened a National Summit on Crime. As an outcome of these initiatives a report was prepared, entitled *Security for Development*.<sup>92</sup> The report observed that crime appeared to be increasing 'in volume and spread, variety and seriousness', that the overall government presence in many rural areas appeared to have declined, that 'perceived political instability ... is sometimes thought to have given rise to public questioning of the durability of particular leaders, policies and even laws', and that the disciplined services had not been able to cope with 'sources of law-breaking and disorder'.<sup>93</sup> It also referred to 'the growing frequency with which call-outs of the PNGDF in aid to the civil power and states of emergency have been declared' and noted that the disciplined services were being increasingly required to work together.<sup>94</sup> Among a number of recommendations the report proposed the establishment of a Joint Services Command Centre (chaired, 'perhaps most appropriately in current circumstances', by the police commissioner), the creation of an Office of Security Coordination and Assessment in the Prime Minister's Department, and the progressive integration of the disciplined forces ('subject to review and even possible reversal').<sup>95</sup> It also suggested that 'the most serious, foreseeable threats facing Papua New Guinea are internal' and that the

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<sup>91</sup> Defence Report 1989.

<sup>92</sup> *Security for Development: Integrating the Government's Response to the National Summit on Crime into a Comprehensive and Planned Approach to Law and Order*, Government Paper (Acting Government Printer, Port Moresby, 1991).

<sup>93</sup> *ibid.*, pp.11, 17, unnumbered.

<sup>94</sup> *ibid.*, p.24.

<sup>95</sup> *ibid.*, pp.23-30. The idea of amalgamating the police and army in a paramilitary field force was rejected in 1974 (see above) but the idea has continued to re-emerge from time to time, notably in a proposal by the then Defence Minister, Noel Levi, in 1981 (see *Post-Courier*, 17 December 1981), at a seminar in Port Moresby in 1982 (see Ball, *The Internal and External Security of Papua New Guinea ...*), and in the context of a ministerial review in 1983.



priorities of the PNGDF 'should be reviewed and, as may be appropriate, re-ordered'.<sup>96</sup>

The demand for a change of focus was supported by Defence Minister Benais Sabumei, who in 1990 had suggested that Papua New Guinea faced a far greater threat from internal security threats than from external problems<sup>97</sup> and in 1991 told a PNGDF passing out parade that 'The real future of our Defence Force is to assist the civil authorities deal effectively with these threats'.<sup>98</sup>

Simultaneously, the Australian government undertook a review of its security assistance programmes for Papua New Guinea, and in September 1991 the two governments released a statement (see Appendix 2) which announced that Papua New Guinea was to give highest priority to internal security needs, and that Australian assistance would be geared to supporting Papua New Guinea's disciplined forces in maintaining internal security, including law and order.<sup>99</sup> This was to be done by way of training and the provision and funding of infrastructure, equipment and other support facilities. But it is notable that, following well-publicised reports of abuses by Papua New Guinea's security forces on Bougainville, an Australian government document described Australia's military training efforts as having several components 'designed to strengthen soldiers' awareness of humanitarian law to provide guidance concerning proper treatment of civilians during security operations'. Operational training, it said, was 'based on Australian Defence Force doctrine, which in turn draws on the Geneva Convention'.<sup>100</sup>

Thus within sixteen years of independence the priorities of the PNGDF had been effectively reversed and the possibility of an integrated paramilitary force revived, though to date there has been no

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<sup>96</sup> *ibid.*, p.36.

<sup>97</sup> *Post-Courier*, 6 November 1990.

<sup>98</sup> *Post-Courier*, 2 July 1991.

<sup>99</sup> In 1991 the Papua New Guinea government had again sought, unsuccessfully, a formal security cooperation treaty with Australia (see *Post-Courier*, 12 August 1991; Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, *Australia's Relations with Papua New Guinea*, p.176. The Agreed Statement on Security Cooperation is reproduced in Appendix 2.

<sup>100</sup> G. Evans, *Government Response to the Report of the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade on Australia's Relations with Papua New Guinea*. Mimeo, n.d., pp.34-35.

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move to implement the latter proposal, which remains unpopular among both RPNGC and PNGDF personnel.

#### **Military-Civil Relations**

From a very early stage, the Australian officers responsible for the training of Papua New Guinean soldiers were anxious to instil in their protégés the idea of the subservience of the military to the civil authority, and to ensure that relations between the military and politicians were cordial (see above). Following the 1957 riots a member of the then Department of District Services and Native Administration was appointed as liaison officer between the military and the administration, and in the 1960s members of the House of Assembly were taken on tours of military establishments in Port Moresby.

The achievement of cordial civil-military relations should have been rendered easier in post-independence Papua New Guinea by the fact that, given the nature of pre-colonial Papua New Guinean societies (for the most part small and non-hierarchical) and the brief period of effective colonial administration in much of the country, defence force personnel and the emerging nationalist politicians and civil servants came from similar village backgrounds, and in the case of the better educated had been to the same government-run schools in much the same age cohort. The PNGDF's first Papua New Guinean commander, Ted Diro, for example, came from a village in the Rigo district, where his father had been a plantation labourer and a carrier for the Allied troops during World War II. In common with the other two young men selected for early officer training, and with many of the leading politicians and civil servants of the late 1960s and 1970s, he had attended the government high school at Sogeri. But perhaps because of the military ethos inherited from the colonial period, and the nature of the military training, relations between senior military officers on the one hand, and politicians and public servants on the other, were not particularly close; indeed Sinclair describes relations in the early 1970s as 'frosty'.<sup>101</sup> Politicians tended to see the military as elitist and a possible threat to civilian rule, and the military had misgivings about

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<sup>101</sup> Sinclair, *To Find a Path*, Volume II, p.297; see also O'Neill, 'The Army in Papua-New Guinea'; Sundhaussen, 'Australia's Future Defence Relations with Papua New Guinea'.



politicians who questioned the future role of the defence force and suggested that it might be too big.<sup>102</sup>

But despite this degree of separation of military and civilian circles, within the first few years of independence there were suggestions that the higher echelons of the military were being politicised.

Diro and Lowa had been rivals for the top position during their early military careers and as it became clear that Diro was the likely choice for commander, Lowa told an interviewer that he 'would probably get fed up with [the defence force], one of these days'<sup>103</sup> and on the eve of independence he resigned and joined Prime Minister Somare's office. He subsequently contested the national elections in 1977 as a Pangu candidate, was elected to a seat in Port Moresby, and became minister for police in the second Somare government. In the following months there were rumours that within the Somare government there were moves to oust both General Diro and the police commissioner, Pious Kerepia, both of whom were felt to be 'politically unreliable'. Lowa was said to be prominent in these moves.<sup>104</sup> In November, following a series of disputes among senior police officers, Kerepia's tenure was terminated, though he protested, alleging political interference.<sup>105</sup> The same month a challenge to Lowa's residential eligibility was upheld and he lost his parliamentary seat. (Lowa later became national organiser of the Melanesian Alliance party and was re-elected to parliament in 1987 from an electorate in his home province, West New Britain.)

Meanwhile, tensions in the relations between members of the government and senior PNGDF officers<sup>106</sup> came to a head in what was termed 'the Diro affair'. In August Diro had held discussions in Wewak with a leader of the OPM. Although Diro claimed that the defence minister had been fully briefed on the talks, there was a feeling in cabinet that Diro had exceeded his authority and in late September it was announced that he would be officially reprimanded. The reprimand came a week later. By this time Diro had sought and

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<sup>102</sup> Interestingly, however, O'Neill observed that there was 'significant support' for Pangu Pati within the PIR (O'Neill, 'The Army in Papua-New Guinea', p.17).

<sup>103</sup> Quoted in Sinclair, *To Find a Path*, Volume II, p.149.

<sup>104</sup> See *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 October 1977.

<sup>105</sup> See *Post-Courier*, 8 November 1977, 7, 12 December 1977.

<sup>106</sup> See *Post-Courier*, 2, 21 September 1977.



received a commitment of support from senior officers, and there were rumours in Port Moresby of a possible coup.<sup>107</sup> At the time Diro told cabinet:

... I have now been able to assess who my friends are and who aren't ... Mr Prime Minister, I want you to know that the force is becoming sick to death of being made a political football by certain politicians and ex-politicians.<sup>108</sup>

Though one commentator described the incident at the time as 'the most serious threat to the authority of the government since independence',<sup>109</sup> it appeared to blow over fairly quietly. Six years later, however, an anonymous former PNGDF officer<sup>110</sup> told an Australian Broadcasting Commission correspondent<sup>111</sup> that had Diro been sacked in 1977 PNGDF officers would have staged an already-rehearsed operation, codenamed 'Electric Shock', in which the prime minister and certain other politicians and public servants would have been taken hostage. The former officer claimed that PNGDF officers had been in contact with the Indonesian government during this period; indeed one of their major concerns had been the Papua New Guinea government's poor handling of the border situation. Diro's role in all this was unclear and the story was denied in some quarters;<sup>112</sup> certainly it may have been embellished by 1983. But it served as a reminder that military intervention was not an impossibility.

