

# Australia and Solomon Islands: what next after 14 years of regional assistance?

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## Introduction

In July 2003, Australia committed to sending troops, police and civilians into Solomon Islands—a country in crisis and the third Australian intervention into a neighbouring country in seven years. The reasons behind the intervention were promoted as preventing the country from becoming a ‘failed state’ and thus a ‘safe haven for transnational criminals and even terrorists’.<sup>1</sup> Importantly, the Government of Solomon Islands requested Australia’s assistance and quickly enacted legislation to allow the intervention.

The subsequent mission, known colloquially as RAMSI (Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands), was undertaken with a coalition of other Pacific countries, although Australia consistently held the lead. It is due to withdraw in 2017, having downsized significantly already over recent years. While the situation on the ground is currently relatively secure and stable, there is an enduring sense that this is only the case because RAMSI remains. When the mission finally leaves Solomon Islands in a year’s time, will it be so only to return again, and for the same reasons?

## Solomon Islands and the evolution of the conflict

Solomon Islands is an island group to Australia’s northeast in the Southwest Pacific ocean. Its closest neighbour is the province of Bougainville in PNG, just 20 kilometres from the northern tip of Solomon Islands. It lies approximately 2000 kilometres, slightly over three hours’ flight time, from Australia’s Queensland coast. Solomon Islands is comprised of almost 1000 islands, including nine large island groups. The capital, Honiara, is based on Guadalcanal, one of the larger islands, neighbouring the island of Malaita.

Between 1998 and 2003, Solomon Islands descended into economic collapse, chaos and armed conflict, a period referred to as ‘the tensions’ in Solomon Islands. While the casualty figures were relatively low, forced evictions and displacements, and a population-wide fear of armed militants, as well as the incapacity of the government to respond effectively, were significant in creating insecurity and instability.<sup>2</sup> Identifying root causes of conflict are fraught with difficulties. However, the underlying causes of the conflict in Solomon Islands are said to be both deep-seated traditional issues of land and compensation, perceptions and promotion of ethnic differences, poor handling of government revenue, and transmigration to Honiara, all aggravated by uneven economic development and resource extraction.

By late 1998, violent civil unrest had broken out on Guadalcanal, particularly targeting Malaitan settlers who were seen by Gualese as creating land and employment pressures. The perpetrators initially called themselves the Guadalcanal Revolutionary Army, then the Isatabu Freedom Fighters, finally arriving at Isatabu Freedom Movement. Towards the end of 1998 and into 1999, the Isatabu Freedom Movement’s violence included several murders, sexual assaults, intimidation and forceful evictions of Malaitan settlers. By mid-1999, an estimated 20,000 people had been evicted from their homes in settlements on Guadalcanal.<sup>3</sup> This figure grew to approximately 25,000 over subsequent years.<sup>4</sup>

By the beginning of 2000, and in response to the violence perpetrated against them by the Isatabu Freedom Movement, displaced Malaitans had formed their own group called the Malaita Eagle Force. It had the support of Malaitan business leaders, and from within the Royal Solomon Islands Police, with Malaitan police officers joining them to attack Isatabu Freedom Movement areas in Guadalcanal.<sup>5</sup> On 5 June 2000, the Malaita Eagle Force, with the assistance of supporters from inside the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force, looted the police armoury at Rove near Honiara, and Auki on Malaita, and forced Prime Minister Bartholomew Ulufa’alu to resign.<sup>6</sup>

## Australia's responses

In 2000, Solomon Islands religious and peace organisations rose to negotiate peace agreements, assisted by the Australian and New Zealand governments. On 2 August, an agreement was signed on board the Australian Navy ship HMAS *Tobruk*. It collapsed within a day. Further negotiations resulted in the 'Townsville Peace Agreement', signed two months later on 15 October 2000.

