

**PAPUA NEW GUINEA'S INTERNAL SECURITY:  
DILEMMAS FOR AUSTRALIAN PLANNERS**

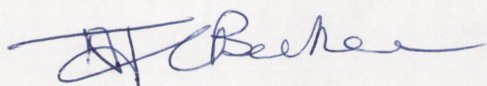
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I certify that this sub-thesis is my own work  
and that all sources have been acknowledged.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Becker". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line extending to the left of the first letter.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank all who agreed to be interviewed, including officials and former officials of the Australian Department of Defence, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. Particular thanks go to Dr Stewart Woodman and Lt Col Terry Boyce, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, and Dr Bill Standish, Department of Political and Social Change, for their insight and encouragement.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>		<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 1:</b>	<b>Australian Strategic Perspectives on Papua New Guinea - 1884-1975</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Chapter 2:</b>	<b>Australia-Papua New Guinea Defence Relations 1975-1989</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Chapter 3:</b>	<b>Papua New Guinea's Internal Security Crises and Australia's Response 1989-1990</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Chapter 4:</b>	<b>Perspectives on Intervention and Involvement Post-Bougainville</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Chapter 5:</b>	<b>Ongoing Assistance</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>		<b>50</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>		<b>52</b>

## INTRODUCTION

The security of Papua New Guinea, Australia's former colony and nearest neighbour, has been considered of importance to Australia for over a century. Australia was committed to the direct defence of PNG until 1975 and has provided critical financial support to the Papua New Guinea Defence Forces in the seventeen years since PNG became an independent state. By 1989 the strains of development had begun to tell on PNG's cohesion and stability and the police and military were being stretched beyond their capabilities by a secessionist war and rising lawlessness. This turn of events caused Australian foreign and defence policy makers a great deal of concern. Australia had recently begun to formulate a tentative policy approach to domestic instability in the South West Pacific in response to political upheavals in two of the smaller island states. However, determining an appropriate response to PNG's deteriorating internal security situation was a problem of quite a different magnitude. PNG's geographic proximity to Australia, the open ended nature of its domestic difficulties, and the closeness of the defence relationship between the two countries presented new difficulties and dilemmas, compelling Australia to come to terms with the full implications of its role as Papua New Guinea's 'primary security partner'.

Papua New Guinea's internal security has become a major foreign and defence policy preoccupation for Australia. This paper does not, however, purport to be a comprehensive discussion of the many problems facing Papua New Guinea as these have been extensively detailed elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> Neither is it an exhaustive history of the Australia - Papua New Guinea defence relationship although this awaits the attention of researchers. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the evolving interaction between Papua New Guinea's internal security problems and Australian defence policy. It gives an overview of the dynamic from Australia's perspective, with particular emphasis on the pivotal Bougainville crisis, and highlights dilemmas old and new facing Australian foreign and defence policy makers.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Sean Dorney, *Papua New Guinea: People, Politics and History Since 1975* (Random House, Australia, 1990); Mark Turner, *Papua New Guinea: The Challenge of Independence* (Penguin Books, Australia, 1990); and David Hegarty, *Papua New Guinea: At the Political Crossroads?* (Working Paper No. 177, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre (SDSC), Australian National University (ANU), Canberra, 1989).

## CHAPTER ONE

### AUSTRALIAN STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVES ON PAPUA NEW GUINEA - 1884-1975

The post-independence years have been a relatively short phase in the evolution of Australian defence thinking on Papua New Guinea and many of the assumptions driving both Australia and PNG's policy responses since 1975 had their genesis in the colonial period. While this paper focuses on the Australia/Papua New Guinea defence relationship since 1975 it is necessary to give a brief overview of these formative years, emphasising the linkages between Australia's early strategic perceptions and the evolution of Papua New Guinea's defence capabilities.<sup>2</sup>

Well before Australia had become a nation state its constituent colonies were concerned that they might be the targets of external aggression. Their continent was considered particularly vulnerable as it was both sparsely populated and remote from its metropolitan power, Britain, on whose naval strength it relied for protection. Sometimes Australian fears related to uncertainty over the nature and scope of increasing French and German interest in the Pacific and at others to the proximity of the heavily populated countries of eastern and south-eastern Asia.<sup>3</sup>

The island of New Guinea, Australia's closest neighbour and lying just off its northern coast, was regarded as a natural bulwark and a base that should not be allowed to fall into enemy hands. It was this perception that lay behind the illegal annexation of Papua by the Queensland government that resulted in its proclamation as a British Protectorate in 1884. It also explains the Australian Federal government's attempt to annex outright the former German New Guinea after World War I and, when that failed, its successful bid to administer the colony under a League of Nations mandate.<sup>4</sup> In the words of the Australian Prime Minister, W.M. Hughes, New Guinea was vital to Australia's security interests because 'any strong power controlling New Guinea controlled Australia and ... if Australia did not control New Guinea she could not feel safe'.<sup>5</sup>

In 1940, when the ripples of World War II reached the South West Pacific, a Papuan Infantry Battalion (PIB) was raised but it was not until 1944, when the PIB had proved its worth, that the first New Guinea Battalion (1NGIB) was formed. In late 1944

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2 Unless otherwise attributed, the information in this chapter is drawn from Paul Mench's definitive pre-independence analysis of *The Role of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force* (Development Studies Centre Monograph No.2, ANU, Canberra, 1975).

3 J.D. Legge, *Australian Colonial Policy: A Survey of Native Administration and European Development in Papua* (Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1956), p.2.

4 *Ibid.*

5 Cited in Mench, *The Role of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force*, p.3.

the PIB and three New Guinea Infantry Battalions were brought under joint control with the establishment of Headquarters Pacific Island Regiment (PIR). By the time the Japanese surrendered in 1945 the units of the PIR that had been operationally active - PIB, 1NGIB and 2NGIB - had gained a formidable military reputation. Their bravery and skill in reconnaissance, ambushing and long range patrolling had left 2209 enemy dead for the loss of only 63 Australian, Papuan and New Guinean servicemen.

Unfortunately, disciplinary problems, which had surfaced occasionally throughout the war, became more serious during the middle of 1945, confirming the fears of territory administrators who thought indigenous troops a potentially dangerous, unruly and destabilising influence on the local population. Despite the PIR's impressive war record and the mitigating circumstances, which included inequitable pay and conditions and poor Australian leadership, the PIR was disbanded in 1946.

Four years later, however, heightened concern about regional external and internal security trends set in train the PIR's reactivation. Australia's earlier general unease about Great Power rivalry and Asian 'spillover' was now replaced by a more specific fear of communist expansionism. An increasingly assertive communist China, the Malayan insurgency and the existence of a Chinese minority in Australia's New Guinea territory; instability in Indonesia and increasing tension between that country and the Netherlands over the future of Dutch New Guinea, all fuelled fears that PNG might fall prey to communist subversion or infiltration. PNG was still considered of vital strategic importance to Australia and memories of the recent Japanese invasion of PNG ensured bipartisan agreement that 'Australian defence and defence preparations in PNG would serve Australian security interests as well as those of the people of PNG'.<sup>6</sup>

The tasks assigned the newly reconstituted PIR emphasised this role as the first line in Australia's defence and reflected its wartime experience. In peacetime the battalion was to patrol, provide a basis for possible expansion, and assist the civil administration in maintaining law and order if required. In times of war it was to undertake garrison duty and act as an advisory unit to Australian units. It was also to provide medium range reconnaissance and to fight as a unit to delay the enemy.

The PIR was clearly considered as an adjunct to Australia's defence forces in 1950 and not as the potential nucleus of an independent defence force. However, following two serious outbreaks of indiscipline in 1957 and 1961 there was a wide ranging review of the battalion's future. The review reappraised the role of the PIR in light of these disciplinary problems and against the background of the first tentative discussions of independence for PNG. The Commanding Officer of the PIR argued, and many in

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p.25.

Australian defence circles now agreed, that the battalion should no longer be seen simply as a military unit but in terms of its potentially positive contribution towards the stability and development of an independent PNG and towards the maintenance of harmonious relations between that country and Australia.

It was decided to localise senior NCO positions and train PNG officers and to improve all aspects of pay and conditions. Plans for the reorganisation and expansion of the PIR, on a scale affordable and appropriate to a developing country's needs, were also drawn up. Conditions were improved and localisation and officer training were initiated but the PIR was not restructured and remained about 700 strong until 1963 when strategic imperatives led to renewed interest in PNG's defence capabilities. In that year *Konfrontasi* and the transfer of West Irian further narrowed the focus of Australia's security concerns, raising fears that PNG might become the next target of Indonesian expansionism.

Promising that Australia would 'defend these territories as if they were part of the mainland'<sup>7</sup> its Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies, announced that the strength of the PIR would be doubled. In the following year the proposed increase had leapt to three battalions and supporting units - a total of some 3500 men. A twelve million pound building programme was announced for the construction of barracks, engineering services, workshops and married quarters. A coastal security force was also to be formed and airfields built and upgraded to improve PIR mobility and RAAF access. Recruiting difficulties and inadequate processing facilities meant that the three battalion force was never realised but the 'Confrontation build up' which lasted from 1963 to 1969 did quadruple troop numbers and massively expand defence infrastructure.

Expansion was halted when Australia's strategic perspectives changed with the demise of President Sukarno and a warming in relations between Australia and Indonesia. The linkages between Papua New Guinea and Australia's security became even more attenuated during the early 1970s as the implications of global political and technological change were absorbed. A revolution in military technology including the advent of land and submarine based nuclear ballistic missiles now seemed to reduce the importance of invasion springboard bases such as PNG. A strategy of 'forward defence' in Papua New Guinea was also losing its attraction as the direction of the war in Vietnam became more obvious.

Uncertainty over the extent of British and American commitment to the security of the Asia-Pacific region and in particular to the security of Australia was also undermining traditional foreign and defence policy perspectives. Australia now had to consider the possibility that it would have to defend itself in certain circumstances and to

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p.37.



consider how best it might contribute to regional security. The 1972 Whitlam Labor government believed that political, social and economic change in the region was inevitable and even desirable and eschewed Australian military intervention even if such change resulted in violence.<sup>8</sup> Whitlam wanted to develop a series of regional security relationships patterned on Australia's programme of bilateral defence assistance to Indonesia, initiated in the late 1960s. The intention was to improve relations with Australia's neighbours and contribute towards their defence self-reliance, thus reducing any future pressure on Australia to send its own forces abroad in a regional role.<sup>9</sup>

The last Australian troops were bought home from Vietnam, a battalion withdrawn from Singapore, conscription abolished and the process of decolonisation and disengagement in PNG greatly accelerated.<sup>10</sup> The first defence function was transferred with the appointment of a Ministerial Spokesman on Defence in 1972 and by early 1975, ahead of Independence, PNG had complete control over its own defence. Australia is the only metropolitan power and the only trustee under the UN Charter to have transferred responsibility for defence to a dependent nation before its international entity had been established.<sup>11</sup>

Robert O'Neill suggests that the comparative haste with which Australia transferred defence powers to Papua New Guinea may also have been related to concern over internal disturbances in PNG.<sup>12</sup> In the last years before Independence there had been a resurgence of tribal fighting in the Highlands as Australian authority receded and potentially secessionist political movements had sprung up in South Bougainville and the Gazelle Peninsula. In 1970 nationalist violence on the Gazelle had reached such proportions that it had tied up some 25% of the entire Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary (RPNGC) and threatened to completely overwhelm PNG's police resources. The Territory Administration, which was responsible for internal security, requested permission from Canberra to call out the PIR should the police prove inadequate to the task of restoring order.

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<sup>8</sup> Stewart Woodman, *Towards an Independent Outlook: Australia's Regional Security Policies 1945-1991* (Unpublished Paper, SDSC, ANU, Canberra, 1991), pp.5-6.

<sup>9</sup> Robert O'Neill, 'Defence Policy' in W.J Hudson (ed.), *Australia in World Affairs 1971-75* (Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1980), p.21.

<sup>10</sup> Woodman, *Towards an Independent Outlook*, p.6.

<sup>11</sup> Ian Downs, *The Australian Trusteeship Papua New Guinea 1945-75* (Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1980), p.548.

<sup>12</sup> O'Neill, 'Defence Policy', p.22.

This request generated a week of 'unpublished drama' in Canberra.<sup>13</sup> Against its concern and pressure for action by the Territory Administration the Australian government had to weigh the opposition of the defence establishment and the political and foreign policy costs of deploying the military to quell civil disorder in PNG. The Australian Defence Committee in Canberra advised the Minister for the Army of its opposition to the use of defence services to assist the civil power. The Committee's verdict reflected the belief, held to a greater or lesser degree in all Westminster type democracies, that police and military functions should remain discrete. Police forces are trained to protect life and property in maintaining law and order while armies have to be prepared to use lethal force in the national defence. Force could prevail over law if internal security operations were conducted by the military and an army so employed could become politicised and pose a threat to the democratic order. The belief that military force should only be used as a last resort was even more strongly held in Australia than in such countries as Great Britain or Canada.<sup>14</sup>

As early as 1958 doubts had been voiced about the ability of the police to deal with large scale civil disturbances in PNG. It had been suggested then that the army be made available to deal with serious hostilities but Australia had preferred to increase police manpower and authorise the formation of police riot squads. Defence authorities in Canberra doubted whether the PIR could give effective and controlled aid to the civil power and a number of Army officers, both in Australia and PNG, were concerned that the PIR's standing in local society, and therefore its morale, would be adversely affected if it were employed in the suppression of public disorder.

Defence attitudes may have been different had a direct link been perceived between the territories' internal order and Australia's defence interests. However, this particular security nexus had never existed. Colonial administrators had attempted to quell the widespread conflict that had traditionally characterised relations between the hundreds of small communities in PNG as part of their 'civilising mission'<sup>15</sup> and had introduced new systems of justice and law enforcement to facilitate the development and management of the territories.<sup>16</sup> A similar mixture of altruism and concern greeted the new forms of civil disorder which appeared with the rapid and uneven pace of economic development and the prospect of enforced political unification.

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13 B.D. Beddie and S. Moss, *Some Aspects of Aid to the Civil Power in Australia* (Occasional Monograph No.2, Department of Government, Faculty of Military Studies, University of New South Wales, 1982), p.54.

14 Mench, *The Role of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force*, p.117.

15 Turner, *Papua New Guinea: The Challenge of Independence*, p.164.

16 Dorney, *Papua New Guinea: People, Politics and History since 1975*, pp.39-40.

That there was a distinction drawn between these internal security matters and external defence, however, and a relative weight apportioned, was evident in the division of responsibilities between the Territory Administration and the central authorities in Canberra. The low priority accorded internal security in comparison with external defence was also reflected in Australian government expenditure, with the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary (RPNGC) receiving considerably less funding than the PIR and being run on much more austere lines. The defence force in PNG was allocated some \$23 million in 1972/73 compared with a police budget of just \$14 million.<sup>17</sup>

During the Gazelle Crisis the Australian government was also aware that the Labor Party Opposition, now critical of repressive colonial regimes and publicly advocating the acceleration of decolonisation in PNG, would make political capital out of any miscalculated or excessive use of armed force. Furthermore, any substantial use of Australian armed force against civilians in PNG might attract criticism from the international community and, as PNG was governed by agreement with the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations, even draw censure from the United Nations itself.<sup>18</sup> Despite official and political opposition and its own reservations the government was eventually persuaded that the Territory Administration's request was justified and gave the authority for a call-out, but in the event the police proved able to maintain control and the order was revoked.