Four years after the 1977 incident Diro announced that he was resigning from the PNGDF to contest the 1982 national elections. He stood as leader of a (mostly Papuan) PNG Independent Group and was elected. A report of the 1982 election commented on his campaign:

<sup>107</sup> See *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 October 1977; D. Hegarty, 'Political Chronicle: Papua New Guinea', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol.24, No.3, 1978, p.402.

<sup>108</sup> Quoted in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 October 1977.

<sup>109</sup> Hegarty, 'Political Chronicle', p.402.

<sup>110</sup> The former officer was Tom Poang, a lieutenant colonel and director of personnel at the time, who left the PNGDF soon after and in 1983 was speaker in the Morobe provincial assembly.

<sup>111</sup> Geoff Heriot, ABC 'Background Briefing', 21 August 1983.

<sup>112</sup> See *Times of Papua New Guinea*, 26 August 1983, 15 September 1983, 7 October 1983.

Ex-General Diro deplored dishonesty and division in the Chan government and called for firm, business-like and, by implication, military style leadership.<sup>113</sup>

In the process of coalition formation the ambitious Diro was at one stage tipped as possible prime minister, but he ended up in opposition, briefly accepting leadership of the National Party, and becoming minister for forests in 1985 when a vote of no confidence brought a change of government.

Diro was not the only former PNGDF officer to contest the 1982 elections: in Manus, James Pokasui, who had been transferred to Manus the previous year as adjutant of the Maritime Element, stood as an Independent Group candidate and was initially declared winner, though the result was subsequently overturned by the Court of Disputed Returns;<sup>114</sup> in Wewak, former PNGDF major Michael Malenki, who had left the PNGDF in 1977 to become electoral secretary to Prime Minister Somare but had fallen out with Somare and become national secretary of the Melanesian Alliance, stood unsuccessfully (he was later elected to the East Sepik Provincial Assembly).

With Diro's resignation from the PNGDF it was generally expected that Colonel Ken Noga, who had been the third most senior Papua New Guinean officer after Diro and Lowa, would succeed him. Instead, the position was given to Colonel Gago Mamae. In 1980 a split in the ruling Pangu-led coalition and a subsequent vote of no confidence against Prime Minister Somare had brought a new coalition government to power, headed by People's Progress Party (PPP) leader Sir Julius Chan, who had been deputy prime minister under Somare. In 1977 Noga had resigned from the PNGDF to contest the national elections as a pro-Pangu candidate, having rejoined the force when he failed to be elected.<sup>115</sup> Some suggested that Mamae had been appointed over Noga in 1981 for political reasons. The suggestion that

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<sup>113</sup> P. King (ed.), *Pangu Returns to Power: The 1982 Elections in Papua New Guinea*, Political and Social Change Monograph 9 (Department of Political and Social Change, Australian National University, Canberra, 1989), p.11.

<sup>114</sup> Pokasui subsequently worked for Fr John Momis, parliamentary leader of the Melanesian Alliance, and was elected in 1987, becoming minister for defence.

<sup>115</sup> Under the provisions of the *Defence Act* 1974 it is possible for a member of the PNGDF to transfer to the reserve force, and later apply for re-admission to the regular force. In 1992 Brigadier General Lokinap tried, unsuccessfully, to prevent



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political considerations had entered into the selection of the PNGDF command was reinforced in 1983 when, having been re-elected to office in the national election of the previous year, the Somare government replaced Mamae with Noga as commander of the PNGDF. A newspaper editorial at the time asked: 'Must we continue to entertain political appointments in the public service ...?'.<sup>116</sup> Mamae, after serving for a while as military attaché in Australia, resigned and became executive officer in Chan's PPP office (standing unsuccessfully as a PPP candidate in the 1987 national elections).

The politicisation of the most senior PNGDF appointment was demonstrated even more blatantly in late 1985, when another vote of no confidence again removed a Somare-led coalition and brought to office a government headed by Paias Wingti and Julius Chan. Noga was himself removed and replaced by Tony Huai. Colonel Huai, who had commanded the Papua New Guinea force in Vanuatu in 1980, had been in consideration for the top position in 1982. In 1984 he resigned, criticising the government's handling of the PNGDF. He initially joined Mamae in Chan's PPP office and indicated his intention of standing for parliament in 1987.<sup>117</sup> At the time of his appointment Huai was a security officer with Air Niugini and the appointment of a commander from outside the PNGDF was reportedly opposed by the Defence Department and resented by some senior officers. Opposition leader Somare described it, not without irony, as a 'dangerous precedent'.<sup>118</sup>

Huai proved to be a controversial figure as PNGDF commander. Early in 1986, on his return from a visit to Indonesia, Huai told a press conference that he would closely cooperate with Indonesian armed forces commander, General Benny Murdani, to stamp out the OPM. His statement attracted criticism, notably from prominent lawyer (later Justice Minister) Bernard Narokobi, who accused Huai of being dictated to by Indonesians; Narokobi said that Huai had no authority to make public statements about matters of defence policy, and called for his dismissal.<sup>119</sup> Huai resigned in late 1986 but was reinstated. The following year Huai again attracted

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the reinstatement of PNGDF personnel who had resigned to contest elections.

116 *Times of Papua New Guinea*, 26 August 1983.

117 *Post-Courier*, 29 November 1985.

118 *Post-Courier*, 3 December 1985.

119 *Post-Courier*, 27 March 1986, 1 April 1986.



public attention when it was reported that, having been opposed to the defence provisions of the Joint Declaration of Principles then being negotiated between Papua New Guinea and Australia, on the grounds that a reference to possible 'attack from an external source' could be misread by Indonesia and create unnecessary tension, Huai had made unauthorised visits to Indonesia and had leaked details of the progress of discussions to General Murdani.<sup>120</sup> He was also said to have accepted gifts of uniforms and furniture from the Indonesian army chief. According to a *Times of Papua New Guinea* report,<sup>121</sup> Huai's close relations with Murdani had nearly resulted in a mutiny by senior officers and NCOs. Partly as a result of this, but also, according to Defence Minister Pokasui, because Huai had allowed infighting and political lobbying among senior officers,<sup>122</sup> Huai was dismissed in late 1987. He was replaced by Colonel Rochus Lokinap. Lokinap was the first non-Papuan commander of the PNGDF, coincidentally coming from a village in Chan's New Ireland electorate; he had also been Pokasui's commanding officer.

By this time, too, Diro's political fortunes had begun to turn. Having been re-elected in 1987 Diro managed to swing the entire bloc of members from Papuan electorates into a coalition with Paias Wingti, thus delivering government to Wingti when it looked as though a Pangu-led coalition would be returned to power. He became deputy prime minister in the new government. However, an enquiry set up by Wingti in 1987 to investigate allegations of corruption in the forestry industry had accused Diro of involvement in a number of illicit transactions and recommended prosecution. Further, in the process of investigation it was revealed that Diro had received from Indonesia's General Murdani some US\$139,400, ostensibly as a contribution to his 1987 election campaign expenses.<sup>123</sup> This 'contribution', which had not been declared, was in defiance of a provision of the Papua New Guinea constitution which states that an organic law will be passed to prevent candidates or parties accepting contributions from foreigners (though in fact the organic law had never been passed).

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120 See *Times of Papua New Guinea*, 4-10 February 1988.

121 24 December 1987-7 January 1988.

122 *Post-Courier*, 22 December 1987.

123 Murdani, it might be noted, denied having given money to Diro: 'What was said by Ted Diro is not true' (*Post-Courier*, 2 December 1987).

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Charged with perjury and facing possible prosecution, and with calls for his resignation from parliament, Diro resigned from cabinet. In subsequent statements to the press he said:

... the events of the past couple of months have had implications leading to rumours of disobedience in the disciplined forces ... I have been one of the experts on military coups through the world [and] ... the ingredients are here for a coup ... I do not want to be blamed when that arises.<sup>124</sup>

In the wake of the military coups in Fiji in 1987 - the first in the island Pacific and generally unexpected - such comments were not dismissed lightly. With rumours circulating in Port Moresby about an impending coup,<sup>125</sup> three senior colonels (Kwago Guria, Lima Dataona and Robert Dademo), all of them Papuans, were removed ('redeployed within the Public Service'), although the possible links between the talk of coups and the government's actions were never made clear. This action was bitterly criticised within the Papuan community, especially from within the then recently formed People's Action Party (PAP), a predominantly Papuan group of which Diro was parliamentary leader.<sup>126</sup> Following a change of government in 1988, the three were reinstated. Guria chose not to return but Dataona subsequently commanded the PNGDF troops on Bougainville and Dademo, having been reinstated as chief of staff, became commander in 1992.