The Agreement suspended violence between the Malaita Eagle Force and Isatabu Freedom Movement militias. A monitoring team from Australia, New Zealand, Cook Islands and Vanuatu entered Solomon Islands. Part of the Agreement's remit was to disarm the groups, which were required to voluntarily surrender firearms and ammunition.<sup>7</sup> It expired in October 2002, with the surrender of weapons barely successful.<sup>8</sup> Approximately 500 firearms were still loose, in the hands of those formerly associated with the militias.

Crime was also rife. Special constables were created, as adjuncts to the police force, many of whom were 'amnestied' former Malaitan militants. In the weeks that followed, major industries collapsed and the country's economy weakened further. The breakdown in law and order expanded to remote and rural areas, particularly the southern coast of Guadalcanal, the Weather Coast, and to northern Malaita. On the Weather Coast, a particularly vicious militia emerged, headed by Harold Keke.

In January 2003, then Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer emphatically stated that Australia would not be sending troops to Solomon Islands. Downer contended that not only would such an intervention 'fail to solve the problem' but he was particularly acute to potential allegations of 'recolonisation', and decried the idea as 'folly in the extreme'.<sup>9</sup> Yet on 22 April, the Solomon Islands Prime Minister, Sir Allan Kemakeza, wrote to Prime Minister Howard, and although not the first time that Solomon Islands had asked for Australian assistance, this time it was followed by a meeting in Canberra on 5 June.<sup>10</sup>

Five days later, on 10 June, the Canberra-based Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) published a paper titled 'Our Failing Neighbour: Australia and the future of Solomon Islands'.<sup>11</sup> It was not alone in reaching the conclusion of state failure. Earlier in the year, *The Economist* had asserted that 'the Solomon Islands faces the prospect of becoming the Pacific's first failed state'.<sup>12</sup> Such predictions took place against Australia committing troops to US-led interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, a mounting fear of international terrorism, and a growing academic discourse on failing and fragile states. The concern in Australia was that becoming a failed state would not only generate a humanitarian crisis for Solomon Islands but that it could become a sanctuary for rogue elements, such as transnational criminals and terrorists, all on Australia's doorstep and only months after 88 Australians were killed in the 2002 Bali bombing.

ASPI's publication had previously been circulated and familiarised in Canberra policy circles by its principal author, Elsinia Wainright, and then ASPI Executive Director, Hugh White, who had previously been Deputy Secretary for Strategy and Intelligence in Defence.<sup>13</sup> Being alerted to the report and its proposed recommendations allowed policy-makers and political leaders to consider carefully why and how Australia could or should not intervene.<sup>14</sup> The decision was made to intervene and, on 23 July, Prime Minister Howard farewellled the first RAMSI contingent.

In a subsequent speech to Parliament, Prime Minister Howard listed the reasons why RAMSI was necessary, saying that beyond what he termed 'endemic violence', he was concerned about corruption and used the term 'failed state', linking it to enabling a 'safe haven for transnational criminals and even terrorists', also asserting that 'the time for guns is over'.<sup>15</sup> Along similar lines, Hugh White in the introduction to the ASPI paper had reiterated Australia's responsibilities to Pacific, saying:

A little-known clause in Australia's Constitution assigns to the Federal Government responsibility 'for managing the relations of the Commonwealth with the islands of the Pacific' ... testifying to the permanence of Australia's strategic interests in the pattern of islands that punctuate the approaches to our island continent, and to the enduring challenges that Australia faces in upholding those interests in such small, remote, complex and socially fragile lands.<sup>16</sup>

The result was an Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade-led mission, police-heavy but with ADF support. Importantly, it had the blessing of the Pacific Regional Forum, and went at the invitation of the Solomon Islands Government. The mission had a tri-fold imperative to restore law and justice, and to improve both economic governance and the machinery of government.

The economic governance pillar was aimed at restoring government finances and promoting economic reform to generate growth. The machinery of government pillar was aimed at rebuilding core institutions of the state, including accountability institutions, such as the public ombudsman. The law and justice pillar was about removing the firearms and enforcing strong penalties for the possession of firearms after an initial amnesty, and rebuilding the police, justice and corrections structures and systems.