After the Gazelle disturbances authority was given for the PIR to begin internal security training and by 1972 it was reported that the force was receiving about ten weeks training a year in aid to the civil power.<sup>19</sup> However, while the Liberal-Country Party government was eventually persuaded of the requirement for military aid to the civil power and had even contemplated the deployment of forces stationed in Australia<sup>20</sup> should the PIR prove unequal to the task, the incoming Labor Party government wanted to minimise its military involvement in the maintenance of PNG's internal security. The transfer of defence power strengthened the PNG government's capacity to resist internal challenges to its own authority and relieved Australia of this responsibility.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Paul Mench, 'After Independence...Australian Military Involvement?', *New Guinea and Australia, the Pacific and South-East Asia*, January 1975, pp.47-48.

<sup>18</sup> Beddie and Moss, *Some Aspects of Aid to the Civil Power in Australia*, pp.55-56.

<sup>19</sup> Merry Wickes, 'The Khaki Connection: of Coups, the Military, and Australia', *Meanjin Quarterly*, Spring 1975, p.256.

<sup>20</sup> Beddie and Moss, *Some Aspects of Aid to the Civil Power in Australia*, p.58.

<sup>21</sup> O'Neill, 'Defence Policy', p.22.

## CHAPTER TWO

### AUSTRALIA-PAPUA NEW GUINEA DEFENCE RELATIONS 1975-1989

Australian defence policy regarding PNG clearly had to be revised as Independence approached for PNG could no longer be treated as an extension of Australia in defence planning. The change in status meant that an attack on PNG need no longer be considered an attack on Australia and that Australia was no longer under a direct obligation to defend PNG. A second consequence of Independence and the devolution of formal defence responsibility was that Australia lost control over PNG's security developments and military activities. The Port Moresby government could now pursue policies, or become embroiled in situations, which might be considered inimical to Australian interests. These interests included the safety of the large Australian expatriate community and Australian investments in PNG and the preservation of a benign regional security environment.

Periodic instability in PNG was expected to continue and there was some concern for the future safety of Australian nationals and investments. A secondary concern in relation to internal security was that serious instability could invite unwelcome foreign interference.<sup>22</sup> Although PNG was no longer considered of vital strategic importance, it was generally accepted that the defence of Australia would be seriously disadvantaged by the denial of access to PNG's air and sea space or the lodgement in PNG of an external power capable of military action against Australia.<sup>23</sup>

Potential also existed in Papua New Guinea's relations with Indonesia for disturbance of Australia's own relations with Indonesia. Few thought Indonesia posed a conventional threat to PNG in the foreseeable future as it did not have the capability, nor had it demonstrated any intention, to do so. However, there was some concern that friction could develop and escalate in the relationship between the two countries. Indonesia has a strong interest in containing secessionism throughout its scattered domains, including its easternmost province, Irian Jaya, which shares a long and permeable border with PNG. PNG's population has a natural affiliation with the Melanesian Irianese and the Soeharto government did not want Irianese dissidents using PNG as a safe haven or a base for insurgency operations, expecting cooperation from PNG in preventing it. At a more general level Indonesia was interested in the maintenance of a united and stable PNG under a government broadly sympathetic to Jakarta. A radical or unsympathetic regime in Port

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<sup>22</sup> Hedley Bull, 'Australia's Involvement in Independent Papua New Guinea', *World Review*, Vol.13, No.1, 1974, p.6.

<sup>23</sup> Robert O'Neill, 'Australia's Future Defence Relations with Papua New Guinea', *Australian Outlook*, Vol.26, No.2, 1972, p.201.

Moresby could invite aid from great powers hostile to Indonesian interests. Regional dissidence or instability could have a similar result or simply spill over into Irian Jaya.<sup>24</sup>

If developments in PNG were perceived as undermining Indonesian security or PNG proved unable or unwilling to effectively police its side of the border, the Indonesians might resort to low-level cross border pursuit or punitive raids into PNG. This could lead to limited military exchanges with PNG and/or to PNG requesting Australian assistance.<sup>25</sup> Either of these contingencies would put stress on Australia's relations with Indonesia, thereby complicating the pursuit of one of Australia's most important foreign and defence policy objectives.

To maintain the confidence of the PNG government and minimise the prospects of a hostile power gaining lodgement in PNG, a cooperative relationship, in all areas including defence, was to be maintained between Canberra and Port Moresby. Hard headed strategic calculations were not the only consideration in determining continuing cooperation. The colonial relationship had engendered a sense of responsibility for PNG's welfare that was part benevolence and part concern for Australia's own reputation.<sup>26</sup> This sense of responsibility dictated, and was perpetuated by, substantial financial and administrative assistance to the new government in Port Moresby.

Australia was, however, anxious to avoid any suggestion of paternalism in defence matters - partly because this would be offensive to PNG and partly because it might be interpreted in such a way as to unreasonably increase Australia's obligations. Although Australia was concerned about the potential for instability in PNG, threats to its interests, and problems on the border, its concern was focused not only on the impact these contingencies would have on Australia's security but on the need to avoid intervening if at all possible. As is frequently noted, those considering intervention in the affairs of another state must always take as their starting point the presumption that intervention in general is wrong. So great is the weight ethical and legal arguments against intervention carry in the international community that such a course of action requires very strong justification.<sup>27</sup> Australia was also aware of the operational difficulties and strategic dilemmas attendant on intervention.

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<sup>24</sup> Harold Crouch, 'Indonesia and the Security of Australia and Papua New Guinea' in Desmond Ball and Cathy Downes (eds), *Security and Defence: Pacific and Global Perspectives* (Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1990), pp.392-393.

<sup>25</sup> David Hegarty, 'The South Pacific and Papua New Guinea' in Desmond Ball and Cathy Downes (eds), *Security and Defence: Pacific and Global Perspectives* (Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1990), p.430.

<sup>26</sup> O'Neill, 'Australia's Future Defence Relations with Papua New Guinea', p.201.

<sup>27</sup> Greg Fry. 'A South Peacekeeping Force?' in Hugh Smith (ed.), *Australia and Peacekeeping* (Australian Defence Studies Centre, Canberra, 1990), pp.121-122.

Such considerations influenced the type of security arrangements entered into with the newly independent PNG. In 1975 Australia and PNG signed several interim defence agreements that were formalised in 1977. These were a *Status of Forces Agreement* making legal provision for the status of personnel when in each other's country; a *Consultative Agreement* providing for prior discussion on the use of Australian loan personnel in politically sensitive situations; a *Supply Support Agreement* allowing PNG access to the ADF logistic system; and a *Statement of Understanding* acknowledging the need for continuing consultation on matters of mutual concern to the defence forces of both countries.

What the *Statement of Understanding* did not contain was any suggestion of an Australian commitment to the defence of PNG.<sup>28</sup> Papua New Guinea's leaders, assured that they faced no foreseeable external threat and reassured of continuing Australian concern, did not formally pursue the matter of a defence treaty with Australia.<sup>29</sup> On the Australian side, Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of External Territories had been anxious to avoid such a commitment to PNG's defence for a range of reasons.<sup>30</sup> The first is that Australia wanted to avoid putting any strain on the triangular relationship between Australia, PNG and Indonesia. A security treaty might have caused offence in Jakarta, removed incentives for PNG to proceed cautiously in its disputes with Indonesia, and drawn Australia into any future conflict between its two neighbours. Secondly, Australia was anxious to avoid giving such a formal reminder of PNG's continuing dependence. Finally, Australia was well aware of the potential for domestic disorder in PNG and was reluctant to conclude any arrangement with an independent PNG that could be interpreted as a commitment to its internal security.

While Australia wanted to avoid direct military involvement it retained an interest in denying hostile forces strategic access to PNG. Australia's defence policy regarding the newly independent PNG set out to achieve both of these objectives by assisting in the improvement of the PNG's own defence capabilities. Substantial assistance would assure Canberra of political and military allies in PNG. It would also contribute directly to PNG's security and indirectly to Australia's and raise the threshold of direct Australian military assistance in times of crisis.

To 'maintain Australia's position as PNG's primary defence partner and to assist in the development of the capabilities of the PNGDF'<sup>31</sup> Australia began to provide

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<sup>28</sup> *Joint Statement by Prime Ministers on the Defence Relationship Between Papua New Guinea and Australia*, document tabled before Parliament February 23 1977, *Hansard*, Representatives, p.345.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Hastings, 'Papua New Guinea's Defence Policy', *Sydney Morning Herald*, April 18 1974.

<sup>30</sup> David Hegarty, personal interview, Canberra, April 6 1992.

<sup>31</sup> Katherine Bullock, *Australia and Papua New Guinea: Foreign and Defence Relations Since 1975* (Working Paper No 227, SDSC, ANU, Canberra, 1991), p.1.

funding and training for the PNGDF under the aegis of the Defence Cooperation Programme (DCP). The process of promoting defence self-reliance had to start with the transfer of infrastructure, equipment, administrative and funding responsibilities for the PNGDF from Canberra to the new government in Port Moresby. In PNG's first year of Independence (FY 1974/75) most of the Australian funding was used to facilitate PNG's purchase of Australian defence assets, principally barracks, bases and training camps on land originally purchased for Australian Army use.

The other high priority was the withdrawal of Australian personnel from the PNGDF. The Defence Force was heavily dependent on Australians for leadership and expertise, especially in the higher ranks. In 1974 there were 663 Australians serving with the PNGDF, some 17% of the force total. Australians filled 75% of the officer ranks and over 50% of senior Non Commissioned Officer (NCO) positions. A further 226 Australians were serving in units outside the PNGDF. Some were in support units, principally related to air support, and others in Australian defence units with specific tasks. A Survey Squadron was engaged in mapping for the PNG government and an engineer unit operated as a public works office at Mendi in the Southern Highlands.<sup>32</sup>

Even when defence functions and infrastructure had been transferred and all Australian personnel withdrawn from combat related positions, the PNGDF remained heavily reliant on Australian funding support. From FY 1976/77 to FY 1985/86 Australia provided PNG with between \$11 and \$19 million in DCP funding annually. PNG's share of funding declined relatively during this period as the DCP was broadened to include the South West Pacific island states and the ASEAN nations. However it remained the largest single country recipient of DCP funds, always accounting for at least 35% of total DCP outlay.<sup>33</sup> Some thirty per cent of PNG's defence budget was provided annually by Australia until 1989.<sup>34</sup>

Some of this funding went on short term skill related and officer training courses in Australia, exchanges and joint exercises. Some went on the payment of specialist advisers and loan personnel, particularly in the air transport sector, and some on ongoing engineering and survey assistance to the civilian authorities. Much went on maintaining and upgrading the extensive infrastructure and sustaining both the force structure inherited from Australia and the relatively technology intensive equipment that the PNGDF came to insist was necessary for its external defence role.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Mench, 'After Independence ... Australian Military Involvement?', p.96.

<sup>33</sup> Bullock, *Australia and Papua New Guinea: Foreign and Defence Relations since 1975*, p.1.

<sup>34</sup> Dorney, *Papua New Guinea: People, Politics and History Since 1975*, p.189.

<sup>35</sup> In 1985 PNG's Defence Minister criticised patrol boats offered by Australia because they did not have a sufficient military capability, arguing that PNG's 'soldiers need a sense of pride. They are trained

Despite this continuing assistance, the efficiency, discipline and morale of the PNGDF declined significantly between 1975 and 1989. An important contributory factor to this decline was the absence of a definitive role for the PNGDF after Independence. The military's future had been debated in both PNG and Australia in the late 1960s and early 1970s but never satisfactorily resolved. Some political figures in PNG had argued that the PNGDF should be disbanded as it was expensive, elitist and unnecessary. Even PNG's Constitutional Planning Committee (CPC) had been sceptical of the need for an indigenous external defence capability.<sup>36</sup> Proposals to merge the military and police into a single security force, capable of maintaining a presence in the border region and of contributing to the maintenance of law and order, had been floated in both PNG and Australia.<sup>37</sup>

Such radical restructuring had not been supported by the PNGDF which had a proud military tradition it wished to continue, nor with many in the ADF who had served in, or been otherwise associated with, the PIR or the PNGDF. They had some unlikely allies in the CPC which, despite its doubts about PNG's external defence requirements, was adamant that routine law and order enforcement should remain first and foremost a police responsibility. Papua New Guinea's leadership favoured the retention of a conventional military capability because it was a symbol of independence, sovereignty, and national identity.

Disagreement over military roles and force structure, the existence of a functioning and apparently effective defence force, and the speed of defence devolution all mitigated against radical change.<sup>38</sup> The PNGDF therefore remained substantially as it had been; meaningful in the framework of the Australian Defence Force during that period but militarily unbalanced, expensive and non-viable as a separate force. It was not a force tailored to PNG's specific security requirements.<sup>39</sup>

The PNGDF's priorities were to be, as they had been in the last years before Independence, defence against external attack, assistance in economic development and promotion of national unity; and assistance to the police as a *last resort* in maintaining public order and security internally.<sup>40</sup> To fulfil these tasks the force had a strength of some 3,500 with land, maritime and air components now integrated under a single command.

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soldiers and their morale would be high if they are on proper navy boats'; Mark Baker, 'PNG Rejects Patrol Boats', *Age*, September 7 1985.

36 *Final Report of the Constitutional Planning Committee 1974, Part 1* (Port Moresby, 1974), p.13/2.

37 Mench, *The Role of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force*, pp.75-76.

38 *Ibid*, pp.72-80.

39 Colonel Colin East, 'PNGDF: Colonial Legacy or Independent Force?', *Pacific Defence Reporter*, November 1985.

40 'Separate Police, Defence Forces', *Papua New Guinea News Release*, April 26 1974.



The nucleus of the land element was provided by the two PIR battalions, each of three rifle companies, and the maritime element by five fast patrol boats and several heavy landing craft. PNG had also acquired a modest air capability with four *Dakota* transport planes provided by Australia.