Shortly after resigning from cabinet, Diro shifted the parliamentary allegiance of his bloc and in so doing brought about a change of government. He became minister of state in the new (Namaliu) government and having been cleared of the perjury charges on technical grounds he subsequently became deputy prime minister. But in late 1991 he was found guilty by the Leadership Tribunal of eighty-one counts of misconduct and was forced to resign from parliament and barred from standing for public office for three years. This precipitated a constitutional crisis when the governor-general, the late Sir Serei Eri, formerly president of Diro's PAP, refused to sign the

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<sup>124</sup> *Post-Courier*, 9, 16 November 1987; *Times of Papua New Guinea*, 19-25 November 1987.

<sup>125</sup> Y. Saffu, 'Political Chronicle: Papua New Guinea', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* Vol.34, No.2, 1988, pp.259-60.

<sup>126</sup> *Times of Papua New Guinea*, 21-27 January 1988, 28 January-3 February 1988.



dismissal papers and attempted to reinstate Diro as deputy prime minister. Eventually both Diro and Eri resigned. Ironically, remembering the events of 1977, the PNGDF was placed on alert at the time 'in case of violence between ethnic groups'.<sup>127</sup>

The following year, after another, Wingti-led, coalition had come to office following national elections, there was a further major reshuffle within the PNGDF. In November 1992 Lokinap's extended term as commander came to an end; criticised for his handling of the Bougainville situation, he was not reappointed. In his place Colonel Robert Dademo, one of the force's longest serving officers, was appointed as Brigadier General. Dademo, from Oro Province, was generally regarded as a sound choice (notwithstanding his dismissal under a previous Wingti government), though some claimed that his appointment was 'political'.

Soon after his appointment, a leaked document claimed that Dademo had recommended that five senior officers be replaced, but had been overruled by Defence Minister Tohian (Dademo described the report as 'a serious act of conspiracy to undermine the authority of the Defence Council').<sup>128</sup> Three weeks later, while Tohian was in Australia, the NEC approved the transfer of the five officers,<sup>129</sup> and four officers were promoted to colonel to fill vacant positions. A *Times of Papua New Guinea* report said the moves 'strengthen the commander's position enormously and remove a number of his former rivals from key jobs in the force'.<sup>130</sup>

With the politicisation of senior levels of the PNGDF and increasing pressures, budgetary and operational, upon the military, came also suggestions of declining morale and deteriorating discipline in the force.

As early as 1985 the standard of discipline in the PNGDF was said to be 'below that required'<sup>131</sup> and a concentrated effort was made 'to purge the force of soldiers whose service was considered

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127 *Times of Papua New Guinea*, 3 October 1991.

128 *Post-Courier*, 4 December 1992.

129 Nuia was posted to Jakarta; Baitman to Canberra; Takendu to Wellington; Ani to the National Disaster and Emergency Services and Josiah to the Department of Foreign Affairs.

130 *Times of Papua New Guinea*, 30 December 1992.

131 *Defence Report 1984-85*, pp.39, 44.



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unsatisfactory'; 190 'other ranks' were discharged. The same year some forty Air Transport Squadron ground crew were accused of 'mutiny' when they staged a strike over pay and conditions.

More serious allegations of undisciplined behaviour by the security forces arose during Operation LOMET in the highlands in 1988. Foreshadowing later developments on Bougainville, there were widespread reports of village houses, stores and community centres being burned, of pigs and cassowaries being shot, of looting, and of village people - including old people, women and children - being beaten and raped.<sup>132</sup> Much of the blame was attributed to the Police Mobile Squad, which already in the mid-1970s had acquired a bad reputation in the highlands, but PNGDF personnel were also accused of offences and there were calls for its withdrawal from such operations. (Nevertheless, four years later Standish reported similar abusive behaviour by police accompanied by PNGDF soldiers in the highlands during the 1992 elections.)<sup>133</sup>

In 1988-89 problems of discipline were manifested on a larger scale in open challenges to the government's authority by elements of the military. In June 1988, the minister for civil aviation announced a decision to close Lae airport (civil aviation operations having been shifted to Nadzab some years earlier). The PNGDF, whose air element had opposed relocation to Nadzab (a move recommended in the 1983 defence review), responded by flying personnel from Port Moresby to Lae to 'secure the airport' against civil aviation authorities. Civil aviation officers were allegedly assaulted. Lokinap subsequently announced that all defence force planes would be grounded. Several days later, having been severely reprimanded by Prime Minister Wingti, Brigadier Lokinap apologised for the PNGDF's actions and assured the prime minister and the people of Papua New Guinea of the PNGDF's undivided loyalty.<sup>134</sup> Nevertheless Lokinap continued to defend the PNGDF's actions and the *Defence Report 1988* listed amongst the years military operations: "Operation Albatross". This operation secured the Lae City airfield and prevented its destruction by elements of the Department of Lands and Department of Civil

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<sup>132</sup> *Draft Hansard*, 11 November 1988, pp.10-11, 18 November 1988, pp.16-17; *Post-Courier*, 20 October 1988, 15, 17, 18 November 1988.

<sup>133</sup> Personal communication, 1992, Dr W.A. Standish to author.

<sup>134</sup> *Post-Courier*, 8 June 1988.

Aviation'.<sup>135</sup> In a contemporary editorial on these 'extraordinary events' the *Times of Papua New Guinea* asked: 'Is our Defence Force more powerful than the government?', and answered its own question in the affirmative.<sup>136</sup> (In 1991 a new military air base, largely funded under the Australian DCP, was opened in Port Moresby.)

Then in early 1989, angered at receiving lower than expected pay increases,<sup>137</sup> some 100-200 soldiers ignored the orders of their officers and, joined by some hangers-on, marched on the national parliament; during the incident windows were smashed, vehicles (including a police superintendent's vehicle) overturned, and civilians and politicians abused. There was also a smaller demonstration by PNGDF personnel in Wewak. The government promptly suspended the commander, chief of staff, and secretary for defence, and set up a Defence General Board of Inquiry to investigate the incident. Three soldiers were later gaoled. But the government quickly implemented pay increases, and while the Board of Inquiry noted a serious decline in discipline ('There is an apparent inability and or reluctance by commands at all levels to impose discipline')<sup>138</sup> and evidence of some misuse of funds and equipment, its report was largely devoted to discussing problems of morale and recommending improvements in conditions of service within the PNGDF (including the administration of promotions). While the board's analysis may have been accurate, it did little to reassure the public or political leaders.

Further incidents in 1991-92 suggested that, notwithstanding action taken after the 1989 review, problems of discipline remained. In 1991 a group of about fifty PNGDF personnel stormed a police station in Manus to release a naval lieutenant charged with burning down several houses after a fight between soldiers and civilians on Manus. Shots were fired and police vehicles damaged. Several months later, soldiers from Taurama Barracks raided a Port Moresby settlement and burned houses after two soldiers had been attacked by a local gang, and in Vanimo, calls were made for the removal of the PNGDF base

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<sup>135</sup> *Defence Report 1988*, pp.5,13.

<sup>136</sup> *Times of Papua New Guinea*, 9-15 June 1988.

<sup>137</sup> In 1988 an Australian-based consultancy firm had carried out a job evaluation exercise with a view to reviewing PNGDF salaries, and pay increases - the first since independence - had subsequently been recommended by the Defence Council and accepted by government. The increases, however, were considerably below expectations within the PNGDF.

<sup>138</sup> Defence General Board of Inquiry, *Report ...*, p.49.

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following a raid by soldiers on a local village, the result of another soldier-civilian incident. In Wewak soldiers from Moem and police caused damage to property as they fought in the main street. More recently, early in 1993 PNGDF soldiers burned down the Germania Club in Port Moresby after an altercation between soldiers and security guards in which a soldier was killed, prompting *Post-Courier* journalist Neville Togarewa to call for an inquiry 'wide-ranging enough to cover anything and everything to do with the Defence Force'.<sup>139</sup> Shortly after this, it was announced that the minister for defence had approved the appointment of national court judges to deal with disciplinary cases within the PNGDF.

Disagreements between the defence secretary, the minister and the PNGDF commander also surfaced in early 1993, when it was announced that Defence Secretary Peipul was to be sacked. He was accused by Defence Minister Tohian of insubordination, and of interfering in operational aspects of the PNGDF's presence on Bougainville and was said to have been in conflict with Brigadier-General Dademo.<sup>140</sup>

Overarching all these incidents, however, from 1988 was the much larger issue of the performance of the security forces on Bougainville.