RAMSI was considered a turning point in Australian foreign policy—a policy which was not afraid to intervene with armed force in the Pacific, and to do so with the machinery not just of Defence but in a whole-of-government manner.<sup>17</sup> Originally intended to last only a few months, with one garrison staying up to 12 months, RAMSI will be 13 years old in 2016, and 14 when due to depart in 2017.<sup>18</sup> It has also come at an estimated financial cost to Australia of at least \$2.6 billion, the vast majority being expended on the law and justice pillar.<sup>19</sup>

An obvious question is whether this effort and cost has been effective in restoring enduring peace and stability to Solomon Islands. The answer is ‘possibly’. However, in addition to sentiments expressed to the author during field research in the Solomons in October 2014, repeated surveys in Solomon Islands indicate that Solomon Islanders have a strong belief that RAMSI’s presence, albeit now significantly scaled back, is the only reason the country has not collapsed back into conflict.<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, there are efforts to disavow this perception. One is the imminent re-armament of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force in preparation for taking back responsibility for maintaining rule of law. This is a particularly sensitive issue, given that the Solomon Islands police were so instrumental in perpetrating violence during the tensions.

## **Firearms, law and order**

A key component of the restoration of law and justice pillar was the removal of firearms from the militias, reflecting Prime Minister Howard’s determined message that ‘the time for guns is over’.<sup>21</sup> It was also clearly and publicly articulated by the first head of RAMSI, Nick Warner, that the removal of ‘armed thugs’ from the streets of Honiara was a RAMSI priority.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, in commenting on the policing lead in RAMSI, then Assistant Commissioner Ben McDevitt contended in 2006 that:

Honiara was under the sway of armed criminal elements. In more remote areas ... self-proclaimed warlords and thugs with guns created no-go zones where they committed horrific crimes at will. These groups were largely unopposed by an almost totally ineffective police force.<sup>23</sup>

Repeatedly since, the Australian Government has cited the looting and distribution of firearms in Solomon Islands as a key reason for Australia’s commitments to small arms control.<sup>24</sup> The academic literature is also unapologetic in the link between even minimal numbers of these weapons and insecurity. In particular, David Capie noted in 2003 that ‘[t]he collapse of the Solomon Islands ... shows how quickly the uncontrolled circulation of a small number of weapons can reduce a country to near anarchy’.<sup>25</sup>

Acknowledging the source of the weapons, however, is critical. Leakage—involving the loss, sale or pilfering of official or legal stocks from within the country—rather than gun trafficking, is the most significant source of illicit small arms in the Pacific. Philip Alpers and Conor Twyford, for example, note that:

Small arms stolen or otherwise obtained from security force armouries have featured prominently in all three conflicts in Fiji, the Solomon Islands, and Bougainville. Indeed, in each of these conflicts, access to state armouries—often with the complicity or open support of the security forces—has been pivotal.<sup>26</sup>

Alpers and Twyford further point out that access to poorly-secured armouries has not only resulted in the misuse and negative effects as attributed to small arms elsewhere but that illicit small arms have been

'instrumental in undermining democratic institutions in the Pacific'.<sup>27</sup> Commentators believe that as many as 3500 weapons, many taken from the police and from police armouries, were in circulation during tensions in the Solomon Islands.<sup>28</sup> Alpers and Twyford also found that hand-made or craft-produced firearms comprised almost three-quarters of the weapons handed in during the Townsville Peace Agreement amnesty.<sup>29</sup> Such weapons are identified as being particularly significant in the Pacific, with Capie noting that 'in ... the Solomons, home-made weapons present a serious threat to the rule of law and to human security'.<sup>30</sup>

The supply and demand of firearms were unquestionably significant during the tensions, and have been given prominence in the purpose and practice of RAMSI. An important issue, therefore, is the likelihood of loose, stockpiled or potential firearms, including those craft-produced, presaging a return to conflict, as many Solomon Islanders fear, and a potential trigger for the return of Australia as regional keeper of the peace.