The force was not adequately trained or allocated sufficient funds for its secondary roles of civic action and aid to the civil power. No financial provision at all was made for military assistance to the police while civic action funds were increasingly whittled away for political purposes. In 1988 a third of the three million kina allotted for civic action projects was diverted to the National Development Fund to buy the support of MPs in the run up to the July vote of confidence.<sup>41</sup> At the same time, however, the low priority accorded external defence in the absence of a discernible threat and the consequent lack of budgetary support meant that the PNGDF was increasingly unable even to carry out its sole important external defence function of border patrol. Because budget cuts had reduced available aircraft hours, restricting the PNGDF's logistic supply capacity, border patrols, already reduced to six a year by 1983, were reduced even further to two a year.<sup>42</sup>

Another related reason for the decline in the PNGDF's capability was that the DCP funded specific projects and perceived areas of need but did not provide untied funds to the PNGDF. Australia did give PNG a considerable amount of general budgetary support, some of which PNG could allocate to its defence vote, but defence was an understandably low priority for a developing country. The PNGDF came under increasing budgetary pressure, particularly after 1983 when substantial cuts were made in defence expenditure. Pay and conditions deteriorated, training and administration suffered, patrolling and civic action were cut back, and readiness and sustainability declined.<sup>43</sup>

A third contributory factor was the pace of localisation. PNGDF officers rose rapidly through the ranks to senior positions without accumulating the experience of their counterparts in most military forces. Although an Australian advisory unit (ATTSU) was set up in an effort to redress some of the problems caused by localisation it did not prove popular with the PNGDF.<sup>44</sup> Australia also funded attendance by members of the

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<sup>41</sup> Yaw Saffu, *Military Roles and Relations in Papua New Guinea*, paper presented to Conference on the Armed Forces in Asia and the Pacific, Department of Political and Social Change, ANU, Canberra, 1989, p.10.

<sup>42</sup> T.M. Boyce, *Infrastructure and Security: Problems of Development in the West Sepik* (Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence, SDSC, ANU, Canberra, Forthcoming).

<sup>43</sup> *Report of the Defence General Board of Inquiry Into the Administration and Management of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force and the Defence Department* (PNG Department of Defence, Boroko, PNG, June 1989).

<sup>44</sup> B.T. Maketu, *Defence in Papua New Guinea: Introductory Issues* (Working Paper No 161, SDSC, ANU, Canberra, 1988), p.8.

PNGDF on specialist courses but financial stringencies prevented the PNGDF from maintaining an adequate level of basic training to underpin this.

Although the deterioration of PNGDF standards was not Australia's direct responsibility some of the contributory factors were clearly a result of its inappropriate and maintenance intensive defence bequest to PNG on Independence. Moreover, the deterioration took place as Australia was making a substantial financial commitment to improving PNG's defence capabilities and even gathered pace as Australia increased its funding. Such a glaring mismatch between ideal and reality suggests that the DCP could have been more appropriately directed.

Some practical difficulties did exist in providing PNG with optimum assistance. For example, the PNGDF's limited capacity to absorb advanced technologies contributed to the decline in operational effectiveness after Independence, particularly in relation to the force's border patrol capabilities. In the mid 1970s patrols used to be inserted into border airstrips using *Caribou* aircraft capable of transporting platoon sized groups but the *Caribou* were thought too technologically advanced to maintain in PNG. The Australian decision to supply PNG with *Dakotas* instead greatly reduced the number of airstrips into which patrols could be inserted in a single airlift. Only one airstrip in the West Sepik border area is capable of handling the *Dakota*, limiting most border airstrip access to *Nomad* aircraft which can only transport twelve personnel at a time.<sup>45</sup>

*Iroquois* helicopters tentatively offered to PNG in 1988 would have improved the PNGDF's tactical mobility in the border region. There was some concern however that they would also prove too expensive and too difficult to maintain and operate, given PNG's defence resources and the level of relevant expertise within the PNGDF. That there are solutions to such dilemmas became apparent during the Bougainville crisis when the urgency of the situation persuaded Australia not only to transfer the helicopters but to fund commercial pilots and promise longer term maintenance and training support.

A more fundamental problem with the DCP was that it lacked policy direction, for Australia's general defence objectives had not dictated a long term strategy of assistance for the PNGDF. It would of course have been inappropriate for Australia to draw up a corporate plan for the PNGDF and the type of assistance given would have to be a matter for determination by both countries. The DCP was, after all, supposed to contribute towards the maintenance of cooperative bilateral relations between Australia and PNG. Australia had some difficulty in reconciling the two security imperatives of building PNG's defence self-reliance and fostering harmonious relations with the political and military establishments in Port Moresby and this explains to some extent the weakness of

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<sup>45</sup> Boyce, *Infrastructure and Security: Problems of Development in the West Sepik*.

the DCP. The programme may have been truer to both objectives if they had been translated into a long term assistance strategy in consultation with PNG.

As it was, projects for funding were sometimes initiated by Australia and sometimes by the PNG Department of Defence. If PNG had formulated its own long term defence plan determining priorities for assistance this method of allocating funding may have been less inappropriate but PNG did not produce its first White Paper on defence objectives and capabilities until *thirteen* years after independence. Much of the delay is attributable to PNG's lack of expertise in military planning and policy making and the low, and shrinking, priority accorded defence by PNG's post-Independence governments. No local expertise had been developed in defence administration, policy making or financial control. Between 1975 and 1989 PNG's requests for DCP assistance appear to have been made on an ad hoc basis and not in response to the PNGDF's most urgent priorities in terms of capability maintenance.

Although Australia did sometimes query and occasionally refuse a funding request from PNG, Australia's desire to remain PNG's primary security partner and maintain cooperative relations with the PNGDF mitigated against serious disagreement. It did not, however, prevent Australia from funding projects under the DCP whose contribution to its stated aim of improving PNG's defence capabilities were equally ambiguous.

Australia's commitment to rapid localisation in the first years after Independence, for example, did not stem entirely from a belief that it would improve PNGDF capabilities. Political considerations were just as critical in determining the pace. Australia was anxious to minimise the possibility of ADF personnel being caught up in such politically sensitive combat situations as the suppression of secessionist revolts. Australian Labor governments were particularly concerned that the sight of white Australian officers and former colonial masters leading PNGDF companies or platoons in such circumstances would leave them, and PNG, vulnerable to domestic and international criticism.<sup>46</sup>

Some of the assistance provided in later years was designed as much to improve Australia's security environment generally as to bolster PNG's defence capabilities. Patrol boats, first offered to PNG in the mid-80s and handed over from 1987 on, were part of Australia's broader Pacific Patrol Boat Programme (PPB). The PPB traded island states a limited, multi-purpose, marine capability in return for their future participation in a regional maritime surveillance network.<sup>47</sup> To persuade PNG to join the

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<sup>46</sup> Hastings, 'Papua New Guinea's Defence Policy'.

<sup>47</sup> *Australia's Relations with the South Pacific*, Report of the Commonwealth Parliament Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade (Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1989).

programme, Australia had to agree to an enhanced, and unnecessary, military capability for the patrol boats.<sup>48</sup>

In 1987 the government in Port Moresby approached Australia for a more explicit security commitment. Prime Minister Pias Wingti, one of a new generation of more assertive PNG leaders, had been working with some success to extend and deepen PNG's multilateral and bilateral relationships with its neighbours. The informal 'special relationship' between Australia and Papua New Guinea now appeared an anachronistic oddity. And Wingti had another reason for seeking to put relations between the two countries on a more formal footing. In 1985 Australia and PNG had signed a third quinquennial aid agreement since Independence, covering the period 1986 to 1991. However, when presenting its 1986/87 budget in August 1986, the Australian government had unilaterally announced a \$10 million reduction in PNG's aid allocation for that financial year.<sup>49</sup> The PNG government wanted greater stability and certainty in its dealings with Australia and sought a treaty covering all aspects of the relationship.

The increasing complexity of the regional security environment persuaded Australia to consider Wingti's request. Between 1945 and the mid 1980s the South West Pacific, had been considered a relatively stable region and a strategic backwater, ruffled only occasionally by an increase in apprehension over PNG's external security. Australia's policy towards the region during those years, developed in the context of its membership of the Western Alliance, was to act as regional guardian and so deny strategic access to hostile external powers, in particular the Soviet Union. The low level of Soviet and other great power interest in the region meant, however, that the South West Pacific did not rank high on Australia's foreign and defence policy making agenda. The region only began to assume any sustained importance for Australian security planners after 1985.<sup>50</sup> In that year the New Zealand Labour government barred nuclear ship visits, a move which precipitated a crisis in the ANZUS Alliance and was widely seen as weakening the regional link in the broader Western Alliance. Perceptions of declining Western influence in the region were accompanied by fears of increasing hostile external influence. In 1985 Kiribati negotiated and signed a fisheries access agreement with the Soviet Union, in 1986 and 1987 key political figures in Vanuatu and New Caledonia forged unwelcome links with Libya, and in 1987 Vanuatu also negotiated a Soviet fisheries agreement.

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<sup>48</sup> 20mm Oerlikon cannons were fitted to PNG's patrol boats. Rowan Callick, 'Pacific Perspective', *Australian Financial Review*, October 5 1989, p.16.

<sup>49</sup> Yaw Saffu, 'Political Chronicle - Papua New Guinea', *The Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol.33, No.2, 1987, p.142.

<sup>50</sup> See Greg Fry, *Australia's South Pacific Policy: From 'Strategic Denial' to 'Constructive Commitment'* (Working Paper 1991/8, Department of International Relations, ANU, Canberra, 1991).

These events unfolded as Australian defence policy was being reoriented, away from 'forward defence' in an alliance framework and towards the self-reliant defence of Australia and its immediate environs. Paul Dibb's 1986 *Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities* and the Defence White Paper of the following year brought into focus and gave substance to a process that had been in train since the American enunciation of the Guam Doctrine in the early 1970s.<sup>51</sup>

While Australia's guardianship of the region was still considered its necessary contribution towards the maintenance of the global strategic balance, strategic denial now took on rather more direct significance for Australian security planners. These planners were encouraged in their new regional interest by a particularly knowledgeable and active Minister of Defence, Kim Beazley, who propelled the Department of Defence into the forefront of Australia's regional policy development.

Beazley believed that developments in the South West Pacific were of direct interest to the defence of Australia. Much greater attention was to be given to facilitating Australian access to the region, understanding its strategic environment and promoting defence ties with regional countries in an effort to build strategic consensus and stability.<sup>52</sup>

Defence Cooperation Programme expenditure on the island states was increased, emphasising projects which would improve Australia's operational reach and contribute to regional surveillance. In PNG's case an officer exchange programme was initiated, a regular round of defence exercises introduced, and more infrastructural projects funded. These initiatives sometimes promoted Australia's wider security interests at the expense of PNG's. For example, Australia funded an upgrading of the Lombrum Naval Base on Manus Island despite the PNG government's desire to close the base (which was hugely expensive to maintain and poorly situated in terms of PNG's security interests) and move the patrol boat squadron to Port Moresby.<sup>53</sup> Australia wanted Lombrum kept open, considering it strategically important as it facilitated the operations of Australian patrol boats and naval vessels to FFG size in the waters north of PNG.<sup>54</sup>

The Defence Minister also wanted to grant PNG's request for a defence treaty as it would 'head off any possible search for other partners by Port Moresby whilst

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<sup>51</sup> Paul Dibb, *Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities*, Report to the Minister for Defence, (Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1986) and *The Defence of Australia*, Department of Defence (Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1987).

<sup>52</sup> Woodman, *Towards an Independent Outlook*, pp.10-14.

<sup>53</sup> Colonel Ian Glanville, 'The Changing Face of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force', *Pacific Defence Reporter*, April 1984, p.13.

<sup>54</sup> *Australia's Relations with Papua New Guinea*, Report of the Commonwealth Parliament Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade (JCFADT), Commonwealth of Australia, 1991, p.173.

allowing Australia a continued involvement in regional defence matters'.<sup>55</sup> He argued that Australia already had firmer security arrangements with countries less strategically important than PNG, making specific reference to the *Five Power Defence Arrangement* (FPDA) signed in 1971 by Australia, Britain, New Zealand, Singapore and Malaysia.<sup>56</sup> Foreign Minister Bill Hayden favoured a more cautious approach, his concern being that a firm security commitment might encourage future governments in Port Moresby in a more reckless border policy. Hayden thought that 'Australia may live to regret the PNG defence link'.<sup>57</sup> The compromise which emerged was contained in the defence section of the 1987 *Joint Declaration of Principles* which required the governments of both countries to consult in the event of an external attack on the sovereignty of either 'For the purpose of each government deciding what measures should be taken, jointly or separately, in relation to that attack'. While this was not meant to give a concrete promise of support it was considered 'an effective guarantee of Australian commitment' by Papua New Guinea.<sup>58</sup>

As both the 1987 documents - Australia's *Defence White Paper* and the *Joint Declaration* - make clear, the Australia-PNG security relationship was framed in terms of mutual vulnerability to external threat. No mention was made in either of the internal security dimension in Papua New Guinea. This can be explained by Australia's continuing concern about the potential for domestic conflict in PNG and its determination not to become directly committed to its resolution.<sup>59</sup> From 1987 on, Australian foreign and defence policy makers were to become increasingly concerned about domestic political instability in such island states as Fiji and Vanuatu, partly because of its potential to impact on the safety of Australian nationals and investments, and partly because of the potential it created for unwelcome outside interference. In May 1987 Australia had considered a military response to a coup by the Fijian armed forces and had made preparations for the evacuation of its nationals. Australia's response to the Fiji coup, coming as it did after the ADF's indirect support to the Vanuatu government in 1980, was received with some ambivalence by the island states. It raised concerns about Australian adventurism in some quarters but heightened expectations in others that Australia would respond positively to requests for military assistance. However, Australia continued to prefer that its response to internal security crises be determined by choice and not compulsion.

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<sup>55</sup> Cited in Bullock, *Australia and Papua New Guinea: Foreign and Defence Relations since 1975*, p.7.

<sup>56</sup> David Hegarty, 'Links with Australia Mature as Both Nations Seek Cooperation', *Australian Financial Review*, September 14 1989, p.7.

<sup>57</sup> Bullock, *Australia and Papua New Guinea: Foreign and Defence Relations since 1975*, p.7.

<sup>58</sup> Stephen P. Mokis, Secretary, PNG Department of Defence, 'Papua New Guinea and Australia' in Desmond Ball (ed), *Australia and the World: Prologue and Prospects* (Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence No.69, SDSC, ANU, Canberra, 1990), p.309.

<sup>59</sup> Gareth Evans and Bruce Grant, *Australia's Relations in the World of the 1990s* (Melbourne University Press, 1991), p.170.

In 1988 and early 1989 Australia received two more requests for assistance from beleaguered regional governments. Australian forces went on alert in 1988 when politically motivated disorder threatened Father Walter Lini's government in Vanuatu and did so again in early 1989 when the outcome of military riots in Port Moresby appeared uncertain.<sup>60</sup> In the event, Australia's immediate indirect support to the Vanuatu government in the shape of riot control equipment obviated the need for more direct involvement, and no action proved necessary in PNG. The fact that the wheels of intervention had been put in motion at all suggested to some in the region that Australia had overcome its traditional aversion to direct military involvement. However, Australia's actions could also be interpreted as a series of reflexive reactions to unwelcome and unprepared-for security contingencies. The maintenance of order in the region was beginning to assume a higher priority than external defence but little attention had been given to it in Australian defence planning.