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<sup>139</sup> *Post-Courier*, 26 April 1993.

<sup>140</sup> *ibid.*



## CHAPTER 3

### THE IMPACT OF THE BOUGAINVILLE CRISIS<sup>1</sup>

In 1988, simmering discontent within the landowner group around Papua New Guinea's immense gold and copper mine on Bougainville<sup>2</sup> erupted into a major confrontation. Mine installations were subjected to a series of arson and sabotage attacks, during which pylons carrying power lines to the mine and town at Panguna were blown up, and workers attempting to repair lines were threatened by armed men. (Among the leadership of the militant landowner group was a former PNGDF officer trained in the use of explosives.) Late in 1988 the mine operator, Bougainville Copper Ltd (BCL), temporarily closed the mine and a government committee attempted to negotiate a settlement with the dissident group. But following further acts of sabotage against BCL installations and government property, police reinforcements were called in and a curfew was imposed in the mine area in early 1989. Shortly after this, riots broke out in the nearby town of Arawa after a series of incidents, not directly related to the mine dispute, in which a Bougainvillean and two non-Bougainvilleans were killed. With tension rising and long-standing separatist sentiments regaining strength, the curfew was reimposed and PNGDF troops

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<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed account of the background to the 'Bougainville crisis', the ongoing events, and their broader implications, see Saffu, 'Political Chronicle: Papua New Guinea', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol.36, No.2, 1990, Vol.37, No.2, 1991, Vol.38, No.2, 1992; R.J. May, 'Papua New Guinea's Bougainville Crisis', *The Pacific Review*, Vol.3, No.2, 1990; R.J. May and M. Spriggs (eds), *The Bougainville Crisis* (Crawford House Press, Bathurst, 1990); D. Oliver, *Black Islanders: A Personal Perspective of Bougainville 1937-1991* (Hyland House, Melbourne, 1991); M. Spriggs and D. Denoon (eds), *The Bougainville Crisis: 1991 Update*, Political and Social Change Monograph 16 (Department of Political and Social Change, Australian National University, Canberra, in association with Crawford House Press, Bathurst, 1992); and *The Contemporary Pacific*, Vol.4 No.2, 1992, special issue, 'A Legacy of Development: Three Years of Crisis in Bougainville'.

<sup>2</sup> The North Solomons (formerly Bougainville) Province consists of two main islands, Bougainville and the smaller island of Buka. Following the disturbances on Bougainville (Island) in 1988 the opponents of the national government reverted to the term Bougainville for the whole province. In what follows 'Bougainville' may refer either to the whole province or the main island, depending on the context.

(whose call-out had been authorised in December 1988) were brought in to assist police restore law and order. By the end of March 1989 there were approximately 600 police and military personnel on Bougainville, under the direction of a joint planning committee headed by the provincial administrative secretary. Within weeks of its arrival the PNGDF had suffered its first casualties; two soldiers were killed when a PNGDF patrol was ambushed and it was reported that the PNGDF had launched a 'full-scale military operation' against what was now widely referred to as 'the rebels'.<sup>3</sup>

In April, dissident leader Francis Ona announced a revised set of demands against the mining company and the government, which, apart from massive financial compensation, included a call for the withdrawal of all security forces. 'We are not part of your country any more', he told the government, 'We belong to the Republic of Bougainville'.<sup>4</sup> The call for the withdrawal of the security forces was supported by the Premier, Joseph Kabui, and by community, church and business leaders; indeed the Catholic Church on Bougainville requested an Amnesty International investigation into complaints of mysterious deaths, beatings, theft, rape, and the burning of a village by security forces. There was also evidence of growing support on the island for Bougainville's secession. In May Premier Kabui described the situation as serious: a lot of other elements were becoming involved in attacks and acts of sabotage, he said, and the issue was no longer merely about land but also involved the question of secession.<sup>5</sup> The same month, after further attacks on the mine had forced its closure, the government announced tighter security measures, including wider powers for the police and army under an amended Defence (Aid to Civil Power) Regulation. The army was subsequently told to pull back, however, while a neutral group attempted to negotiate with Ona. The government wanted to avoid at all costs a military operation, Prime Minister Namaliu said, and was not entertaining the possibility of military action 'at this point'.<sup>6</sup> But when these talks failed, Namaliu ordered an all-out attack on the rebels, who were now calling themselves the Bougainville Revolutionary Army

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3 *Post-Courier*, 11 April 1989.

4 *Niugini Nius*, 12 April 1989.

5 *Post-Courier*, 23 May 1989.

6 *Canberra Times*, 26, 27 May 1989.



(BRA) and were being trained by former PNGDF and RPNGC personnel.

The government's repeated attempts to negotiate with Ona were seen by some, both within and outside the security forces, as a sign of weakness on the part of the government. In March 1989 Police Commissioner Paul Tohian was reported to have complained of 'political interference with essential police work and political indecision', and to have threatened to defy government directives in his attempts to capture Francis Ona. In response, prominent Bougainvillean politician and Minister for Provincial Affairs, Fr John Momis, criticised Tohian and said, 'If Mr Tohian disobeys Cabinet, I will immediately move for his dismissal'.<sup>7</sup> The following morning a group of about one hundred angry policemen, some wearing masks and riot squad helmets, went to Momis's home and warned him against sacking the commissioner. (In the event, Tohian claimed to have been misreported and received a reprimand; disciplinary action was ordered against the police involved in the incident at Momis's home.) Shortly after this, the acting PNGDF chief of staff, Colonel Leo Nuia, publicly rebuked the defence minister, saying he 'should refrain from making wild statements on matters affecting the operations of the soldiers and police' on Bougainville.<sup>8</sup> The acting commander and the chief of PNGDF operations on Bougainville also publicly criticised the government's handling of the crisis. About the same time a meeting of mineworkers at Panguna expressed the view that the security forces were not doing their job properly because of political interference. And in May, opposition leader Wingti criticised the government for proposing a truce, describing the move as a 'dangerous precedent' which would undermine the government's authority. Within the PNGDF and RPNGC there were many who felt that they could 'clean up' the situation on Bougainville if only they were not held back by politicians. As against this, there is little doubt that heavy-handed actions by the security forces - primarily, it seems, the police mobile

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<sup>7</sup> *Post-Courier*, 27 February, 6 March 1989.

<sup>8</sup> *Niugini Nius*, 12 April 1989.



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squad, but also the PNGDF<sup>9</sup> - did much to alienate villagers and catalyse demands for secession.

After some vacillation, in June 1989 the government declared a state of emergency on Bougainville.<sup>10</sup> Police Commissioner Tohian was made controller of the state of emergency with the PNGDF field commander on Bougainville (initially Dataona, later Nuia) and a civilian administrator his deputies. Diro, whose decision to cross the floor of parliament had resulted in a change of government, became minister of state and chairman of a ministerial committee on the Bougainville crisis and later, for a while, deputy prime minister. Diro's comparatively 'hard line' approach to the Bougainville situation was indicated in a statement he made in parliament in proposing the extension of the state of emergency - that 'It is a military problem. It is no longer a police law and order problem' - and in instructions passed on to the Bougainville commander, Colonel Dataona, and leaked to the press, which 'suspended' peace initiatives and gave Dataona 'freedom of military action to bring about an end to BRA activities'.<sup>11</sup> In October Dataona was replaced on Bougainville by Colonel Nuia, who was generally regarded as a hardliner and closer to Diro.

Despite attempts to negotiate a settlement with the rebels, and notwithstanding several reports that the BRA was about to surrender, the conflict continued throughout 1989 and early 1990 without resolution. In December 1989 the Bougainville mine, which had provided Papua New Guinea with around 40 per cent of its exports and about 17 per cent of its government revenue, was 'mothballed'. The following month cabinet approved an 'all out war' against the rebels; the military option, Prime Minister Namaliu declared, is now

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9 Graeme Kemelfield, who was on Bougainville at the time, later told an Australian parliamentary enquiry that 'when the soldiers first came in I think many people welcomed them. They were seen as being more disciplined [than the riot squad] ... they were friendly; they were courteous and so on ... [But] as their frustration developed their whole attitude changed' (Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Hearings, 22 October 1990, p.793). In July 1989 the North Solomons premier and a provincial minister were beaten up by security forces personnel, the latter losing the sight of one eye after being hit with a rifle butt.

10 In its first report on the state of emergency, however, the Permanent Parliamentary Committee on National Emergency expressed 'great concern that there was no proper consultation between the NEC and the Committee in accordance with ... the Constitution' (*Statement No. 1. State of Emergency in the North Solomons Province*, 1989, p.2).