### ***Keeping guns off the streets***

There can be little doubt that one major success of the policing component of RAMSI, the Participating Police Force, has been in the removal and deterrence of illicit firearms and ammunition ownership and use. RAMSI's gun amnesties were adhered to because they were not optional, and were enforced with significant penalties of up to 10 years in prison or a substantial US\$3500 fine for being in possession of a weapon.<sup>31</sup>

Sabrina Pfiffner and Heather Sutton argue that Solomon Islands gun-free zones, mostly signposted as 'weapons free villages', were a success not only due to RAMSI dealing swiftly with all illegal firearms but also because of local leadership, community participation including signage, and the non-partisan National Peace Council that implemented and monitored them.<sup>32</sup> The role of women, who stigmatised the unlawful possession of weapons, was also seen as highly influential.<sup>33</sup>

These factors, in association with the work of RAMSI, successfully increased the social costs of the acquisition and use of weapons. The previous demand was mostly group pressure to acquire firearms due to ethnic differences, grievances and lack of faith in the government. However, under RAMSI, it was successfully replaced by norms that vilified firearms. This is because both supply and demand were addressed by the RAMSI intervention, which in turn gave the population faith in RAMSI.<sup>34</sup> The danger, however, is the dependency this has created on RAMSI, particularly the Participating Police Force, in keeping the Solomon Islands relatively firearms-free.

During fieldwork undertaken by the author in 2014, there were many anecdotes and much hearsay about firearms being stockpiled and fired, yet there was no evidence to substantiate these claims.<sup>35</sup> While some 200 police weapons remain unaccounted for, repeated interviewees shared doubts that any tensions-era weaponry that was still loose would be useable.<sup>36</sup> Very occasional firearms use has been noted over recent years, with allegedly 14 reports of firearms being used between 2003 and August 2015.<sup>37</sup> One of the few credible reports was an ATM robbery in Honiara in mid-2014, although the firearm and its user were not located.<sup>38</sup> An indicator of the lack of firearms was also said to be the increased crocodile infestation in Solomon Islands since RAMSI's arrival.<sup>39</sup>

Of greater concern, however, was the shooting of a boat being used by political candidates on Mbike Island in central Malaita in December 2014. While the alleged intention was to incapacitate the boat so that the candidates could not return to vote in the Prime Ministerial election the next day, the alleged perpetrator—an employee of a company owned by a north Malaitan politician—has been charged with firearms offences and attempted murder, although the police investigation is continuing.<sup>40</sup> What firearm was used, and where it and the related ammunition came from, has not been made public.

Prior to this incident, concern had been raised that the most likely demand for small arms in the Solomon Islands would be from political actors, which is somewhat validated by the Mbike Island shooting.<sup>41</sup> Some succour, however, could be taken from the public outcry, and pressure from Pacific neighbours, when in 2007 the previous Solomon Islands' Prime Minister attempted to create an armed palace guard to be trained in Taiwan, sufficient that the idea was abandoned.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, with a number of former militants now present-day parliamentarians, the risk of politicians or aspiring politicians creating a

private militia, similar to that created by East Timor's former Interior Minister Rogerio Lobato in 2006, remains a real concern.<sup>43</sup>

A constant over many years has been the assertion that firearms traverse the maritime border between Solomon Islands and Bougainville with relative ease. However, it is quite feasible that demand oscillates depending on factors on each side of the border, and that firearms actually go back and forth across this border rather than stream in one direction. Demand in the Southern Highlands of PNG, for example, is seemingly stronger than in Solomon Islands at this point in time, and it would seem more feasible that small arms from Bougainville transit PNG from east to west than flow south and east into Solomon Islands.