This was reflected in the Defence Cooperation Programme with Papua New Guinea. The DCP's focus had always been on external defence because its direction had been determined by two defence establishments who were primarily interested in conventional military functions. Even when PNG's 1988 Defence White Paper openly acknowledged that the country's security was most threatened by 'internal instability situations such as secessionist movements, tribal fighting and insurgencies'<sup>61</sup>, DCP funding continued to be primarily oriented towards assisting the PNGDF in its external defence role. It did cover engineering and survey assistance projects that had been initiated before Independence but Australia did not allocate any significant resources to internal security, despite the PNGDF's constitutional obligation to assist the police in certain circumstances. There was also little coordination, on either PNG or Australia's part, with other government agencies concerned with development or the maintenance of law and order.

The conditions for possible Australian intervention were not outlined until Foreign Minister Senator Gareth Evans presented his 1989 Ministerial Statement on regional security. Evans had succeeded Bill Hayden as Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade in 1988 and was determined to restore his department to its rightful role as the architect of Australia's regional policy. He also wanted to change the perception, current in both Australia and the region, that Australian foreign policy was being led by the Department of Defence.<sup>62</sup> The thaw in superpower relations which had already been felt during Hayden's last year of tenure provided the ideal climate for a reassessment of

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<sup>60</sup> Matthew Gubb, *The Military Role of Australia and New Zealand in the South Pacific*, Unpublished MA Sub-thesis, SDSC, ANU, Canberra, 1990, p.29 and p.78.

<sup>61</sup> *Papua New Guinea Defence White Paper 1988*, Department of Defence, Murray Barracks, p.5.

<sup>62</sup> David Jenkins, 'The Southeast Asia Dimension' in Greg Fry (ed.), *Australia's Regional Security* (Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1991), pp.58-59.

Australian regional policy while the rising incidence of regional crises as evidenced by the Fiji coups and the political turmoil in Vanuatu only seemed to underscore the necessity for a more concentrated, coherent and comprehensive approach. Australia would no longer act as regional guardian of Western interests but would pay greater attention to regional security concerns, eschewing 'strategic denial' in the South West Pacific for a policy of 'constructive commitment'. Although Evans acknowledged that non-military threats were of paramount concern to the island states and concluded that Australia should develop a multidimensional policy approach in response, he discussed the contribution of Australia's military capabilities to regional security at some length.

Senator Evans pointed out that Australia had the military capability to undertake such regional 'peacetime' initiatives as the protection or rescue of Australian citizens abroad. Indeed, Australian military forces had already been put on alert for such a contingency four times since 1987. He also stated that Australia had the military capability to provide support for a legitimate government in maintaining internal security, adding that the use of military force might be appropriate in 'extreme and unusual' circumstances. The Evans Statement went on to suggest criteria that should be met before Australia would consider military intervention. These were the agreement of the recognised domestic authorities; a manifestly direct threat to major Australian security interests; a finite time frame for the military operation; a clear and achievable operational objective; and consultation with, and if possible, the cooperation and participation of, other regional states.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> *Australia's Regional Security*, Ministerial Statement by Senator the Hon. Gareth Evans Q.C, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, December 1989, p.22.



### CHAPTER THREE

#### PNG'S INTERNAL SECURITY CRISES AND AUSTRALIA'S RESPONSE 1989-1990

For a decade or so after Independence PNG had confounded the pundits by surviving with a reasonable measure of economic and political stability. By the second half of the 1980s, however, it was becoming apparent that the move from a subsistence agrarian economy to a resource-based capitalist economy was raising expectations without satisfying them and causing serious social inequalities. PNG also appeared to be having some difficulty reconciling traditional kinship-based loyalties and customs with inherited concepts and structures of nationhood, democracy and civil order. PNG's internal stability came under increasing stress from a wide range of economic, social and political problems including urban drift, unemployment and soaring crime rates, a resurgence in tribal fighting, industrial and landownership disputes, coalition tensions in parliament, bureaucratic inertia, corruption and restlessness within the military.<sup>64</sup> Australian commentators were inclined to believe that such problems were symptoms of development and change and would therefore resolve themselves over time but political instability, government paralysis, lawlessness and challenges to the central authority only increased in their severity and impact. By 1989 there was some doubt as to whether PNG would even 'muddle through' as a nation state.

Events came to a head that year when repeated attacks by militant landowners finally shut down Bougainville Copper Limited's (BCL) giant Panguna Mine on the North Solomons Province island of Bougainville. The Bougainville Revolutionary Army's (BRA) initial claims for closure of the mine and compensation for environmental destruction and pollution grew into demands for Independence from Papua New Guinea.

In January 1989, in response to a campaign of sabotage against BCL, police strength on the island had been increased but the mobile riot squads, formed to police tribal fights and mass disturbances, lacked the equipment and training to combat the guerrilla tactics of the BRA and their undisciplined response only escalated tensions. When BRA militants had begun targeting non BCL facilities and non Bougainvillean civilians in March, troops were sent to the island to assist the RPNGC. The PNGDF's initial brief was to guard BCL installations and public facilities and to help maintain law and order. In May the PNGDF was authorised to actively search for BRA leaders, in June a State of Emergency was declared, and in October another 200 troops were sent to augment the estimated 300 police and 200 troops already on the island. In January 1990 Prime Minister Namaliu declared a military campaign the only answer, launching *Operation Footloose* and ordering

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<sup>64</sup> Hegarty, *Papua New Guinea: At the Political Crossroads?*, p.3.

the defence force 'to rid the island of terrorist scourge, restore peace and reopen Bougainville'.<sup>65</sup>

The operation was a failure. The PNGDF was ill-equipped to combat a determined BRA and resorted, like the RPNGC before it, to indiscriminate violence, alienating the civilian population and compounding its own operational difficulties. Commercial life on the island ground to a halt as hostilities worsened and just six weeks after declaring the military option the only one, the government announced a cease-fire with the acknowledgment that 'any lasting solution will need much more than just a military solution'.<sup>66</sup>

The Bougainville Crisis did not come as a complete surprise to Australia's foreign policy and defence community. Anti-BCL and secessionist sentiment had been voiced on Bougainville as long ago as the 1960s and at Independence prominent commentators were already discussing Australia's options in the likely event that 'a political movement with local control in Bougainville decides to secede, taking the copper mine with it ...' and '... the government in Port Moresby seeks to suppress this by dispatching units of the Pacific Islands Regiment'.<sup>67</sup> Despite these predictions and despite Australia's longstanding general concern about PNG's internal security, Canberra was as ill prepared for Bougainville as the PNGDF was. Three different policy options existed and had to be canvassed - direct military action, indirect assistance to the PNGDF, and complete non-involvement. While a general consensus was reached between government departments over the broad outlines of Australia's response, disagreement existed on some of the detail. There was also a good deal of soul searching and debate over Australia's wider defence relationship with Papua New Guinea.

Some time in late 1989, with the Bougainville conflict threatening the safety of over a thousand Australian nationals, the Australian government sought PNG's agreement to an evacuation should it prove necessary.<sup>68</sup> Extricating foreign nationals from PNG in the event of widespread violence and disorder would be far from straightforward as some 10,000 Australian expatriates are scattered throughout the country, many of them in remote and inaccessible locations. Evacuation from a limited area such as Bougainville is more feasible, however, and plans were stepped up for such an eventuality in late January 1990, following the wounding of a second Australian on the island. The Townsville based 2/4 Battalion RAR of the Operational Deployment Force (ODF) was put on alert and the

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<sup>65</sup> Yaw Saffu, 'Political Chronicle - Papua New Guinea', *The Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol.37, No.2, 1991, p.346.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> Bull, 'Australia's Involvement in Independent Papua New Guinea', p.13.

<sup>68</sup> 'Special Meeting About Australian Action in PNG', *Canberra Times*, January 22 1990, p.3.

HMAS *Jervis Bay*, recalled from a goodwill visit to Auckland, was deployed to Queensland along with a landing ship, destroyer escort, guided missile frigate and several *Hercules* aircraft.<sup>69</sup> In the event diplomatic warnings were sufficient to persuade most Australians to leave before the conflict had escalated too far and civil transport proved adequate to the task of transporting them, obviating the need for Australian military action.

While evacuation of Australian nationals was considered, Australia decided against direct military involvement in the conflict itself. This decision is perhaps best explained by reference to the criteria for direct military involvement set out in the Evans Statement.

The first and most important of Senator Evans' criteria was that the recognised domestic authorities should agree to Australian military involvement and PNG did not ask Australia to play an active role in resolving the crisis. A RAAF *Hercules* was requested to transport troops to and from Bougainville during the early stages of the fighting but available evidence suggests that no more direct involvement was sought. In the absence of a request for direct assistance, intervention by Australia was always highly unlikely.

Even if PNG had made such a request, it is unlikely that Australia would have agreed. While the crisis on Bougainville was of great concern to Canberra it did not pose the same direct challenge to the central political authorities or threaten national stability to the same extent as some earlier regional internal security crises. Australian policy makers therefore had greater latitude to consider the strategic, operational, foreign policy, and domestic political effects of direct military involvement.

The Bougainville Crisis did not present a clear and achievable operational objective with a finite time frame. Australia may have preferred the territorial status quo in PNG but there were problems with translating such a preference into operational terms. Eliminating the BRA may have provided a short term solution but even that would not have been easy, given the unfamiliar and difficult terrain on Bougainville and the rebels' ability to blend in with the population at large. Even if military intervention had succeeded in quelling the BRA it would have done nothing to redress the grievances that had prompted the rebels to resort to force and ensured them of some measure of popular support. Indeed, as Australia had learnt in the Vietnam War, counterinsurgency (COIN) techniques tend to increase civilian alienation. Australia could have found itself drawn into a long term, costly and manpower intensive commitment of doubtful and possibly counterproductive utility.

The ADF's reputation may also have suffered domestically (and within the region) had it become so closely associated with the PNGDF and its rather unconventional

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<sup>69</sup> 'Navy Waits For Orders to Sail to Bougainville', *Townsville Bulletin*, January 31 1990, p.3.

methods.<sup>70</sup> And although Evans did not list domestic support as a criterion for intervention, policy makers did have to consider public attitudes to direct Australian military involvement. Intervention would probably have evoked comparisons with Vietnam, being ethically questionable as well as being potentially costly in terms of Australian lives.

The costs of intervention would have been especially difficult to justify when no critical link existed between the Bougainville Crisis and Australia's security, especially as the BRA did not have, nor was it likely to gain, the assistance of any external power. In the interval between the tabling of the 1987 Defence White Paper and the outbreak of the Bougainville Crisis, Australia's concern that regional instability might create the conditions for unwelcome outside interference had abated somewhat. Secessionist movements like the BRA have lost much of their ability to attract external support and funding as the superpowers have wound back competition for influence in the Third World. BRA leader Sam Kauona's threat to seek assistance from communist regimes unless recognition of Bougainville's independence was forthcoming was a hollow one<sup>71</sup> and elicited none of the concern that it would have in 1987. There was equally little likelihood of the BRA attracting support from neighbouring countries who would have nothing to gain and much to lose from encouraging regional instability.

It was also clear that no regional power has the intention and capability to intervene unilaterally in PNG at present. Even Indonesia, PNG's closest neighbour, with a not insignificant military capability and some experience of attempting territorial absorption by force would be unlikely to do so. The current regime in Indonesia is preoccupied with boosting economic development and maintaining internal security. Moreover, Indonesia's external security concerns are now focused to the north and Jakarta would be reluctant to deliberately jeopardise the relationship with Australia on its southern flank. The established regional principles of ASEAN, and the concern of other non-aligned states, amongst which Indonesia is attempting to build its credentials, would probably also hinder any inclination to interfere.<sup>72</sup>

Moreover, while Indonesia has an interest in the maintenance of stability and cohesion in PNG, because of its desire to contain the West Irianese secessionist movement, the Organisasi Papua Merdeka (OPM) and keep its own domains intact, it would be reluctant to intervene in PNG, and have to face the much stronger national sentiment than

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<sup>70</sup> Stewart Woodman and David Horner, 'Land Forces in the Defence of Australia', in David Horner (ed), *Reshaping the Australian Army: Challenges for the 1990s* (Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence No.77, SDSC, ANU, Canberra, 1991), p.101.

<sup>71</sup> Saffu, 'Political Chronicle - Papua New Guinea', 1991, p.347.

<sup>72</sup> Norman MacQueen, 'Papua New Guinea's Relations with Indonesia and Australia: Diplomacy on the Asia-Pacific Interface', *Asian Survey*, Vol.XXIX, No.5, 1989, p.535.

exists in Irian Jaya or East Timor.<sup>73</sup> This would only add to the considerable logistic and operational difficulties involved in intervening in a country with such formidable terrain and minimal infrastructure.<sup>74</sup>

There has long been an expectation in Jakarta that Australia, as PNG's primary security partner and the only regional power with the requisite military capability, would and should underwrite PNG's security. The fact that the Indonesian Defence Minister, General Benny Murdani, urged Australia to play a 'bigger role' on Bougainville<sup>75</sup> was taken in this context and not as a warning that Indonesia might act if Canberra did not.

Not only was the probability of external interference now recognised as low but the risk to Australia's security from hostile lodgement in PNG had also been reassessed. Limited infrastructure would hamper an aggressor's ability to support operations against Australia from PNG. It would then have to overcome the twin hurdles of distance between PNG and most potential targets in Australia and the ADF's formidable air and naval interdiction capability.<sup>76</sup>

It is unlikely that PNG's neighbours would have cooperated or participated in military intervention. Few of them share PNG's own enthusiasm for the concept of collective regional military action. Some lack the capability to contribute, others have conflicting regional and local affiliations, and most uphold the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of others. Fiji is the only other Melanesian country with a conventional military capability of any size and the Fiji government has never looked kindly on the idea of a South Pacific 'neighbourhood watch'. The Mara government was extremely critical of PNG's military assistance to the government of Vanuatu in 1980, partly because it might have set an unwelcome precedent for regional interference in its own domestic affairs.<sup>77</sup> This antipathy towards regional intervention could only have increased since the 1987 coup in Fiji. The Solomons Islands government did not officially support the Bougainville rebellion but could not have countenanced sending its police force to assist PNG's central government against a people who are its ethnic and linguistic neighbours. In the probable absence of support for regional action from the Solomon Islands and Fiji it is highly unlikely that other island states such as Vanuatu or Tonga would have agreed to contribute any of their limited resources. Without any participation or

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<sup>73</sup> Bill Standish, 'Bougainville: Undermining the State in Papua New Guinea (Part Two)', *Pacific Research*, February 1990, p.10.

<sup>74</sup> Ross Babbage, *The Dilemmas of Papua New Guinea (PNG) Contingencies in Australian Defence Planning* (Working Paper No 128, SDSC, ANU, Canberra, 1987), pp.16-17.

<sup>75</sup> Peter Coster, 'Indonesia Urges Australia to Intervene in Bougainville Rebellion', *Australian*, July 26 1990, pp.1-2.