11 See *Post-Courier*, 12 July 1989; *Niugini Nius*, 27 July 1989.

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11 See *Post-Courier*, 12 July 1989; *Niugini Nius*, 27 July 1989.



the only option. 'Operation Footloose' was launched 'to rid the island of terrorist scourge, restore peace, and reopen Bougainville'.<sup>12</sup>

Yet shortly after this intensification of the conflict, in March 1990 a ceasefire was negotiated and the government agreed to the withdrawal of troops. This decision was not well received within the security forces, and although it was apparently intended by the government that the provincial police establishment remain to provide some semblance of law, Tohian ordered the early removal of all police, as well as the army (arguing that without the PNGDF the ordinary police would not be able to protect themselves). This left the province virtually in the hands of the BRA. The last of the security forces flew out on an aircraft which brought in a team of international observers. In submissions to an Australian parliamentary committee the action was later described as 'a fairly serious breakdown in the control by the Papua New Guinean Government of its force' and bound to lead to chaos.<sup>13</sup>

Shortly after, on his way from an informal reception in Port Moresby to welcome home PNGDF personnel returning from Bougainville, Tohian was alleged to have called over his car radio for police and army personnel to arm themselves and join him at the prime minister's residence, where they were to arrest the prime minister and take over the government. He, the officer in charge of police riot squads, and another riot squad officer were arrested and charged with treason. But the incident was not taken altogether seriously (being commonly referred to as 'the barbecoup') and the charges were subsequently dropped.<sup>14</sup> (In 1992 Tohian was elected to the national parliament and became minister for defence.)

Two months after the withdrawal of the security forces, with negotiations for a settlement of the conflict failing to materialise, the national government cut off communications with Bougainville and imposed 'selective economic sanctions'.<sup>15</sup> This action, announced by

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<sup>12</sup> *Post-Courier*, 12 January 1990.

<sup>13</sup> Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Hearings, 22 October 1990, pp.752, 783-84.

<sup>14</sup> The charge of treason was later amended by the public prosecutor to one of sedition. According to a *Post-Courier* report (Frank Senge, 5 March 1991) the charge was dropped because it was not clear that it could be successfully prosecuted.

<sup>15</sup> Initially the government announced a 50-mile exclusion zone around the province,

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the Acting Prime Minister, Diro, shortly after Prime Minister Namaliu left on an overseas trip, was regarded as at least a temporary victory of the 'hawks' in the government (led by Diro and Sabumei) over its 'doves' (led by Momis and Narokobi), and was seen by some as a deliberate attempt to undermine proposed peace talks.<sup>16</sup> Two days later the BRA command issued a unilateral declaration of independence for the 'Republic of Meekamui'. Among those named in the interim government of the republic, 'the Minister for Defence and Police', Joe Pais, and the commander of the BRA, Sam Kauona, were both former PNGDF officers.

During 1990-91 the government persisted in attempts to negotiate a settlement with the BRA. In August 1990 an agreement (signed on board the New Zealand naval vessel HMNZS *Endeavour* and known as the Endeavour Accord) was signed by delegations from the national government and from the Bougainville interim government, under the terms of which the Bougainvilleans agreed to defer political declarations with respect to the political status of Bougainville and to continue the dialogue, while the national government undertook to take all practical steps, 'consistent with the constitution of Papua New Guinea' and without force, to restore services; further talks were planned for later in the year. But, as Saffu<sup>17</sup> suggested, the agreement was a brittle one, and in fact, an attempt to land supplies was aborted when the BRA objected to the presence of soldiers, said to be there to assist civilian personnel, and the further talks did not eventuate until early in 1991.

Meanwhile, in September 1990 PNGDF troops landed on Buka Island in the north, following a request from local leaders, and the BRA was reported to have surrendered control of Buka soon after. An agreement was signed in Kavieng in October with a group of Buka leaders, who rejected secession but called for greater autonomy within the Papua New Guinea state. A locally organised Buka Liberation Front (BLF) had been mobilised to oppose the BRA on Buka (the BLF chairman described the front as an 'authorised unauthorised security force' sanctioned by the PNGDF and the government),<sup>18</sup> and it

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but this was subsequently acknowledged to be a violation of international law, and was withdrawn.

16 See *Australian*, 3 May 1990; May and Spriggs, *The Bougainville Crisis*, p.113.

17 Saffu, 'Political Chronicle: Papua New Guinea', 1992, p.263.

18 Some years previously, when the premier of East New Britain province had tried



received the backing of the PNGDF, though according to one account many on Buka 'feared the BLF more than the BRA and Defence Force soldiers'.<sup>19</sup>

The arrival of troops on Buka did little to resolve the situation. Spriggs<sup>20</sup> described the situation on Buka in late 1990-early 1991 as 'a state of civil war, with fighting between the BRA and the BLF all over the island and the PNGDF seemingly taking little part in proceedings'. Elsewhere, people suffered as a result of the blockade and the refusal of the national government, for some time, to allow even the delivery of medical supplies by international agencies. On Buka there were mounting accusations of human rights violations and military action against civilian targets; an Amnesty International report in November 1990 listed nineteen cases of 'extrajudicial execution' and over fifty cases of torture and ill-treatment by the security forces, as well as abuses by the BRA.<sup>21</sup> In October 1990 there were sixty-seven security force personnel in Rabaul awaiting the outcome of charges relating to human rights abuses. After a boat carrying supplies, authorised by the prime minister, had been prevented from sailing by the PNGDF commander on Buka, who threatened to fire on it, the *Times of Papua New Guinea* commented: 'Confusion reigns ... There does not seem to be any clear directives [sic] as to who is in authority ...'.<sup>22</sup>

In January 1991 a second round of peace talks was held, resulting in the Honiara Declaration, which recorded the two parties' commitment to a peaceful resolution of the conflict and made new provision for the restoration of services. Among other things the Honiara Declaration agreed to the establishment of a civilian task force, appointed by the minister for provincial affairs in consultation

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to set up a provincial police force, he had been charged with setting up an unauthorised paramilitary force contrary to s. 200 of the national constitution, and gaoled.

19 M. Spriggs, 'Bougainville Update: August 1990 to May 1991' in Spriggs and Denoon, *The Bougainville Crisis*, p.12; also see *Post-Courier*, 19 December 1990.

20 Spriggs, 'Bougainville Update', p.12.

21 Amnesty International, 'Papua New Guinea. Human Rights Violations on Bougainville, 1989-1990', AI INDEX: ASA 34/05/90, 1990. Also see North Solomons Provincial Government (NSPG), *Provincial Select Committee Report*; Permanent Parliamentary Committee on National Emergency (Papua New Guinea), *Statement No.1*; *Post-Courier*, 20, 29 June 1989; *Times of Papua New Guinea*, 25 January 1990; S. Dorney, *Papua New Guinea: People, Politics and History Since 1975* (Random House, Sydney, 1990); Spriggs and Denoon, *The Bougainville Crisis*.

22 *Times of Papua New Guinea*, 13 December 1990.



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with a Bougainville interim legal authority, to coordinate the restoration of services, and to accept a multinational supervisory team (MST) to oversee the process of reconciliation and rehabilitation.

While negotiations over the implementation of the Honiara Declaration were still proceeding, however, in April 1991 some 300 PNGDF soldiers, under the command of Colonel Nuia, landed on north Bougainville and launched an operation against the BRA. Nuia claimed that the troops had been requested by local chiefs, but his action violated the terms of the Honiara Declaration and had not been authorised by the government. He came under strong criticism, especially from Momis, who described the incursion as 'totally illegal ... totally irresponsible' and likely to jeopardise peace initiatives, and called for the sacking of officers involved. In the event, Nuia received a reprimand, but the operation was retrospectively endorsed by cabinet.

The April 1991 'invasion', like the May 1990 blockade, was carried out while Diro, in Namaliu's absence, was acting prime minister. In fact, while the peace talks were taking place in Honiara in January it was reported that PNGDF troops were about to move on Bougainville; 'the days for talking are over', Diro had said, 'the situation there does not need any more political rhetoric'.<sup>23</sup> But in January such action had been averted when Momis threatened to resign from the government (an action which could have brought down the coalition government). Diro again displayed his 'hawkish' attitude in February, when he told an interviewer that his preferred solution to the Bougainville situation was to assassinate Ona and Kauona and take over the province in the ensuing chaos. Namaliu described his deputy's statement as 'inappropriate and untimely'.<sup>24</sup>

In the following months the extent of the growing tension between civil and military authorities in relation to Bougainville became evident on a number of occasions. In May, responding to Momis's attacks on Nuia's 'invasion' of Bougainville the previous month, an army major publicly accused the minister of promoting secession and being a BRA collaborator and said 'Lunatics like Fr Momis and his task force members are the ones the government should sack'.<sup>25</sup> And on Buka, Nuia criticised a leading member of the

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<sup>23</sup> *Post-Courier*, 18 January 1991.