The recent interdiction in the northern Solomon Islands of armed PNG police—allegedly following Bougainville criminals into Solomon Islands territory, and Participating Police Force officers disarming them of their weapons—while possibly one rare case, does indicate that the border in this area is at least partially patrolled and that national laws are being enforced.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, yachts transiting the Pacific have reportedly had firearms seized when they arrive in Solomon Islands, notwithstanding that their owners claim they were intended only to be used for protection at sea.<sup>45</sup>

The considerable pilfering of explosive material from the easily-accessible World War 2 unexploded ordnance site at Hells Point, near Honiara, remains an issue. Elsewhere, children routinely collect World War 2 remnants to sell to tourists as souvenirs. It is reassuring that there is no evidence of explosive material currently being re-used to make small arms ammunition. It is, however, used to make explosives for fishing. Home-made grenades, comprising scavenged explosive packed into a plastic water bottle, are ignited and thrown into the sea, allowing for easy collection of killed fish floating to the surface. Three such grenades were allegedly sold in the local market in October 2014 for approximately A\$80, although there is no evidence that they or similar devices have been used for other than fishing.<sup>46</sup> The weapons that are sighted in crime and disputes are more commonly bush knives, and craft-produced projectiles, the latter including sharpened bolts and screwdrivers destructive enough to pierce metal.<sup>47</sup>

Despite the imminent partial rearming of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force with lethal rounds, as an institution it is much less of a proliferation risk than it was at the start of the tensions. The combined efforts of its new Commissioner, increased armoury security, and the expansion and re-armament of three of its units, are being handled sensitively and consultatively. The three units to be armed are those involved in personal protection for dignitaries, police operating at international airports, and a response team to respond to civil disturbances. The recent recruiting effort to deliberately target potential police cadets from across the country also reflects an encouraging determination to diminish the traditional Malaitan dominance of the Police Force, which was a key vulnerability during the tensions.<sup>48</sup>

In terms of potential weapons proliferation, the risk remains that small arms could be shipped in and across Solomon Islands, most likely sourced from Bougainville. There are numerous small airstrips across Solomon Islands where light aircraft could land. Firearms could also be craft produced as they were during the tensions. Significant machine tool and construction machinery use by Solomon Islanders over the past decade could have developed the necessary knowledge and skills to manufacture small arms, as certainly occurred in PNG. The materials needed to manufacture them could also be easily shipped into harbours undetected. However, there have been no reports of any serious level of sophisticated or widespread ammunition or weapons production. Perhaps a curious indicator is that World War 2-related memorial brass plaques have been intact over the past decade, whereas earlier there were allegations of plaques being removed and melted to make bullet casings.

The strongest catalysts for firearms demand in Solomon Islands appear to be fourfold. First is RAMSI's scheduled departure by 2017. Second is opposition to the limited re-armament of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force. Third is the potential creation of politically-aligned militias. Fourth, there was the frequently heard refrain that the original causes of the tensions were never adequately dealt with, including Malaitan transmigration to Guadalcanal. If such demand generators can be met by supply, there is a serious danger of a return to pre-RAMSI anarchy in Solomon Islands. Fortunately, there is currently little appetite for this, and Australia would seem well placed to move the bilateral relationship into a new phase to ensure such a risk is mitigated.

## Australia and the future Solomon Islands

In 2017, RAMSI will leave Solomon Islands. It clearly should not do so only to return with RAMSI Mark 2. After such a commitment, which has not only been financial but has involved the professional commitment of Australian police, the ADF and civilian personnel for over a decade, Australia should be placing itself to support a sustainable, stable and secure post-RAMSI Solomon Islands.

However, at present, the relationship with Solomon Islands continues to be in one direction, from Australia as benefactor and Solomon Islands as recipient. Given the relatively-benign operating environment in Solomon Islands, it is disappointing, for example, that Australian container ships from Honiara return to Australia empty. Trade, and seasonal as well as permanent labour mobility, would greatly assist in developing the Solomon Islands' economy, and the latter would ease the frictions caused by internal migration.