<sup>76</sup> Woodman and Horner, 'Land Forces in the Defence of Australia', p.101.

<sup>77</sup> Norman MacQueen, 'Beyond Tok Win: The Papua New Guinea Intervention in Vanuatu, 1980', *Pacific Affairs*, Vol.61, No.2, 1988, p.242.

support from PNG's island neighbours a regional force would have had to be drawn entirely from Australia and New Zealand. The island leaders' united and vociferous disapproval of the Australian/New Zealand stance after the first Fiji coup<sup>78</sup> suggests that any such proposal would have attracted a barrage of regional criticism, thus defeating the whole purpose of Senator Evans's criterion.

Another compelling reason to avoid direct military involvement was that it might have set a precedent and Australian planners were anxious not to encourage requests for direct assistance in the future.<sup>79</sup>

At the same time, Australia's close relationship with PNG made it difficult to stand completely apart from the controversy. Concern remained about the possible ripple effect on the stability of PNG and the region of a successful BRA bid for secession and consequently about the PNGDF's counterinsurgency capabilities. The poor performance of the PNGDF also reflected badly on Australia as its principal foreign trainer and supplier. If Australia had adopted a 'hands off' approach and denied all PNG's requests for assistance it would have remained vulnerable to criticism over the PNGDF's performance but lost its ability to exercise any influence over events on Bougainville. The PNGDF's operational capability would decline even further - at least in the short term - and along with it military discipline. Moreover, while the defence section in the *Joint Declaration of Principles* related only to external security, the conclusion reached in Canberra was that Australia had an obligation to support the central government in PNG. To ignore that obligation completely would have been to undermine Australia's reputation and its credibility as a security partner both in PNG and in the wider region.<sup>80</sup>

To overcome this policy dilemma, Australia sought indirect means of providing support. *Iroquois* helicopters, offered tentatively in 1988 for border surveillance, were transferred in late 1989 to assist PNGDF operations on Bougainville. A Declaration was made under the *Crimes (Foreign Incursions and Recruitment) Act* to allow PNG to recruit Australian citizens as helicopter pilots;<sup>81</sup> small arms and ammunition were

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<sup>78</sup> Fry, *Australia's South Pacific Policy*, p.21.

<sup>79</sup> Roy Eccleston, 'Defence HQ Wanted PNG Role', *Australian*, July 23 1990, pp.1-2.

<sup>80</sup> R. Woolcott, Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Opening Statement to the JCFADT Inquiry into Australia's Relations with Papua New Guinea, *Hansard*, November 5 1990.

<sup>81</sup> *The Crimes (Foreign Incursions and Recruitment) Act 1978* makes illegal the recruitment in Australia of persons to serve in any capacity in or with an armed force in a foreign state but does allow for exemption by Ministerial Declaration should such recruitment be in Australia's defence or foreign policy interests. The 1989 Declaration states that 'it is in the interests of the defence of Australia to permit the recruitment in Australia by the government of the independent state of Papua New Guinea or its contractors or agents, of persons to serve in or with the Papua New Guinea Defence Force for the purpose of facilitating the use of 4 *Iroquois* helicopters supplied to that government by the Australian government...', *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, No.S.253, July 24 1989.

discounted by 50%; Special Air Service (SAS) instructors were sent to train reconnaissance troops; and an aerial survey of Bougainville was commissioned.<sup>82</sup>

The *Iroquois* transfer proved the one major source of disagreement in deciding the appropriate level of Australian support for the PNGDF. The Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Defence disagreed on the issue of end use controls, Senator Evans favouring the imposition of tight restrictions. Conditions on the transfer of the *Iroquois* would have done something to protect Bougainvilleans against PNGDF excesses, the Australian government against domestic political criticism, and Australian nationals on Bougainville against retribution. The Defence Department, on the other hand, did not consider end use controls desirable or appropriate. Overly stringent conditions would have restricted PNGDF operations and may well have offended the PNG government as neo-colonial and interfering.

Evidence suggests that conditions were eventually imposed on the transfer of the helicopters<sup>83</sup> although the subsequent allegations of human rights abuses produced some interesting equivocations as to their exact nature. The Australian Prime Minister claimed in May 1990 that 'the only condition that we, properly, imposed in those circumstances was that no Australian defence personnel would be used in the operation of those helicopters'.<sup>84</sup> The Defence Department claimed that the problem had arisen because, while the conditions were 'quite specific', they 'did not seek to address all of the theoretical possibilities in an exhaustive way'.<sup>85</sup> A common intent seems to underlie these statements. Both excused Australian officials from the invidious position of having to pass public judgement on PNG.

The most alarming aspect of the Bougainville Crisis for Australian planners was the poor performance of PNG's security forces. The fact that PNG did not have the capacity to meet its own security needs, caused a great deal of concern in Canberra and focused attention on Australia's defence assistance policies. There was a perception that Australia, although it was not responsible, may have contributed to the inappropriate focus of the PNGDF and the decline in the force's discipline and efficiency since Independence. An internal Defence Department *Review of Defence Cooperation Activities with Papua New Guinea*, the first since the programme's inception in 1975, was completed by July 1990.<sup>86</sup>

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82 Eccleston, 'Defence HQ Wanted PNG Role'.

83 On July 7 1989 Mr Hawke announced that, following consultations with Australia, PNG had stated its intention to use the helicopters for troop transportation, patrolling, surveillance and medical evacuation purposes, but not as gunships. *Prime Ministerial Press Release*, July 7 1989.

84 House of Representatives, *Hansard*, May 9 1990, p.114.

85 Defence Department Evidence to JCFADT, *Hansard*, October 22 1990, p.744.

86 *Program Performance Statements 1991-92, Defence Portfolio, Budget Related Paper No.8.5*, Canberra, 1991, p.260.

This in-house review was the first of at least two official Australian reviews which discussed PNG's security prospects and the appropriate contribution of both the PNGDF and the DCP.

It was now acknowledged that PNG faced no identifiable external threat while its continued viability as a state was already under threat from a number of internal stresses, of which the secessionist crisis on Bougainville was only one. Although many of these are constitutional or administrative in nature, others, like violent or obstructive landowner disputes, tribal fighting and urban lawlessness, were deemed to require an immediate 'public order' response if the PNG state was to remain intact and continue functioning in the public interest.

The Bougainville experience has encouraged provincial governments, landowners, and 'nationalist' businessmen elsewhere in PNG to press for greater compensation for resource exploitation and environmental damage.<sup>87</sup> These claims are unlikely to grow into demands for secession, an option which has particular appeal and plausibility to Bougainvilleans because of their historic experience and geographic position.<sup>88</sup> There is, however, an increasing incidence of dispute related shutdowns and sabotage, a matter of concern both in itself and because of the probability that some disputes will escalate still further, from sabotage to physical violence, following the Bougainville example. With its economy so heavily resource dependent PNG can ill afford such disruption to exploration and mining activity but its present dedicated capabilities are not adequate to the task of providing security to all the threatened projects.

Social and economic life in the rural areas is also being threatened by tribal fighting, a traditional means of resolving disputes, which is again becoming endemic in PNG's highland provinces. In 1990, for example, there was tribal fighting in Chimbu, Enga, Southern Highlands and Western Highlands provinces for much of the year. Modernisation has multiplied possible sources of friction and increased the lethality of available weaponry but provided no satisfactory alternative means of resolving disputes. The law treats tribal fighting as the crime and the police mete out arbitrary 'punishment' for participation, an approach which not only leaves the originating disputes unresolved but often adds new grievances.<sup>89</sup>

In the towns, especially the larger centres like Lae and Port Moresby where urban drift and unemployment are particularly high, the major problem is violent crime. 'Raskol' gangs have become increasingly sophisticated and aggressive with petty pilfering

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<sup>87</sup> Saffu, 'Political Chronicle - Papua New Guinea', 1991, p.348.

<sup>88</sup> R.J. May, 'Political Implications of the Bougainville Crisis for Papua New Guinea', in R.J. May and Matthew Spriggs (eds), *The Bougainville Crisis* (Crawford House Press, Bathurst, 1990), p.57.

<sup>89</sup> Dorney, *Papua New Guinea: People, Politics and History Since 1975*, pp.309-314.



being replaced by organised theft, marketing and distribution of stolen goods, and protection rackets. Violence is no longer random but a calculated and integral aspect of raskol culture.<sup>90</sup> The criminal justice system cannot cope: the police, the courts and the correctional institutions are all so inadequately funded and staffed that criminals who do not escape apprehension often escape trial or from detention.

The gravity of the situation and its multifaceted nature elicited a coordinated response from interested Australian government departments and oversight by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. DFAT's resources devoted to Papua New Guinea had been substantially increased in late 1989, during the Bougainville Crisis. New mechanisms for coordinating government policy and activities in relation to Papua New Guinea were introduced, including a PNG Policy Coordination Group, representing all concerned departments and chaired by DFAT.<sup>91</sup>

DFAT's oversight extended to the DCP. Its interest in the programme had also been triggered by the Bougainville Crisis. The performance of the PNGDF (and therefore of the DCP) had become a matter of concern to DFAT because it had the potential to impact on Australian interests in PNG and on both PNG and Australia's relations with neighbouring countries.

The paramountcy of defence interests and the institution to institution relationship between the Australian and PNG Departments of Defence that had hitherto characterised the DCP were not sufficient in these circumstances. For similar reasons the direction of the DCP post-Bougainville could not be a matter for determination by the Department of Defence alone. The Policy Coordination Group therefore undertook its own review of the programme.

It is likely that this review concluded, as critics and analysts had, that DCP priorities had been skewed, with too great an emphasis placed on unlikely external defence contingencies and too much expenditure devoted to major capital equipment projects. An important area of neglect had been training; not only had the funding allocation been inadequate but insufficient attention had been paid to tailoring training courses to PNG's particular needs.

The Policy Coordination Group Review of the DCP was not simply retrospective. Attention was also given to the future direction of the defence relationship and while the review's findings are confidential it seems certain that several options would have been canvassed. One would have been to suggest the retention of the PNGDF as a conventional defence force with secondary civic action and law and order functions and the

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<sup>90</sup> Hegarty, *Papua New Guinea: At the Political Crossroads?*, p.8.

<sup>91</sup> Woolcott, Opening Statement to the JCFADT Inquiry into Australia's Relations with Papua New Guinea.

continuing assignment of primary responsibility for law and order to the police, and to assist in improving the capabilities of both. This option would maintain the separation of roles considered so important to ensuring political stability. It would probably be the option most preferred by both the PNG government and the PNGDF. However, it would not solve the central problem of cost. Maintaining two distinct disciplined forces has already proven beyond PNG's resources and Australian policy makers are anxious to see a rationalisation.

If the PNGDF were to remain primarily a conventional defence force, the DCP would remain an appropriate funding mechanism for Australian assistance. However, it would be difficult to justify traditional levels of DCP funding when both PNG and Australia are under pressure to devote more resources to the law and order sector. The suggestion has already been made that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade would be a more appropriate channel for civic action and law and order funding as it is not strictly defence related.<sup>92</sup>

A second option would have been to suggest a restructuring of the PNGDF, along the lines suggested at Independence, as a paramilitary force. Such a restructuring would allow the force to fulfil its obligations on the border, improve its counterinsurgency capabilities and equip it better to deal with such medium level civil contingencies as tribal fighting or attacks on mining sites. Some of the pressure would be taken off the police, allowing for a greater concentration of resources on routine law and order enforcement.

Although the paramilitary option had its adherents in Australia there were many who would oppose it vigorously as an excessive and inappropriate response to PNG's security problems and a threat to the democratic order. It was also unlikely to be popular with the government in Port Moresby, the PNGDF, or the RPNGC, none of whom wished to see the military assume quite such a prominent role in internal security.

A third option, and the one which was evidently thought the most feasible and appropriate, was to recommend that the PNGDF be better trained and equipped for internal security contingencies but that it still only be deployed as a last resort. Improvements in cost effectiveness and efficiency would be achieved by a certain degree of integration between the PNGDF and the RPNGC. Logistics, transport, communications and training were some of the areas in which rationalisation was suggested.<sup>93</sup>

The review concluded that PNG required 'security if development is to proceed and development if security is to be maintained'. It also concluded that PNG required a comprehensive, planned and integrated approach to security which

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<sup>92</sup> Questions to the Defence Department, JCFADT, *Hansard*, November 20 1989, p.19.

<sup>93</sup> Defence Department Evidence to JCFADT, *Hansard*, October 21 1991, p.1682.

acknowledged the need for external defence but gave a higher priority to internal security, including law and order. It was proposed that security co-operation between the two countries '... be developed in ways that reflect these changing priorities'. Australia should henceforth focus on training PNG's disciplined services in the maintenance of internal security, including law and order; providing infrastructure, equipment and other facilities to support the disciplined forces and other law enforcement agencies in maintaining internal security; and funding exchanges of personnel between the two countries.<sup>94</sup>

Although it had long been argued that Australia should avoid direct involvement in PNG's domestic affairs, the conclusion that PNG should be given indirect assistance in maintaining internal security was a new one, prompted by the gravity of the situation and the difficulties the PNG government had in responding effectively.

Discussions were held with officials in PNG who were made aware of Australia's preferences regarding internal security reforms. However, Australia could not determine PNG's security priorities or dictate the PNGDF's future functions. Nor could it provide effective assistance until those priorities and roles had been decided. Australia had to wait for PNG to set out its own internal security agenda, detailing programmes and projects for funding, before consultations could begin on appropriate areas for Australian funding.

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94 *Agreed Statement on Security Cooperation.*

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PERSPECTIVES ON INTERVENTION AND INVOLVEMENT POST-BOUGAINVILLE

In the wake of Bougainville the Papua New Guinea government again sought a more binding security treaty with Australia but Canberra was as determined as ever not to make such a formal commitment.<sup>95</sup> As Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, reminded his PNG counterpart in PNG, the time is 'long past when Australian forces could act in an internal security role...except perhaps in the most extraordinary, agreed and limited of circumstances'.<sup>96</sup> Such circumstances, he added, related to the evacuation of Australian nationals with PNG government permission. The experience of Bougainville does suggest that, although Australia would not intervene to safeguard investments, intervention would be a serious consideration if the safety of Australian nationals were put in serious jeopardy.<sup>97</sup> A possible scenario might involve the rescue of Australian personnel from a mining site which had come under sustained attack and which PNG proved unable to secure.