<sup>24</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 February 1991, 5 March 1991.

<sup>25</sup> *Post-Courier*, 17 May 1991.

Task Force, Bernard Simiha, and said 'I have always suspected Mr Simia [*sic*] and some members of the Task Force';<sup>26</sup> subsequently Nuia physically attacked Simiha, who fled to Solomon Islands. The following month Nuia arrested another senior member of the Task Force, Patrick Ita, who was accused of secretly working for the BRA and charged with sedition. Not surprisingly, the civilian administrator on Buka, Sam Tulo, expressed himself as not happy with the working relationship between the military and the Task Force. PNGDF opposition to the idea of a MST was also a reason for its failure to materialise.

On the same day that Ita was arrested, however, Nuia was himself removed. The previous day, on an Australian Broadcasting Corporation television programme, Nuia had confirmed reports, earlier denied, that the helicopters which Australia had supplied, conditionally, to the PNGDF (see above) had been used as gunships, and that in February 1990 they had been used to dump at sea the bodies of six alleged BRA sympathisers who had been executed by PNGDF soldiers in an incident which became known as 'the St Valentine's Day massacre'. Nuia's somewhat erratic behaviour had already caused concern among the defence establishment and this unauthorised disclosure finally led to his dismissal, with Somare calling Nuia 'a blatant liar' for earlier having denied the incident, and Momis saying: 'If we don't put a stop to it, we cannot stop a coup'.<sup>27</sup> (Subsequently Nuia challenged the legality of the action and in 1992 was reinstated and put in charge of special projects at Murray Barracks). With regard to the substance of Nuia's revelations, Namaliu promised an independent commission of enquiry 'when the circumstances allow'.

Resentment in military and defence circles of what was seen as indecision and political interference in the handling of the Bougainville situation was sharpened by Nuia's sacking and was expressed in calls for clear directions on the specific role of the PNGDF commander on Bougainville and his relation to the Task Force. These calls were supported by deputy opposition leader Chan, who said that the Nuia revelation uncovered new grounds on the Bougainville conflict that

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<sup>26</sup> *Post-Courier*, 27 May 1991.

<sup>27</sup> *Post-Courier*, 25 June 1991.



should be fully and properly addressed by a commission of inquiry.<sup>28</sup> Shortly after this it was reported<sup>29</sup> that the PNGDF strength on Bougainville was 'being scaled down drastically', due to shortage of funds, though defence force sources acknowledged that such scaling down 'could reduce government authority in Bougainville and encourage revival of Bougainville Republican Army activity'. The sources were quoted as saying:

... until the Government can tell the Defence Force element in Bougainville what its true role is and support this financially, we can not be expected to carry out our task effectively without drawing unfounded criticisms from the public and national politicians ...

The same month, the Parliamentary Privileges Committee recommended that Lieutenant Colonel Walter Salamas be officially reprimanded for acting in 'a very undignified and threatening manner' towards members of the Parliamentary Emergency Committee, whom he had earlier ordered to be escorted out of the operation area on Bougainville; the incident referred to had occurred back in 1989 (and Salamas had been recalled to Port Moresby).

But the removal of Nuia and the briefing of the new PNGDF commander on Bougainville did not resolve the tensions between military and civilian officials. In July 1991, on the eve of planned peace talks, Namaliu described the security forces as 'serving in a non-combat role because the soldiers were doing a first class job in assisting the Task Force, the Administrators and local chiefs in restoring services'.<sup>30</sup> Two days later, after the shooting of two members of the security forces on Buka by the BRA, it was announced that the Bougainville administrator, Tulo, had closed the passage between Buka and Bougainville, imposed a curfew on parts of Buka, and requested the government to withdraw the security forces from north Bougainville back to Buka.<sup>31</sup> Subsequently the NEC resolved that all ships and aircraft going to Bougainville must be cleared in Rabaul or Buka, but Brigadier-General Lokinap complained that the security

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28 *Post-Courier*, 27 June 1991.

29 *Post-Courier*, 11 July 1991.

30 *Post-Courier*, 22 July 1991.

31 *Post-Courier*, 24 July 1991.



forces were being bypassed, that 'decisions were being made by the Government or by individual Ministers and passed direct to the civil authorities without the security forces being advised'.<sup>32</sup> In December it was reported that the security forces had imposed a new blockade on Bougainville, 'as a protest over what they claimed to be lack of consultation with them about the national Government's restoration program particularly over the co-ordination of ships and aircraft undertaking the restoration exercise'.<sup>33</sup> Ships and aircraft were being prevented from travelling regardless of whether they had authorisation from civilian officials. One of the casualties of this action was a chartered aircraft which was to have taken south Bougainville leaders to Honiara for talks with a national government delegation comprising Somare, Narokobi and Momis. In a masterly understatement, Tulo said: 'It seems there is a general break-down of communication between the national Government and the security forces on Bougainville'.<sup>34</sup> Within days of this report, Lokinap announced that until the National Security Advisory Committee had reviewed the role of the security forces on Bougainville and issued fresh instructions he would be the sole authority to give permission for ships and aircraft to travel to Bougainville.<sup>35</sup>

Military operations and, simultaneously, attempts to negotiate continued throughout 1991 and 1992 and into 1993, while the number of casualties on both sides rose and the circumstances of civilians in the villages continued to worsen. In 1991-92 interim legal authorities were set up across Bougainville to help coordinate the restoration of services and in mid-1992 - just before national elections - security forces landed on south and central Bougainville, following a request from local chiefs. Early in 1993, in an operation codenamed 'Dynamo', the security forces landed in Arawa, and the South-West Bougainville Interim Authority was said to be offering its '3000 [strong] resistance force' to help the security forces stage an all-out war against the BRA in the Siwai area.<sup>36</sup>

Shortly after the reported capture of Arawa, eight PNGDF soldiers were killed in a BRA ambush. Three months later, in a letter to

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32 *Post-Courier*, 27 December 1991.

33 *Post-Courier*, 24 December 1991.

34 *ibid.*

35 *Post-Courier*, 27 December 1991.

36 *Post-Courier*, 3 March 1993.

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the *Post-Courier* signed 'Angry Soldier, Bougainville', it was claimed that the operation had been bungled and that because of the delay in inquiring into the causes of the troop loss in the ambush 'a particular company commander, a Major [had been] assaulted so seriously by soldiers that he was nearly killed'; the letter expressed a demand from soldiers 'that the government immediately replace those responsible for operations on Bougainville ... before the troops become very upset'.<sup>37</sup>

Neither military operations nor attempted negotiations, nor a change of government in 1992 which brought Wingti back as prime minister (and Tohian as minister for defence), have brought peace to Bougainville; nor has there been a resolution of the tensions between military and civil authorities. In late 1992 an international delegation of church leaders, whose visit to Bougainville had been authorised by the national government, was turned away by the security forces, causing the *Post-Courier*'s editorial writer to ask, 'Who controls Bougainville? ... What authority does the national Government have over the military if its decisions about visits are going to be overturned?'.<sup>38</sup> And in 1993 Foreign Minister John Kaputin (who had played a role in early negotiations with the Bougainville rebels) attacked Prime Minister Wingti's handling of the Bougainville situation in a leaked private letter, accusing him of failing to provide 'constitutional and political leadership', of letting the National Security Advisory Committee usurp other sources of advice and decision making, of misrepresenting the situation on Bougainville, and of being insensitive to opinion in other countries, including Solomon Islands. He went on to say that a military solution was neither desirable nor moral.<sup>39</sup>

In 1992-93 the Bougainville conflict spilled over the international border to create severe strains in the relations between Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. Since the conflict on Bougainville began, there had been traffic between the North Solomons and the neighbouring western islands of Solomon Islands, despite the security forces' attempts to prevent the movement of people, supplies and weapons. There were even suggestions that the Solomon Islands government was providing covert support to the

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<sup>37</sup> *Post-Courier*, 13 May 1993.

<sup>38</sup> *Post-Courier*, 21 October 1992.

<sup>39</sup> *Post-Courier*, 15 April 1993.