Prior to RAMSI's departure, a friendship visit from the ADF might also be considered. This could be a naval visit, with a strong Indigenous component, such as patrolmen from NORFORCE and invited Indigenous officers throughout the ADF. The exercise could also involve a demonstration of unexploded ordnance clearance at Hells Point. That would enhance professional relationships and develop Indigenous links with Solomon Islanders. It is worth noting that in April 2015, Taiwan conducted its 13<sup>th</sup> naval visit to Solomon Islands since 1984.<sup>49</sup>

While Australia already conducts unexploded ordnance clearance in Solomon Islands under Operation RENDER SAFE, given the enormity of the task, unexploded ordnance will continue to pollute enormous areas of land and sea in the country for decades to come. In addition to RENDER SAFE, Australia might consider creating a Pacific Explosive Ordnance Disposal School to conduct unexploded ordnance risk education, which could assist in minimising the pilfering of unexploded ordnance and the potential for explosive devices to be used in civil disturbance.

Australia might also consider suggesting that prior to the partial re-armament of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force, the Participating Police Force could offer to conduct an audit of its less lethal stocks, such as bean bag rounds and pepper spray, to identify any weaknesses in stockpile management and to encourage accountability. The Royal Solomon Islands Police Force could also be encouraged to consider ways in which crocodile infestation could be reported and responded to quicker than at present.

The policing relationship between Australia and Solomon Islands is strong, and should continue to be supported. None of the suggestions in this article will be a panacea, nor will they take place in a vacuum. However, they may assist Solomon Islands and Australia to build a deeper, stronger, relationship, which clearly would be in the interests of both parties and for regional stability more broadly.

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## Notes

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- 2 Purportedly in the hundreds: see Matthew Allen, 'Contemporary Histories of the Conflict in Solomon Islands', *Oceania*, Vol. 76, No. 3, November 2006, p. 310.
- 3 Tarcisius Tara Kabutaulaka, 'Australian Foreign Policy and the RAMSI Intervention in Solomon Islands', *The Contemporary Pacific*, Vol. 17, No. 2, Fall 2005, p. 285.
- 4 Jon Fraenkel *et al.*, 'The RAMSI Decade: a review of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands, 2003-2013', *East West Center* [website], 14 July 2014, p. 15, available at <<http://pidp.eastwestcenter.org/pireport/2014/July/Independent%20RAMSI%20Review%20Report%20Final.pdf>> accessed 26 October 2015.
- 5 Kabutaulaka, 'Australian Foreign Policy and the RAMSI Intervention in Solomon Islands', pp. 285-6.
- 6 One thousand from Rove on Guadalcanal and 34 from Auki on Malaita respectively: see Philip Alpers and Conor Twyford, 'Small Arms in the Pacific', *Small Arms Survey* [website], March 2003, p. 90, available at <<http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/B-Occasional-papers/SAS-OP08-Pacific.pdf>> accessed 26 October 2015.
- 7 UN Security Council, 'The Townsville Peace Agreement', *UN* [website], available at <[http://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/SB\\_001015\\_TownsvillePeaceAgreement.pdf](http://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/SB_001015_TownsvillePeaceAgreement.pdf)> accessed 24 August 2015.
- 8 Elsinia Wainright *et al.*, 'Our Failing Neighbour: Australia and the future of Solomon Islands', Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI): Canberra, 2003, p. 23, available at <<https://www.aspi.org.au/publications/our-failing-neighbour-australia-and-the-future-of-solomon-islands/solomons.pdf>> accessed 26 October 2015.
- 9 Alexander Downer, 'Neighbours cannot be recolonised', *The Australian*, 8 January 2003.
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- 11 Wainright, 'Our Failing Neighbour'.
- 12 *The Economist*, 'The Pacific's First Failed State: special constables, special problems', *The Economist* [website], 13 February 2003, available at <<http://www.economist.com/node/1580220>> accessed 26 October 2015.
- 13 Bob Breen, 'The Good Neighbour: Australian peace support operations in the Pacific Islands 1980-2006', Vol. V, *The Official History of Australian Peacekeeping, Humanitarian and Post-Cold War Operations*, Cambridge University Press: Port Melbourne, forthcoming.
- 14 For explanations of why the Prime Minister decided to intervene against departmental advice, see Breen, 'The Good Neighbour'.
- 15 Howard, 'Solomon Islands speech'.
- 16 Hugh White, 'Director's Introduction', in Wainright, 'Our Failing Neighbour', p. 1.
- 17 Allan Gyngell and Michael Wesley, 'Case Study: The Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands', in Allan Gyngell and Michael Wesley (eds.), *Making Australian Foreign Policy*, 2nd Edition, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2007, p. 227.
- 18 Privately, Downer and Howard acknowledged the intervention could last a decade: see John Braithwaite *et al.*, 'Chapter 5. Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands', in John Braithwaite *et al.*, *Pillars and Shadows: statebuilding as peacebuilding in Solomon Islands*, ANU E Press: Canberra, 2010.
- 19 Jenny Hayward Jones, 'Australia's costly investment in Solomon Islands: the lessons of RAMSI', Lowy Institute for International Policy: Sydney, May 2014.
- 20 Fraenkel, 'The RAMSI Decade', p. 91.
- 21 Howard, 'Solomon Islands speech'.
- 22 For example, Craig Skehan and Geoff Kitney, 'PM's warning to Pacific thugs', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 July 2003.
- 23 Ben Mc Devitt, 'Operation Helpem Fren: a personal perspective', *Australian Army Journal*, Vol. 3, No 2, 2006, p. 66.