Hawke had gone on to say that Australia was committed 'not to solving PNG's problems but building its capacity to do so for itself'.<sup>98</sup> Indeed Australia's response to Bougainville suggests that, in most circumstances, Australia would rather avoid direct military involvement in PNG's domestic affairs, preferring to provide non-combat assistance to the central government in the form of supplies, logistics, communications and transport. However, Australian intervention in support of the PNG government can not be ruled out entirely. The 1991 Force Structure Review makes specific reference to requests for ADF support from regional nations in maintaining or restoring law and order. It notes that planners continue to identify and test a range of options and points out that the ADF maintains the relevant capabilities in its force structure.<sup>99</sup>

There is one particular contingency that is as yet untested and which might persuade Australia to consider intervention and that would be a request from the properly constituted government in Port Moresby for assistance in putting down a coup attempt by the security forces. Because a coup attempt in PNG is a contingency that Australia has yet to face, the prospects of such a contingency arising and the policy choices facing Australia in determining an appropriate response merit some discussion. Evaluating the likelihood of

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<sup>95</sup> Russell Skelton, 'Jakarta Put Paid to Joint Security Treaty, Says Namaliu', *Australian*, August 30 1991, p.5.

<sup>96</sup> Roy Eccleston, 'Hawke Tells PNG to Stand on Own Feet', *Australian*, September 4 1990, p.3.

<sup>97</sup> Woodman and Horner, 'Land Forces in the Defence of Australia', p.104.

<sup>98</sup> Eccleston, 'Hawke Tells PNG to Stand on Own Feet'.

<sup>99</sup> Department of Defence, *Force Structure Review 1991*, Report to the Minister for Defence (Australian Government Publishing Service, May 1991), p.28.

a coup also sheds some interesting light on the evolution of civil-military relations in PNG and highlights yet another security dilemma for Australia.

Many would argue that the prospect of a coup attempt is highly unlikely, citing a range of inhibiting factors. Some contend that PNG lacks strong communal interest groups and has a military broadly representative of society at large. (On the one occasion when an ethnic interest group - 'the Papuan Colonels' - has begun to crystallise within the military it has been quickly neutralised). There is therefore little likelihood that the PNGDF would intervene in the political process to advance the claims of a particular ethnic or regional constituency as the Fijian army did in 1987. And, while the national rather than regional or ethnic orientation of the military might increase the chances of a coup 'in the national interest', command rivalry amongst senior PNGDF officers is expected to inhibit collective military action. Some argue that the division of responsibilities and the longstanding antagonism between the military and the police ensures an external counterweight to military ambitions. Others, that PNG has a safety valve lacking in many developing countries in that senior members of the PNGDF with political ambitions can satisfy them by resigning their commissions and running for parliament.

PNG's relationship with Australia is also thought an inhibiting factor. Although Australia has avoided making a direct commitment to PNG's internal security, Australian intervention in support of an ousted civilian government has to be a consideration. And finally, many commentators believe that the daunting prospect of maintaining order in PNG with such a small force would be sufficient in itself to discourage a coup attempt.<sup>100</sup>

These arguments may well be valid. An equally strong case can be made, however, for the proposition that a coup attempt is likely. Several of the causal conditions commonly held to have prompted military takeovers elsewhere now exist in PNG. The first of these conditions is a military perception of a serious threat to its corporate interests<sup>101</sup> in the form of inadequate budgetary support or interference in its internal affairs.

Inadequate budgetary support has been a longstanding source of military grievance in PNG. The 1989 soldiers pay riots in Port Moresby marked the nadir of a decline in defence budget allocations only reversed by an injection of aid from Australia post-Bougainville. Defence spending is likely to shrink again as PNG and Australian resources are channelled increasingly into the maintenance of law and order and, while

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<sup>100</sup> See Dorney, Turner and Hegarty, as for footnote 1, for more detailed discussions of coup inhibiting factors.

<sup>101</sup> See Eric A. Nordlinger, *Soldiers in Politics: Military Coups and Governments* (Prentice-Hall, N.J., 1977).

some of these resources will fund greater PNGDF participation in internal security, the corresponding de-emphasis of external defence is unlikely to be popular.<sup>102</sup>

Defence budget cuts and force reduction decisions by the PNG government have sometimes been perceived as politically rather than financially motivated. Similar charges have been levelled at its periodic attempts to reshuffle and weed out politically ambitious officers in the upper ranks.<sup>103</sup> Senior officers have also been discharged for causing the government embarrassment, notably in its dealings with Australia. The most recent example was Colonel Nuia's dismissal for publicly acknowledging (rather than for committing) human rights abuses by the PNGDF.

Military frustration at government vacillation and weak administration in times of instability has also been a common motivating factor behind coup attempts. The PNG government's handling of the Bougainville Crisis, although it has not provoked a serious coup attempt, has become a source of great dissatisfaction within the PNGDF. The February 1991 announcement of a cease-fire and the withdrawal of troops from Bougainville, apparently without consultation with the military command on the island added insult to injury for some senior members of the disciplined forces. They already held the Namaliu government responsible for their defeat on Bougainville, citing the ever shifting emphasis between taking the military offensive and attempting conciliation with the BRA.<sup>104</sup> The government's more recent strategy on Bougainville has also drawn criticism from the PNGDF. The military, which had made an unauthorised return to the province in 1991 and extended its control over the northern third of the island, staged patrol boat raids on fuel dumps in the neighbouring Solomon Islands in early 1992. PNGDF sources denied responsibility or wrong doing, claiming that the government's tardiness in restoring goods and services to the island was to blame by frustrating the military's attempt to wean more local sympathy away from the BRA. The PNGDF's view was that, as long as the administration procrastinated, smuggling would continue from the neighbouring Solomon Islands and the PNGDF would be obliged to counter it - with further cross border incursions if necessary. Smuggling, they argued, was not only an illegal activity but was undermining the PNGDF's efforts to demonstrate to Bougainvilleans the advantages of remaining a part of PNG. The PNGDF doubts the political will exists to retain Bougainville and has given a veiled warning to the government. 'If people rise up against what PNG has achieved on the island it is a different story. If they rise up because of empty promises then there will be serious trouble'.<sup>105</sup>

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102 Frank Senge, 'Keeping the Peace', *Pacific Islands Monthly*, November 1988, p.15.

103 Saffu, *Military Roles and Relations in Papua New Guinea*, p.22.

104 Dorney, *Papua New Guinea: People, Politics and History Since 1945*, p.148.

105 'Time to Remember Bougainville', *Papua New Guinea Post-Courier*, April 10 1992, p.2.

An Australian Defence Intelligence Organisation (DIO) report, leaked in April 1992, voiced concern about the PNG government's inability to halt the deterioration in law and order and to control an increasingly maverick PNGDF. It concluded that a convergence of these trends was making the prospect of a military coup ever more likely.<sup>106</sup> The report's release coincided with Prime Minister, Paul Keating's, visit to PNG, during which he again reminded the government in Port Moresby of the urgency of internal security reforms. What it did not note was that the reforms advocated by Australia - reorientation of the PNGDF towards internal security and increased cooperation between the disciplined services - could cause an equally serious upset in civil-military relations.

Recommending greater PNGDF preparedness for internal security contingencies carries several risks, the first of which is that it may provoke serious resentment in the force. The PNGDF is not a complete stranger to internal security operations, having been called on to assist the RPNGC in restoring law and order on three occasions between Independence and the Bougainville crisis. They joined forces with the police in Operation Green Beret in Port Moresby in 1984; in Operation Coolex covering Morobe, Madang and Eastern Highlands provinces in 1987; and in Operation LO-MET in the Highlands in 1988.<sup>107</sup> However, the PNGDF did not enjoy the experience. Coordination was poor and there was obvious police resentment of what they saw as the premature call out of the army. As already noted, no allocation had been made in the budget for military aid to the civil power and to cover costs when assisting the police the PNGDF had to dip into soldiers' salary and leave monies.<sup>108</sup>

Moreover, the army has always been called out as a last resort and evidence suggests that routine law enforcement does not accord with the military's idea of its proper role and function. The PNGDF's norms are those of its Australian progenitor in this regard; it prides itself on being a professional and apolitical organisation whose primary and ultimate responsibility lies in ensuring the nation's external security. Its officers, like those in most defence forces trained, organised and equipped to fight similarly prepared enemies, find the prospect of routine law and order enforcement distasteful and the role of de facto policemen demeaning.<sup>109</sup> While senior officers of the PNGDF are likely to consider counterinsurgency, of the type being waged on Bougainville, as a legitimate military function the Bougainville experience is unlikely to be repeated often - if at all. Chronic lawlessness will probably continue to be the more common response to economic and social upheaval in PNG and law enforcement consequently a more likely routine for the PNGDF.

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<sup>106</sup> Peter Hartcher, 'Rumblings of a Military Coup in PNG', *Sydney Morning Herald*, April 27 1992, p.1.

<sup>107</sup> Saffu, *Military Roles and Relations in Papua New Guinea*, p.10.

<sup>108</sup> *Report of the Defence General Board of Inquiry*.

<sup>109</sup> Saffu, *Military Roles and Relations in Papua New Guinea*, p.11.

Military forces responsible for maintaining internal security are not in themselves much more likely to attempt coups than those dedicated to external defence. However, forces in transition during periods of public disorder quite often do so, prompted by 'deep resentments towards governments whose incompetence has forced them to take on the unsavoury role of policemen'.<sup>110</sup>

In addition to causing resentment within the military the proposed change of role for the PNGDF carries two other risks. First, the longstanding animosity between the PNGDF and the RPNGC may dissipate with increased cooperation in maintaining internal security, thus removing an important counterweight to military ambitions. And second, increased experience in internal security may seduce the military into the belief that it should play a more authoritative role in such matters, breeding disdain for the principles of civilian law enforcement and perhaps even for the concept of civilian government. Factors which would increase this probability include not only political instability, weak administration and government vacillation but official corruption.<sup>111</sup> Corruption has increased to such an extent in PNG<sup>112</sup> that government critics of PNGDF indiscipline have left themselves open to countercharges of hypocrisy and culpability from the armed forces.<sup>113</sup>

Senior members of the PNGDF have not, in the past, been averse to taking matters into their own hands when disagreements have arisen over government policy. Examples of such action include PNGDF Commander, Tony Huai's leaks to Indonesia on bilateral defence negotiations with Australia in 1987;<sup>114</sup> the illegal Defence Force reoccupation of Lae airport in 1988,<sup>115</sup> and Colonel Nuia's unilateral return to Bougainville in 1991. Even if one discounts the somewhat farcical 'Bar B Coup' attempt by disgruntled Bougainville emergency controller, Police Commissioner Paul Tohian, there has already been one plot to force the government to accede to military demands. The plan by officers

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<sup>110</sup> Coups in Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Benin, Turkey, Colombia and Syria are cited as examples in Nordlinger, *Soldiers in Politics: Military Coups and Governments*, p.91.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> Some 90 of the 109 Members of Parliament in PNG have been investigated by the Ombudsman Commission for alleged misdemeanours and misappropriation of funds. *JCFADT Report*, p.69. In his recent inquiry into PNG's forest industry Mr Justice Barnett also found that bribery, corruption and the buying of support were so prevalent in PNG as to constitute 'a major social sickness', Dorney, *Papua New Guinea: People, Politics and History Since 1945*, p.228.

<sup>113</sup> Ibenge Solot, PNGDF, 'Discipline Leaders First', Letter to the Editor, *Papua New Guinea Post-Courier*, April 29 1992, p.10.

<sup>114</sup> Saffu, *Military Roles and Relations in Papua New Guinea*, p.15.

<sup>115</sup> 'Army Illegally Occupies Lae Aerodrome', *Times of Papua New Guinea*, June 9-15 1988, p.3.



of the 1st Battalion PIR was reportedly rehearsed twice in 1977 but aborted when fears that Brigadier General Ted Diro would be dismissed came to nothing.<sup>116</sup>

Options facing the Australian government in the event of the PNGDF actually carrying such a plan through would include military intervention; assistance to opposing forces or groups; complete withdrawal of budgetary assistance; cessation of the Defence Cooperation Programme and logistics supply; and diplomatic pressure through international fora.<sup>117</sup>

There may well be domestic pressure for economic and diplomatic measures but some uncertainty must always exist concerning the efficacy of such responses. The Fijian coup makers, for example, resisted pressure from the Commonwealth, Australia and New Zealand and their political heirs are reorienting their foreign policy, defence and trade relations. Suspension of the Defence Cooperation Programme and/or access through the Supply Support Agreement would, in current circumstances, impact very quickly on the PNGDF's capabilities, especially in the air transport sector.<sup>118</sup> However the PNG government is now seeking to diversify its sources of support and supply, and its vulnerability to such disruption may decrease along with its dependence on Australia. Even if dependence remains high, the longer term impact of unilateral military sanctions is uncertain. A military force seizing power in such circumstances would not be subject to the usual budgetary restrictions on military spending and could quickly purchase replacements from other sources. Moreover, the possibility of Australian expatriates and investments falling hostage to an alienated regime in PNG and Australia's strategic interest in maintaining good relations with its nearest northern neighbours could well hinder application of economic and diplomatic sanctions.<sup>119</sup>

If a coup regime appeared well entrenched or widely supported in PNG, Australia's policy makers would be more likely to consider that its long term interests would be undermined by punitive action. Assistance to opposing forces or groups would only be feasible if they had wide support in PNG and such a strategy was certain of success. If it were unpopular or unsuccessful Australia's strategic access to PNG could be jeopardised in the longer term. Similar considerations apply to the military intervention option. Much would depend on public and police reaction in PNG and the level of

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<sup>116</sup> Transcript of 'Papua New Guinea: an Unsuccessful Coup by Officers of the First Battalion, Pacific Islands Regiment in October 1977 and Arguments For and Against a Combined Police/Army Force', *Background Briefing*, ABC Radio, August 21 1983.

<sup>117</sup> This discussion assumes a hostile Australian reaction to a *coup* in PNG Sir Anthony Siaguru suspects instead that 'faced with a *fait accompli*', Australia's 'feelings might well be of regret and relief', 'Till Death Us Do Part?' in David Anderson (ed.), *The PNG-Australia Relationship: Problems and Prospects* (Institute of Public Affairs, Sydney, 1990), p.63.

<sup>118</sup> Defence Department Evidence to JCFADT, *Hansard*, November 20 1989.

<sup>119</sup> Australia faces the latter dilemma when considering its response to events in East Timor.

cohesion within the military itself. Regional reaction would also have to be a consideration, as the first Fiji coup demonstrated. In this case attention would have to focus on Indonesia's reaction to a military takeover and Australian intervention. Although Indonesia would oppose the replacement of the government in Port Moresby by one more radical, its attitude towards a coup attempt by the PNGDF may be more ambivalent. On the one hand, Jakarta's own response to the demands of managing a fissiparous developing country has been to involve the military in all aspects of national life. And relations between senior members of both military forces are more than cordial. However, doubts must exist in Jakarta, as elsewhere, about the long term ability of the PNGDF to ensure stability and cohesion in PNG.

Tactical uncertainties also exist with the intervention option. The PNGDF has the capability to take leading government figures hostage and take over the international airport and communications facilities in Port Moresby and several, but not all, other urban centres. If this were successfully attempted and an Australian military response was considered appropriate, Australia should be able to rescue hostages and restore communications using the SAS and the ODF. The PNGDF, because of its limited size, probably lacks the capability to effect much wider control, but could well do so with police and/or bureaucratic support. If a coup attempt were thus supported, Australia would be very unwise, and unlikely, to intervene.