BRA. In March 1992 PNGDF troops launched an unauthorised raid on Kariki Island, across the border with Solomon Islands, where a fuel dump used by the BRA was destroyed. Prime Minister Namaliu, in apologising to his Solomon Islands counterpart, said his government did not condone the action, but nevertheless went on to say that if Solomon Islands did not cooperate in preventing the use of its territory by the BRA, 'this sort of thing is bound to happen'.<sup>40</sup> (The parallels between the PNGDF's incursions and those of the Indonesian army on Papua New Guinea's western border some years earlier seem to have been quietly overlooked.) The same sort of thing did in fact happen again, later in 1992, when two Solomon Islanders were killed in a raid by security forces on a Solomon Islands village in pursuit of BRA supporters, and early in 1993 when two border incursions occurred, in which shots were exchanged between Papua New Guinea security forces and police of the Solomon Islands Field Force, and the Solomon Islands island of Oema was 'annexed' by PNGDF troops. Minister for Bougainville Affairs, Michael Ogio, admitted on an Australian television programme that it was difficult for the government to control the actions of the PNGDF on Bougainville and, echoing the earlier *Post-Courier* editorial, a *Sydney Morning Herald* editorial asked:

What is going on here? Who is calling the shots? ...  
Increasingly [the PNGDF] will equate its own worth,  
its very identity and honour with achieving a victory,  
whatever the cost. In so doing it will grow less  
responsible to central control.<sup>41</sup>

In summary, the Bougainville crisis has had a profound and probably irreversible effect on the role of the PNGDF and on perceptions of that role at various levels of Papua New Guinea society. In the first place, when the PNGDF was brought in to assist the civil authority in 1989 there seems to have been a widespread expectation that the conflict would be resolved fairly quickly. In fact, the conflict escalated. In 1991 an Australian parliamentary committee commented that the Bougainville conflict had 'revealed the extent of deterioration

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40 *Post-Courier*, 20 March 1992.

41 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 April 1993.



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in the discipline and effectiveness of the Defence Force'.<sup>42</sup> Papua New Guinea Defence Minister Sabumei was more specific; calling for a review of training doctrines to address 'how to put down rebellions and deal with terrorists', he said:

There was not [at the start of the Bougainville crisis] a soldier on the ground trained to handle the situation which had been misread as a normal law and order problem.<sup>43</sup>

The Bougainville campaign also highlighted the physical and financial limitations on the capacity of the PNGDF to undertake such operations. Notwithstanding repeated overbudgeting in recent years, as a result of its commitment on Bougainville no patrols were undertaken on the Irian Jaya border in 1989, nor was any civic action work done. Payment of special allowances to troops serving on Bougainville was repeatedly deferred due to shortage of funds. And to add insult to injury, Air Niugini refused to provide a charter aircraft to lift troops to Bougainville.<sup>44</sup>

Not only did security force operations fail to resolve the situation, their handling of what became in effect an insurgency tended, over time, to alienate large numbers of Bougainvilleans, and to attract international criticism, thereby rendering solution of the problem more difficult. Further, within the security forces there emerged a growing conviction that a military solution was being frustrated by 'political interference', even that some politicians were more sympathetic to the BRA than to the PNGDF. Reflecting this frustration, in early 1993 a meeting of army wives at Murray Barracks petitioned the PNGDF command to 'let the soldiers deal with the Bougainville problem' or completely withdraw the security forces.<sup>45</sup> Contrarily, there were some who believed - not without basis - that elements in the security forces were deliberately undermining the government peace initiatives. This produced considerable tensions in relations between military and civil authorities - reflected, for example, in Police Commissioner Tohian's attempted 'coup' and the sacking of

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<sup>42</sup> Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, *Australia's Relations ...*, p.176; see also Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, *Hearings*, 22 October 1990, p.715.

<sup>43</sup> *Post-Courier*, 2 July 1991.

<sup>44</sup> Defence General Board of Inquiry, *Report ...*

<sup>45</sup> *Post-Courier*, 2 March 1993.

Colonel Nuia - as well as tensions within the government, especially before Diro's resignation. The failings of the security forces - their inability to contain the rebellion, their tendency to disregard the civil authority, and a general lack of discipline - prompted review of the capacity and role of the security forces. The initial result of this was a commitment to increasing force strength (a decision apparently reversed in 1992) and upgrading equipment and conditions of service in the PNGDF, and measures to strengthen the RPNGC (including the provision of Australian Defence Force personnel, through the DCP, to train police). But it also provided the catalyst for a formal change in the PNGDF's major priority, from external defence to internal security (a change acknowledged in a simultaneous review of the Australian DCP), and revived ideas of integrating PNGDF and RPNGC activities.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSION: THE MILITARY IN A PERIOD OF CHANGE

On the eve of independence, many, especially among Papua New Guinea's emerging political leaders, looked with some apprehension to the future role of the PNGDF. Well funded by the colonial government, well trained and possessing a degree of cohesion unusual in the fragmented society of the emerging state, and actively involved in village-level civic action, the military was seen by some as a potential challenge to the authority of an independent government and a threat to the continuation of a democratic political system. Not all of those who foresaw a political role for the military, however, anticipated a coup-style takeover. Journalist-academic Peter Hastings, for example, suggested that 'Australian democracy' was unlikely to take root and that 'we might be sensible to look towards "guided democracy", to a presidential system, to a strong army loyal to a strong central executive'.<sup>1</sup> Historian Hank Nelson foresaw a more complex situation:

There is little chance of the Niugini army taking power by overthrowing an efficient elected government. The army would not want to and it would not have the resources ... But what is most likely is that for a period Niugini will be governed by a group of army and civilian leaders. After the formal withdrawal of Australian authority the new government may seem to work well, then, as corruption, inefficiency and secessionist movements become more obvious, the few educated and competent will take over, either dismissing the institutions of government established by Australia or ignoring them.<sup>2</sup>

Concern about the future role of the defence force was reflected in the independence constitution, which defined the defence force's primary

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<sup>1</sup> Hastings, *New Guinea*, pp.191-92.

<sup>2</sup> H. Nelson, *Papua New Guinea: Black Unity or Black Chaos?* (Penguin Books, Ringwood, Victoria, 1972), p.208.



function as that of defending the country against external threat and placed restrictions on its use for internal security purposes.

Contrary to pessimistic predictions, after independence Papua New Guinea's democratic system prospered, and in the absence of external threat the military languished, notwithstanding substantial financial assistance through Australia's Defence Cooperation Programme. But within a decade of independence, growing problems of lawlessness and disorder began to threaten the position of national political leaders, and even some who had earlier looked apprehensively at the PNGDF began to call for an expanded role for the defence force in assisting police to maintain internal security.

The first rift between civil and military leaders - the so-called Diro Affair of 1977 - was not long in coming; but though it generated rumours of an impending coup it proved to be inconsequential. On the other hand, the resignation of several senior officers, including the deputy commander and the commander, to pursue careers in civil politics, established an early precedent and suggested a possible safety-valve against the build-up of military antagonism towards the civilian government. There was also, from the early 1980s, clear evidence of a politicisation of at least the senior levels of the PNGDF.

With a resurgence of tribal fighting and a growing problem of criminality, more and more politicians looked to the military to support the increasingly inadequate attempts of the police to contain lawlessness and maintain the authority of the state. From 1984 the army was regularly involved in 'law and order' operations and there was growing acceptance that the PNGDF's role in internal security was likely to be more significant than its function of safeguarding the country against external threat.

In this respect, the emergence of the Bougainville crisis was a watershed in changing perceptions of the PNGDF. What began as a police action against disgruntled landowners developed into a full-blown insurrection, in which a rag-tag 'Bougainville Revolutionary Army', led by a former PNGDF officer, has maintained its resistance against the joint security forces (police and military) for over four years, with significant casualties on both sides. In the process, severe doubts have been cast upon the capacity of the defence force to act in internal security situations. A belief within the security forces that they

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have been deprived of adequate funding and have been subjected to 'political' interference predates the Bougainville crisis but has been exacerbated by events on Bougainville since 1988. The effects of such feelings have been a growing tension in relations between military personnel and civil authorities, factionalism within the PNGDF's senior command structure, and a general lowering of morale and discipline. Notwithstanding this, by the early 1990s, with the Bougainville conflict still not resolved and growing threats to the authority of the state from urban and rural lawlessness, a series of reviews and summit meetings resulted in a significant shift in perceptions of the role of the PNGDF, placing primary emphasis on its role in maintaining internal security, and reviving ideas of integrating police and military.

Such developments have come at a time when there appears to be an accelerating tendency towards tighter social control in Papua New Guinea. This has been reflected in calls for more Draconian treatment of criminals; demands for the repatriation of immigrant urban squatters;<sup>3</sup> proposals for youth national service and the actual formation of uniformed youth anti-crime brigades; the proliferation of private security services and the creation of police rapid response teams to protect mining operations; pressures for censorship of the press; intensified opposition, mostly from national parliamentarians, to provincial government (and proposals to 'revive' traditional local authority structures); the introduction of contentious new internal security legislation (based on Malaysian legislation)<sup>4</sup> and an expressed admiration of some politicians for Indonesian, Singaporean and Malaysian models of social control. Identifying a number of instances of what they described as 'overwhelming evidence' of an 'increasing and dangerous trend towards the militarisation of society', a group of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and church organisations placed a full-page advertisement in the *Post-Courier* in 1992 urging

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<sup>3</sup> In early 1993 it was even suggested that the PNGDF be used to remove squatters from government land in Port Moresby (Radio Australia report, 8 January 1993).