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- 26 Alpers and Twyford, 'Small Arms in the Pacific', p. 24.
- 27 Alpers and Twyford, 'Small Arms in the Pacific', p. 29.
- 28 Alpers and Twyford, 'Small Arms in the Pacific', p. 90; Robert Muggah, 'Diagnosing Demand: assessing the motivates and means for firearms acquisition in the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea', *State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Discussion Paper*, 2004/7, Australian National University: Canberra, 2004, p. 5.
- 29 Alpers and Twyford, 'Small Arms in the Pacific', p. 25.
- 30 Capie, *Under the Gun*, p. 121.
- 31 Muggah, 'Diagnosing Demand', p. 6.
- 32 Sabrina Pfiffner and Heather Sutton, 'The Gun-Free Zone: a tool to prevent and reduce armed violence', UN Office on Drugs and Crime Occasional Papers No. 25, *UN Office on Drugs and Crime* [website], December 2013, pp. 20 and 24-6, available at <<https://www.unodc.org/documents/ungass2016//Contributions/UN/UNODA/Gunfreezones.pdf>> accessed 26 October 2015.
- 33 Muggah, 'Diagnosing Demand', p. 8.
- 34 Graduate Institute of International Studies, *Small Arms Survey Yearbook 2006: unfinished business*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2006, pp. 9 and 17.
- 35 Not only on land but sealed in pipes hidden under water: personal communications, Solomon Islands, 8-10 October 2014.
- 36 Personal communications, Solomon Islands, 8-12 October 2014; also Fraenkel surmises that from a 'minimalist perspective', success included that most firearms were removed or rendered unusable: Fraenkel, 'The RAMSI Decade', p. 89.
- 37 Personal communications, Solomon Islands, 8 October 2014; Australia, 20 July 2015.
- 38 Assumpta Buchanan, 'Alleged robbers deny charges', *Solomon Star*, 26 March 2015.
- 39 Personal communication, 9 October 2014.
- 40 See for example, Phillip Lilomo, 'More resources put into Mbike Island shooting probe', *Island Sun*, 9 March 2015.
- 41 For example, personal communication, Solomon Islands, 9 October 2014.
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- 43 See Stephanie Koorey, "'Orphans" and Icons: small arms control and armed groups in Southeast Asia', doctoral thesis, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, ANU: Canberra, 2008, p. 175, available at <<https://digitalcollections.anu.edu.au/bitstream/1885/7183/2/Koorey02whole.pdf>> accessed 15 June 2015.
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- 45 Personal communication, Solomon Islands, 8 October 2014.
- 46 Personal communication, Solomon Islands, 14 October 2014. A bush knife costs around A\$10.
- 47 Personal communications, Solomon Islands, 8-10 October 2014.



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