While a coup attempt would present Australia with an unwelcome security dilemma it is not currently Australia's greatest concern with regard to PNG's internal security. Indeed, Australian policy makers evidently consider the need for a coordinated public order response sufficiently critical that they are prepared to risk the increased likelihood of a coup.

Australia is willing to assist PNG in improving its internal security capabilities but, with the experience of the pre-Bougainville DCP in mind, is determined that its aid be appropriately targeted. As with the pre-Bougainville DCP Australian assistance is to be determined in consultation with PNG. However, Australia needs to avoid any repetition of the problems caused by the lack of a long term defence allocation strategy between 1975 and 1989 so 'assistance will be provided in response to requests through agreed programs which allow for forward planning'.<sup>120</sup> There will be a great deal of reluctance to underwrite new projects until PNG has outlined a detailed plan of action and ordered its priorities.

PNG did complete a very general security review in mid 1991. A Review Task Force recommended the role of the PNGDF be redefined within existing laws and

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<sup>120</sup> *Agreed Statement on Security Cooperation.*

constitutional provisions, enabling it to play a greater role in internal security. It suggested that police and Corrective Institution Service (CIS) instructors begin intensive training of PNGDF personnel who would then be sworn in as reserve constables, the Joint Services College at Lae be reopened and a Joint Services Command established. The Review also recommended the creation of a Department of Defence and Security, amalgamating the current department of defence and units within the police and the CIS. The new department's primary functions would be to monitor law and order trends and report to the government; develop policy for law enforcement agencies; provide financial and administrative support to the PNGDF, the police and CIS; and coordinate training, equipment purchases and external arrangements.<sup>121</sup>

These recommendations are roughly in line with those suggested by the Australian reviews and Australia would be glad to see them implemented. However, little progress has been made since in detailing these proposals or in deciding priorities for Australian assistance. Later in 1991 PNG presented Australia with an extensive and unrealistic shopping list, seeking funding for everything from a third PIR battalion to new police headquarters, from prison housing to more landing craft, intelligence training to a Joint Services College.<sup>122</sup> There has also been little sign of willingness on the part of the PNG government to allocate sufficient of its own resources to internal security. The police allocation in the 1991 PNG budget did not equal the force's expenditure in 1989 or 1990.<sup>123</sup>

The PNG government is understandably anxious to avoid any impression that it is following an Australian agenda<sup>124</sup> but is having difficulty in drawing up an alternative plan of action. There are many reasons for PNG's slow response.<sup>125</sup> PNG has not had a great deal of experience in long term planning and prioritisation in either the defence or law and order sectors. Neither was considered a national priority or properly integrated into government budgeting and planning processes. Insufficient information, analysis and allocation of resources have encouraged rushed decision making. An escalation of pressure for government action during crises and the immediate political capital perceived as accruing from decisive responses has only added to the attraction of

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<sup>121</sup> Bernard Maladina, 'Joint Command For Disciplined Forces Recommended', *Times of Papua New Guinea*, June 27 1991, pp.1-2.

<sup>122</sup> David Lague, 'PNG Has Huge List of Security Projects', *Australian Financial Review*, September 3 1991, p.2.

<sup>123</sup> M.J Thawley, Assistant Secretary New Zealand and Papua New Guinea Branch, DFAT, Address to Council for the National Interest, Townsville, March 15 1991.

<sup>124</sup> Roy Eccleston, 'PNG Security Review Vital', *Australian*, February 22 1991, p.4.

<sup>125</sup> Problems hindering the development of a long term internal security policy are discussed in *Security for Development: Integrating the Government's Response to the National Summit on Crime Into a Comprehensive and Planned Approach to Law and Order* (Papua New Guinea Government Paper, June 1991).

emergency measures over long term policy development.<sup>126</sup> Those substantial or ongoing programmes that have been formulated have been hindered in their implementation by a lack of political will, bureaucratic disagreement and lack of coordination, a reluctance to divert resources from development priorities, and a shortage of skilled personnel.

Papua New Guinea can rightly point to practical and constitutional obstacles to the integration of its defence forces and law and order agencies, including different degrees of civilian and political control, command structures, procedures, equipment, training and employment conditions. These difficulties, however, constitute only one factor in the political and bureaucratic resistance to integration. The government in Port Moresby is concerned that integration would impact negatively on civil-military relations, the PNGDF and the Defence bureaucracy fear the erosion of their status and the diversion of financial resources to the worse off police and the RPNGC fear that they would be relegated to junior partner by the more powerful and better organised military. No consensus exists between government departments or between politicians and the disciplined services over the direction reforms should take. One major source of disagreement concerns the establishment of a joint base in the Highlands. The Minister for Defence, Benais Sabumei has long supported the permanent deployment of a ready reaction force to the Highlands to enforce mine security and police tribal fighting. The PNGDF leadership, aware that a sustained financial commitment to either defence or police is not ensured, is concerned that the base will be too costly and the project too manpower intensive. Until a consensus is forged between the different interest groups in PNG and priorities agreed upon, Australia will be reluctant to fund major new projects.

PNG is for its part stepping up its attempts to reduce its reliance on Australian defence aid. Although Australia moved quickly in the wake of Bougainville to assure the PNGDF that supply support would not be conditional, its strongly stated preference for certain defence reforms and its stated intent to defer further major defence funding until there is progress towards that end must remind PNG of its vulnerability to Australian leverage.

PNG's most recent attempt to reduce its dependence on Australia was an approach to the Malaysian government for funding and specialist military training.<sup>127</sup> Australian foreign and defence policy planners now support PNG's attempts to diversify and would approve Malaysia's involvement. It has long been argued that training from a military with counterinsurgency experience would benefit the PNGDF and Malaysia may be able to assist in this regard. Moreover, while Australia would still want to retain its

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<sup>126</sup> Sinclair Dinnen, 'Big Men, Small Men and Invisible Women: Urban Crime and Inequality in Papua New Guinea', revised and extended version of a paper published in *The Melanesian Law Journal*, Vol.19, 1991.

<sup>127</sup> Brian Woodley, 'Malaysia to Help PNG Fight Rebels', *Australian*, May 8 1992, p.7.

cooperative defence relationship with PNG, the many dilemmas attendant on being PNG's sole significant security partner when PNG's major security problems are internal make that position an unenviable one. The devolution of responsibility would reduce the expectations placed on Australia by PNG and PNG's neighbours and reduce stress on both sets of relationships.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ONGOING ASSISTANCE

While Australia was waiting for PNG to complete its security review and order its priorities, the secessionist conflict on Bougainville simmered on and lower level civil disorder elsewhere in PNG gave every appearance of actually increasing in scale and intensity. Australia did not want the security situation in PNG to deteriorate to the point where it could find it difficult to resist regional, international and domestic pressure for more direct Australian involvement. To raise this threshold Australia is providing logistic and training assistance to both the PNGDF and the RPNGC. In providing this assistance Australia has attempted to find a balance between its concern and respect for PNG's sovereignty, between its desire to improve PNG's internal security situation and the need to avoid too close an association with the implementation of public order in PNG. This has not been an easy balance to achieve. The *Iroquois* deal illustrated just how blurred the distinction between being actively involved and providing support could become. During operations on Bougainville the helicopters were the property of PNG and flown by civilian pilots under contract to the PNG government. However, Australia not only paid for the helicopters and provided some, if not all, of the weaponry employed on them but facilitated the recruitment of Australian citizens as pilots, (also paid with an Australian grant<sup>128</sup>), and provided ADF loan personnel who advised on the 'safety and security' of PNGDF air assets during the Bougainville operation. Even when the symbiosis is less overt, Defence Department officials admit that 'Australia's extensive involvement with the PNGDF means we are inextricably linked with any PNGDF operation'.<sup>129</sup> When DCP funding support for the PNGDF swelled to some \$38 million in FY 1989-90 and then to \$52 million in FY 1990-91 it constituted over forty per cent of PNG's defence budget.<sup>130</sup> Even at 'normal' levels Australian funding is critical and the Australian government could be held partly responsible by the international community and its domestic electorate if the internal security situation deteriorated further or human rights abuses by the PNGDF continued.

The Bougainville Crisis had highlighted deficiencies in PNG's military equipment and logistic support and it is these deficiencies that the first strand of Australia's ongoing security assistance to PNG aims to remedy. Although the RPNGC has traditionally purchased its equipment from private sector manufacturers, official Australian supply and support to the PNGDF is not new. Since Independence the PNGDF has received most of its defence equipment free or heavily discounted under the DCP or by accessing the ADF's

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<sup>128</sup> *Prime Ministerial Press Release*, July 7 1989.

<sup>129</sup> Eccleston, 'Defence HQ Wanted PNG Role'.

<sup>130</sup> Defence Department Evidence to JCFADT, *Hansard*, November 20 1990, p.31.

logistic supply system in accordance with the 1977 agreement. Equipment ranging from patrol boats and *Nomad* aircraft to small arms and ammunition had been transferred by 1989, attracting little criticism. This changed during the Bougainville Crisis when allegations surfaced of PNGDF human rights abuses. Of particular concern were reports, later confirmed, that the *Iroquois* transferred under the DCP had been used to strafe villages and dump bodies at sea.<sup>131</sup>

It has long been declaratory Australian government policy to deny permission for the export of military equipment to regions of instability or governments which could be expected to use such equipment against their own people. However, these restrictions applied to sales by industry, not the sale, transfer, or disposal of military equipment by the Australian Commonwealth. Moreover, their application to private sector arms exports was rather flexible in view of Australia's countervailing interest in boosting defence self-reliance by encouraging domestic arms manufacturers. Mounting criticism has recently impelled the government to announce the extension of restrictive guidelines to Defence Cooperation arms transfers and government disposals of surplus or obsolete military equipment and to promise more stringent arms export controls across the board.<sup>132</sup>

PNG now qualifies as both unstable and a country in which Australian supplied arms might well be used for 'domestic order' purposes. Yet Australia's declaratory policy on arms exports to PNG has gone against the general trend, despite public outcry over the misuse of the *Iroquois*. Senator Ray announced in June 1991 that, while the transfer of major pieces of military equipment would continue to be conditional, Australia would lift restrictions on the use of items sent to PNG through normal supply channels.

There are, of course, strategic and foreign policy arguments that can be made for exempting PNG from standard arms export guidelines. It is apparently believed that Australia's interest in the maintenance of cohesion in PNG is furthered by provision of military supplies to the central authorities. And, while PNG can, and does, acquire arms from other sources to this end, Australia does not want to lose such influence and leverage as its present role as PNG's largest arms supplier allows. Tightening restrictions on supply and increasing end-use controls would undermine this position by lessening Australia's attractiveness as a dependable source of supply. Moreover, Australia's official logistics agreement with PNG predates changes to the arms export policy and could not easily have been revoked without undermining Australia's credibility as a security partner.

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<sup>131</sup> Transcript of 'Blood on the Bougainvillea', *Four Corners*, ABC Television, June 24 1991.

<sup>132</sup> The evolution of Australia's defence export policy is discussed in a June 1991 Parliamentary Research Service Defence Group Background Paper by Niki Raath, *Australia's Arms Exports: Prospects and Problems*.

It is nevertheless unlikely that Senator Ray's statement signalled any substantial relaxation of restrictions on the supply of arms to PNG. The Minister's statement followed PNG Defence Minister Benais Sabumei's comment that PNG got the 'impression that it still was not treated as an independent nation' by Australia<sup>133</sup>. Mr Sabumei was giving public expression to the bitterness and frustration felt by many in the PNGDF in the wake of Bougainville and the *Iroquois* affair. A common perception was that Australia's stance had been insufficiently supportive and overly critical. Senator Ray's apparent commitment to the lifting of restrictions on the supply of minor items under the logistic support agreement was partly an attempt to mollify his counterpart and the PNGDF. It was also designed to avert future charges of Australian government complicity should the PNGDF again employ Australian supplied equipment in a controversial manner.

Australia has *never* attached end-use conditions to PNG's employment of defence equipment purchased under supply support arrangements. Since 1975 these arrangements have included a clause providing that 'items of Australian manufacture sold to Papua New Guinea...may be employed without let or hindrance from Australia'.<sup>134</sup> What Australia has been able to do, and is likely to continue to do, is to reserve the right to refuse non-routine requests. Arms and ammunition have traditionally been provided for normal training needs with anything surplus to training requirements considered on a case by case basis, weighed against a range of factors including PNGDF or police requirements, contingency levels and armoury security.<sup>135</sup> While Australia may move to ease the flow of standard small arms and ammunition for non-training needs, constraints are likely to remain on 'inappropriate' items. Australian policy makers are, after all, well aware that an unfettered flow of arms to PNG could have serious strategic, foreign policy and domestic political costs. The problem lies in determining which items are inappropriate i.e. surplus to 'legitimate defence needs' and likely to cause unnecessary civilian suffering. While Australia did deny some of PNG's requests during the Bougainville Crisis,<sup>136</sup> helicopters apparently supplied by Australia for transport and surveillance were used to strafe villages. Among the weapons used for this purpose were submachine guns and grenade launchers, also supplied by Australia during the Crisis.<sup>137</sup>

The second component of Australian assistance consisted of an expansion and training programme for the PNGDF. The Bougainville Crisis had revealed a serious

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<sup>133</sup> 'No More Constraints on Arms to PNG: Ray', *Canberra Times*, May 4 1991, p.3.

<sup>134</sup> *Interim Arrangement for the Supply Support of the Papua New Guinea Department of Defence by the Department of Defence*, Tabled in House of Representatives, October 9 1975.

<sup>135</sup> Defence Department Evidence to JCFADT, *Hansard*, October 22 1990, pp.747-751.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> Roy Eccleston, Brian Woodley and Paul Austin, 'Military on Alert for PNG Rescue', *Weekend Australian*, January 20-21 1990, p.1.



lack of military sustainability with the PNGDF unable to deploy more than three companies at a time and then only for a limited period.<sup>138</sup> In June 1990 the first twenty three members of an eighty man Australian training assistance team was dispatched to the Goldie River Training Depot outside Port Moresby. The team, which was drawn predominantly from the Brisbane based 8/9 Battalion RAR, was to assist in the expansion of the PNGDF, increasing numbers by 450 through the 'fast track' formation of a fourth rifle company and bringing the remaining companies up to strength.<sup>139</sup> The PNG government has since stated its intent to further increase the size of the PNGDF to 5,200<sup>140</sup> and has requested Australian assistance in raising a third battalion.<sup>141</sup> Maintaining such a large force would place great demands on PNG's (and the DCP's) financial resources and Australia would be unlikely to agree to PNG's request, particularly when so much uncertainty exists over the PNGDF's future roles and responsibilities.