<sup>4</sup> See *Times of Papua New Guinea*, 6, 13, 20 May 1993; *Post-Courier*, 5 May 1993, 27 August 1993, 6 September 1993. As this monograph was going to press it was announced that the government was considering the establishment of an elite police tactical squad to enforce the Internal Security Act and was looking at the possibilities of training assistance from Malaysia, Indonesia or the UK-based Defence Systems Ltd. (See *Post-Courier*, 1, 8 September 1993.)



leaders and citizens to renounce such militarisation. 'We need not have a military coup', their statement said, 'to militarise society'.<sup>5</sup>

The reference to a military coup was not the first in this period. As noted above, Diro had raised the spectre of a military coup in 1987 and the possibility of a coup has been acknowledged by several prominent political figures, including former governor-general Sir John Guise, Provincial Affairs Minister Momis, and Prime Minister Wingti - though Diro and others have been quick to denounce 'outside' commentators who have raised the subject.<sup>6</sup> Most observers (myself included) continue to see a coup as a remote possibility, not least because of the logistic difficulties which an attempted coup would pose for a relatively small army with limited transport capabilities in a physically and socially fragmented society in which even popularly elected national and provincial governments have difficulty maintaining their authority. Perhaps, in the 1990s, the possibility of challenge to an elected government by some combination of disgruntled soldiers and opportunistic politicians, together with elements of the police and public service - as foreshadowed by Nelson twenty years ago - can no longer be ruled out, but given the fragmented and competitive nature of Papua New Guinea politics such a group would be unlikely to provide a stable or effective regime.

What seems more likely is a gradual movement towards a significantly more *controlled* society, in which the PNGDF, though still subject to civilian control, will play an important role; in which the traditional distinctions between police and army will become progressively less sharp; and in which the security forces will become increasingly politicised. That this tendency is already in evidence is suggested by the growing currency in national political circles of the term 'guided democracy'.

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<sup>5</sup> See *Post-Courier*, 7 August 1992. Signatories to the statement were Melanesian Solidarity, the Catholic Commission for Peace, Justice and Development, the National Alliance of Non-Government Organisations, the PNG Integral Human Development Trust, and the Melanesian Environment Foundation.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Diro's response to Peter King, *Post-Courier*, 14, 15 May 1990, and Sabumei's critique of Saffu, *Post-Courier*, 4 December 1989. See also the reaction to a *Sydney Morning Herald* report (27 April 1992), that Australian intelligence analysts saw a 'real risk' of a military coup in the next year or two, in the *Post-Courier*, 28, 29 April 1992.



## Appendix 1

### Australian Defence Cooperation Payments to Papua New Guinea

	\$A million	As percentage of total DCP
1975/76	15.7	40.3
1976/77	14.0	55.1
1977/78	14.6	54.0
1978/79	11.5	46.8
1979/80	14.2	47.2
1980/81	15.2	40.2
1981/82	16.7	42.0
1982/83	17.3	39.1
1983/84	16.4	36.0
1984/85	16.0	35.4
1985/86	19.1	38.1
1986/87	22.9	42.0
1987/88	24.3	42.2
1988/89	27.4	45.2
1989/90	37.9	51.1
1990/91	52.1	56.0
1991/92	37.2	49.4
1992/93(e)	31.0	41.7

(e) budget estimate

(Source: Parliament of Australia,  
Parliamentary Research Service)

## **Appendix 2**

### **Agreed Statement on Security Cooperation Between Australia and Papua New Guinea**

The Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon. R.J.L. Hawke, AC, MP, and the Prime Minister of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea, the Rt. Hon. Rabbie L. Namaliu, CMG, MP, today reached a common understanding of priorities for bilateral security cooperation between Australia and Papua New Guinea, and of the areas, principles and procedures for security cooperation in the future. This common understanding followed from consideration by the Prime Ministers of the wide-ranging reviews by the Papua New Guinea Government of Papua New Guinea's security needs and by the Australian Government of its security assistance programmes with Papua New Guinea.

#### **PRINCIPAL FINDINGS OF THE SECURITY REVIEWS**

2. Principal findings of the reviews were:
  - Internal security needs are to be given the highest priority by Papua New Guinea, which requires security if development is to proceed and development if security is to be maintained.
  - Papua New Guinea requires a comprehensive, integrated and planned approach to its overall security requirements which, while recognising the need for external defence, reflects the higher priority to be given to internal security, including law and order.
  - Security cooperation between Australia and Papua New Guinea must be developed in ways which reflect these changing priorities.

#### **AREAS OF SECURITY COOPERATION**

3. The Government of Papua New Guinea is fully committed to the earliest possible implementation of the findings of its review. The Australian Government is firmly committed to cooperating with Papua New Guinea in pursuit of this goal. To this end, the two

Governments will engage in wide-ranging programmes of cooperation designed to strengthen national self-reliance. On the basis of either the individual or combined needs of services or agencies, the priorities for such cooperation will be to provide and fund

- the training of personnel in Papua New Guinea's disciplined forces and other related agencies in maintaining internal security, including law and order, in Papua New Guinea,
- infrastructure, equipment and other support facilities for the disciplined forces and other law enforcement agencies, principally in the area of internal security, including law and order, and
- exchanges of personnel between the disciplined forces and other relevant agencies of the two countries.

4. As an essential part of the urgent implementation of its review, the Papua New Guinea Government is preparing a Plan of Action setting out its comprehensive, integrated and planned approach, including detailed programmes and projects. The completion of this Plan will enable the two Governments to make decisions, in consultation, about the most appropriate use of Australia's assistance programmes.

#### **PRINCIPLES FOR SECURITY COOPERATION**

5. In accordance with the Joint Declaration of Principles Guiding Relations Between Papua New Guinea and Australia (JDP), signed on 9 December 1987, the following constitute firm points of reference for future security cooperation between Australia and Papua New Guinea:

- Security cooperation will continue to be conducted with mutual respect for each country's independence, sovereignty and equality.
- Exchanges and other forms of cooperation will be based on the principle that national security is primarily a national responsibility; take full account of capacity, resources and



needs in both countries; ensure reliability, consistency and quality; and be based on full participation by both countries.

- Both Governments retain the right to determine whether or not to supply requested equipment or resources to the other, bearing in mind their respective foreign and strategic commitments and their policies, principles and values.
- Both Governments recognise each other's right to develop and strengthen relations, including security links, with other countries.

#### PROCEDURES FOR SECURITY COOPERATION

6. In implementing security cooperation programmes:
  - Assistance will be provided in response to requests through agreed programmes which allow for forward planning.
  - Cooperating agencies will provide each other with accurate, full and timely information concerning all aspects of bilateral security cooperation.
  - Senior officials of the two Governments will meet annually to review the totality of security cooperation between Australia and Papua New Guinea.
  - The procedures set out in the JDP apply to all matters relating to security cooperation between the two countries.
7. The Treaty on Development Cooperation and other agreements relating to the Status of Forces in each other's countries, to the provision of defence supply support, and to service in Papua New Guinea by Australian loan personnel, remain in full effect.

[signed]

R.J.L. HAWKE  
PRIME MINISTER  
OF AUSTRALIA

[signed]

RABBIE L. NAMALIU  
PRIME MINISTER OF  
PAPUA NEW GUINEA

CANBERRA  
2 SEPTEMBER 1991

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In the decade preceding Papua New Guinea's independence in 1975, there was a lively debate about the possible future role of the defence force. On the one hand there were many among Papua New Guinea's emerging nationalist elite who saw the defence force as a luxury and as a potential threat to an elected government. On the other hand there had already been created, under the Australian colonial administration, a well-trained Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF). In the event, the independent state of Papua New Guinea maintained the PNGDF in essentially the form in which it had been inherited from Australia. The constitution defined its primary role in terms of external defence and placed restrictions on its use for internal security purposes.

From the mid-1980s, however, the PNGDF came to play an increasingly active role in internal law and order operations and with the eruption in 1988-89 of an insurgency in the North Solomons Province (Bougainville) the PNGDF became involved, with the police, in a costly and controversial internal security operation. In 1991 changing perceptions of the role of the PNGDF were acknowledged in a redefinition of priorities, which recognised the greater significance of internal security relative to the unlikely threat of, and limited capacity to respond to, external aggression.

This monograph documents the changes which have taken place in the role of the military in Papua New Guinea and examines relations between civil and military authorities. It argues that a military coup remains a remote possibility. More likely is a gradual movement towards a significantly more *controlled* society, in which the PNGDF, though still subject to civilian control, will play an important role; in which the traditional distinction between police and army will become progressively less sharp; and in which the security forces will become increasingly politicised. Such tendencies are already in evidence.