In the meantime, Australia has moved on from recruit training to improving the standards in the remainder of the force, providing extensive and intensive in-country training for the first time since Independence. The aim here is to correct another area of weakness revealed during the Bougainville Crisis: tactics and discipline. Officers had insufficient experience of intelligence collection and utilisation and of planning, developing and executing major campaigns. Middle ranks had difficulty relating to each other in the field and junior officers' leadership skills were poor, contributing to a breakdown in the implementation of orders and indiscipline at soldier level.<sup>142</sup> Ongoing training is being provided in an effort to remedy these operational deficiencies and minimise the recurrence of disciplinary problems. Officer courses, NCO courses and unit level training are being conducted in both Australia and PNG.

It remains to be seen how fundamental a change will be wrought by the Department of Defence's training assistance. It is not expected to have any significant impact on PNGDF performance, or discipline, for several years and, even then, its effectiveness is not assured. It remains to be seen whether Australian military standards can (or should) simply be grafted on to PNG's political and social culture which contains a number of conflicting norms and values and encourages rather different modes of conduct. Moreover, expansion and training will do little to ameliorate the sort of structural and political problems which beset the PNGDF on Bougainville. The joint rank structure of the PNGDF limits the Commander's rank to Brigadier General and has created a plateau at

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<sup>138</sup> Woodman and Horner, 'Land Forces in the Defence of Australia', p.59.

<sup>139</sup> Konio Seneka, 'Australia Increases Military Aid to PNG', *Times of Papua New Guinea*, June 21 1990, pp.1-2.

<sup>140</sup> Saffu, 'Political Chronicle - Papua New Guinea', 1991, p.354.

<sup>141</sup> Lague, 'PNG Has Huge List of Security Projects'.

<sup>142</sup> Defence Department Evidence to JCFADT, *Hansard*, October 22 1990, pp.721-758.

colonel level, resulting in considerable rivalry and much manoeuvring for the Commander's position. For the first few months of the Crisis a power struggle between PNGDF commanders confused lines of communication and exacerbated logistical difficulties.<sup>143</sup> A lack of clear and consistent political direction, poor communications and differing civil and military perspectives all contributed to confusion and resentment within the PNGDF, hampered effective planning, and encouraged unsanctioned military initiatives.<sup>144</sup> There is little Australia can do to improve the long standing and fundamental inadequacy of civil-military coordination or the problem of command rivalry within the PNGDF.

The provision of advisers, training instructors and technical specialists is not without more direct problems for Australia. Concerned at the prospect of ADF personnel becoming entangled in border disputes between PNG and Indonesia or in internal security operations, Australia has long insisted on consultation on the use of its loan and exchange personnel in 'politically sensitive' situations. When the PNGDF was invited by Vanuatu to quash the Espiritu Santo Rebellion in 1980 approximately twenty ADF loan personnel were included in the deployment as their skills in air transport, communications and logistics were considered critical to the success of the operation.<sup>145</sup> The Australians were, however, only permitted to join Kumul Force after both Vanuatu and PNG had agreed not to deploy them in politically sensitive circumstances.<sup>146</sup>

The *Consultative Agreement* also made it possible for Australia to limit the involvement of ADF personnel in the PNGDF's Bougainville operation. Five members of the ADF on loan or exchange to the PNGDF, including the Director of Air Operations, did nevertheless visit Bougainville during the Crisis.<sup>147</sup> While their duties were apparently confined to the provision of technical advice, their presence and contribution, albeit indirect, to the PNGDF's campaign fuelled allegations of Australian complicity in human rights abuses.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> The Bougainville operation was controlled from Port Moresby. On-site command was initially given to Colonel Lima Dataona -an unpopular choice with the Defence Force hierarchy. Dataona found himself bypassed in the chain of command and his authority undermined to such an extent that he had to rely on civilians for transport. When his rival for command of the PNGDF, Brigadier General Rochus Lokinap, was reinstated he immediately and successfully demanded the replacement of Dataona by Colonel Leo Nui. Dorney, *Papua New Guinea: People, Politics and History Since 1975*, pp.147-148.

<sup>144</sup> Defence Department Evidence to JCFADT, *Hansard*, October 22 1990.

<sup>145</sup> MacQueen, 'Beyond Tok Win', p.241.

<sup>146</sup> Senate *Hansard*, August 19 1980.

<sup>147</sup> Senate *Hansard*, November 27 1990, p.4613.

<sup>148</sup> Robert Cockburn and Mark Corcoran, 'What Happened on Bougainville?', *The Bulletin*, December 18 1990, pp.42-43.

Restricting the involvement of ADF personnel in 'politically sensitive' operations may reduce this risk; it is unlikely, however, to remove it entirely. Australia has assumed much of the responsibility for enlarging and training the PNGDF since Bougainville; one of the objectives being to minimise the recurrence of human rights abuses. There have been fewer reports of such abuses since the PNGDF returned to Bougainville but this may be due, not to any real improvement but, to restrictions on the flow of information to and from the blockaded island. Senior officers in the North Solomons Province apparently continue to act without government sanction and elsewhere the level of military indiscipline and indiscriminate violence remains unacceptably high.<sup>149</sup>

If violations persist in the strengthened PNGDF there is bound to be criticism and resentment of the Australian government as progenitor. Moreover, as the recent fatal shooting of a 'raskol' gang leader by an Australian policeman highlights,<sup>150</sup> it will not always be possible for Australian security advisers to avoid active involvement in internal security enforcement. The potential therefore exists for ADF personnel to become more directly implicated in human rights violations.

Scepticism amongst Bougainvilleans about Australian impartiality put paid to any hope of Canberra playing a constructive role in the conciliation process.<sup>151</sup> It would be even more disadvantageous to Australia if such negative perceptions were to become widespread throughout PNG. It is therefore important that Australian personnel not be employed on active law enforcement duties in PNG and that their assistance to the PNGDF and RPNGC has general community understanding and support.<sup>152</sup>

While the Bougainville Crisis focused attention on deficiencies in PNG's military capabilities and was the catalyst for a review of Australian defence aid to PNG, it was the gradual breakdown of law and order throughout the 1980s that awoke Australian policy makers to the need for greater assistance to the RPNGC. The 5,000 man police force was clearly undermanned, underequipped, underpaid and poorly trained, a victim of its lowly place in the bureaucratic pecking order in PNG. It had come off second best to the military during the colonial period and little had been done by either PNG or Australia to redress the balance since. There are two major and related reasons given for the comparative neglect of the RPNGC by Australia in the years since Independence. The first concerns the lack of an appropriate channel for the transfer of funds. The RPNGC does not

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<sup>149</sup> A recent example reported in *Times of Papua New Guinea*, October 17 1991, took place on the island of Manus. Villages were burnt and several people wounded in clashes between soldiers from Lombrum Naval Base and civilians. The soldiers went on to raid the local police station, freeing one of their members arrested for arson.

<sup>150</sup> 'Aust Officer Kills Leader of "Raskol" Gang', *Canberra Times*, September 14 1991, p.3.

<sup>151</sup> Senator Gareth Evans, Doorstop Interview, March 6 1990.

<sup>152</sup> Professor Ross Garnaut, Evidence to JCFADT, *Hansard*, April 8 1991.

have an institution to institution relationship with an Australian counterpart as the PNGDF has with the Australian Department of Defence and aid to the RPNGC has been allocated from the general Overseas Development Aid (ODA) budget and channelled through the Australian International Development Assistance Bureau (AIDAB). Because the provision of aid for law and order purposes is a sensitive issue, both within and without the international aid community, AIDAB was for many years reluctant to fund the RPNGC. Major aid projects only became a consideration after a 1984 Commonwealth Colloquium identified internal security as a major concern of the developing island states and legitimised the 'diversion' of ODA from the alleviation of poverty to law and order.

In 1986 AIDAB completed a design study for the improvement of RPNGC administrative and operational systems and training programmes. This RPNGC Development Project commenced in 1988, with AIDAB also agreeing to provide financial assistance in constructing police accommodation and A\$2 million worth of communications equipment and vehicles.<sup>153</sup> In 1990 additional aid was provided to PNG's Police Mobile Riot Squads and the fifteen Australian police who had been in PNG since late 1988 under the auspices of the Development Project were joined by twenty senior officials to be seconded to provincial centres.<sup>154</sup> By 1991 AIDAB was funding over 40 such 'long-term advisers'.<sup>155</sup> The construction of 150 prefabricated police houses, to be located at highway patrol bases in the Highlands and Sepik Province and along the Lae-Madang and Buliminski highways as well as at isolated rural police stations in Oro, Central and Western Province, is scheduled to begin in mid 1992. The Staff Housing Project is designed to alleviate long standing problems in adequately staffing rural areas.<sup>156</sup>

Australian assistance to the RPNGC is primarily intended to strengthen the state's ability to maintain public order. An equally important goal should be the inculcation of discipline and restraint in the police force itself. If anything, PNG's police have a worse reputation for indiscipline than the defence force and reports of corruption, theft, arson, and brutality have become increasingly commonplace. However, the same problems that attend the provision of trainers and advisers to the military exist in the case of personnel assistance to the police. The RPNGC have to cope with a good deal more violent disorder than their counterparts in Australia, and in some contingencies respond with tactics that are more paramilitary than police in nature. Australian police advisers, especially those attempting to

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<sup>153</sup> *PNG Program Profile: Australian Aid to Papua New Guinea* (Australian International Development Assistance Bureau (AIDAB), October 1991).

<sup>154</sup> Rowan Callick, 'Bougainville Revolutionary Army Takes Charge', *Islands Business*, April 1990, p.21 and Eccleston, 'Hawke Tells PNG to Stand on Own Feet'.

<sup>155</sup> *Australia's Overseas Aid Program 1991-92*, Budget Related Paper No.4, Canberra, 1990, p.21.

<sup>156</sup> 'Major Housing Project for Police', *Papua New Guinea Post-Courier*, April 29 1992, p.12.

provide close supervision,<sup>157</sup> may attract criticism if there is any suggestion of excessive force being used in RPNGC operations.

Although AIDAB funding for the PNG police is likely to remain relatively high, assistance under the DCP is winding back, from a high of \$52 million in FY 1990-91 to an expected \$37 million in FY 1991-92. Much of the reduction comes from the completion of such infrastructural projects as the Lombrum Wharf upgrade and the construction of new Air Transport Squadron headquarters in Port Moresby. Training and personnel exchange now constitutes the bulk of the DCP budget, accounting for some \$32 million in FY 1991-92 - a considerable percentage increase on the \$19 million allocated in FY 1989-90's \$38 million budget.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Although Australian police advisers are not armed and 'do not take field command' they do accompany the RPNGC on operations. Defence Department Evidence to JCFADT, *Hansard*, October 21 1991.

<sup>158</sup> *Defence Portfolio Explanatory Notes*, pp.423-426 and *Defence Program Performance Statements, 1991-92*, pp.438-440.

## CONCLUSION

The Bougainville Crisis marked a dramatic turning point in the Australia-Papua New Guinea defence relationship. The relationship had hitherto been driven by perceptions of mutual vulnerability to external threat. Although it had been recognised since the early 1970s that internal security developments in PNG could impact on Australian interests and complicate the regional security environment, the maintenance of order was a low priority. Defence planners considered internal security only of indirect defence interest and the maintenance of order a task unsuited to the military for tactical and political reasons. There was little reason to question these assumptions in the first decade or so of PNG's Independence as its governments achieved an unexpected degree of stability and unity. Defence establishments in PNG and Australia were able to concentrate their resources on external security, to the interests of both.

The main objective of Australia's defence policy regarding PNG was to maintain Australia's strategic access. Australia's role as regional watchman for Western interests dictated a direct interest in the exclusion of hostile powers or their proxy governments from PNG; an interest that was given added urgency by PNG's proximity to Australia and its sea lines of communication. Australia's concern to ensure continued strategic access to PNG in turn dictated cooperation with PNG in all areas including defence.

In 1987 the first serious signs of domestic political instability began to appear in the South West Pacific and the maintenance of order rapidly moved up Australia's regional security agenda. As Australia was attempting to develop a coherent policy approach, an internal security crisis erupted right on Australia's doorstep. A conflict on the island of Bougainville between aggrieved landowners turned secessionists and PNG's security forces threatened Australian expatriates and investments and appeared to place the sovereign integrity of PNG in jeopardy. Although Australia made contingency plans for the evacuation of nationals it quickly eschewed direct military involvement in the conflict for a whole range of strategic, operational, foreign policy and domestic political reasons. Nevertheless, the close relationship between the two countries, particularly in the area of defence, placed Australia under a de facto obligation to assist PNG in combating the rebels.

This sense of responsibility was sharpened by concern that Australia, as PNG's 'primary security partner', had failed PNG through years of inappropriately targeted defence assistance. Since Bougainville, Australia has sought to redress this neglect by assisting Papua New Guinea to bolster its internal security capabilities. Under the Defence Cooperation Programme, Australia has provided training and basic combat equipment to increase PNGDF strength and improve the existing force's performance levels. The

logistics supply procedure has been simplified to allow PNG readier access to minor items of defence equipment in the ADF's inventory. And AIDAB has strengthened its RPNGC Development Project with the secondment of more police advisers to PNG. Australia has also pledged to provide further assistance once there is firm evidence of a commitment by PNG to restructure its security capabilities and decide priorities for Australian funding.

By strengthening PNG's internal security and law and order capabilities, Australia hopes to contribute to PNG's stability and cohesion and to raise the threshold of Australian intervention. However, while recent Australian initiatives may help to stabilise the situation in PNG in the short term there are limits to what can be achieved by a public order response which tackles the symptoms and not the causes of PNG's many problems. Some of the stresses on public order are manifestations of the disequilibrium caused by rapid development and cultural dislocation. Some may have been exacerbated by the adoption of inappropriate constitutional provisions, political and judicial procedures and by the legacy of insufficient infrastructure and expertise. Australia may be able to assist to some extent with project aid and advice on constitutional and bureaucratic reform. However, much of the responsibility for PNG's difficulties must be borne by a ruling elite which has in the past shown neither the will nor the capacity to address PNG's more fundamental social and developmental problems. Indeed some scholars now argue that this elite's lack of integrity is actively contributing to those problems by encouraging the acquisition of wealth by any means at all levels of society.<sup>159</sup>

The dilemma for Australia is just how far it should go in supporting, and becoming more closely involved with, the domestic authority of the PNG government until that government demonstrates greater political will and integrity. Bolstering PNG's public order responses in circumstances short of this may have unintended and unwelcome consequences. It may encourage state repression if the government is unwilling or unable to make the more costly commitment to addressing the underlying economic and social causes of crime and dissent. Alternatively it may encourage the security forces to challenge the right of the civil authorities to rule. Either of these scenarios would place Australia as PNG's 'primary security partner' in an invidious position. Even if they do not eventuate, widespread lawlessness and continuing challenges to the central authorities are likely to persist until PNG's leadership has made a concerted and sustained effort to tackle both the symptoms and the causes of instability for itself. Recent experience leaves little room for optimism and suggests that policy problems for Australia will not go away.

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<sup>159</sup> See Dinnen, 'Big Men, Small Men and Invisible Women'.

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