



**SUBMISSION BY ACTING COMMISSIONER PETER MARSHALL OF THE SOLOMON
ISLANDS POLICE FORCE**

**FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE
NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF THE SOLOMON ISLANDS
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In all democracies, a good and capable Police Force is the core to good governance. Parliaments make laws for the peace, order and good governance of a society but a Police Force is constitutionally and legislatively mandated to actually enforce those laws and preserve that state of peace. In accordance with this mandate, the mission of the Solomon Islands Police Force (SIPF) is to work with the community for a safe, peaceful and prosperous Solomon Islands. An efficient and effective Police Force is absolutely necessary for national security, peace and stability in the nation. Most assessments of the SIPF in the years leading to and including the period known as the ethnic tensions determined that as a body the SIPF failed to live up to its mandate. Indeed, in many assessments, it was determined that the failings of the SIPF actually contributed to the situation that led to the invitation to regional governments to form the RAMSI. In saying this, I would like to acknowledge the fact that during these dark days there were many individual members of the SIPF who acted bravely and were loyal to their oath of office. This is the SIPF that we are currently working hard with our RAMSI-PPF colleagues to rebuild.

The SIPF is a national body with 1069 established posts and a very broad mandate. The SIPF provides the policing, national security and defence, and fire fighting capacity for the Solomon Islands. The SIPF is the nation's only organised body capable of meeting the range of community policing, crime prevention and detection, border protection and civil defence requirements. The SIPF is also one of the most geographically spread government agencies being located in every province with over 30 police stations outside Honiara. For all these reasons, the SIPF is fundamental to the long term political, economic and domestic stability, prosperity and future of Solomon Islands.

The SIPF is a complex body and therefore the work to be done in rebuilding the SIPF is beset with complexity. I believe it may assist this committee if I start out by giving you some idea of the extent and scale of activity presently underway to address the needs of the SIPF. The SIPF is taking the necessary measures to continue to professionalize and better resource policing in the Solomon Islands to match internationally recognised, sustainable and appropriate standards. To do this, the SIPF, together with valuable RAMSI-PPF assistance, is working to strengthen law and order in this country, to continue to implement the SIPF capability plan and program, to promote community policing particularly in rural areas, and support police stations in strategic locations in the Provinces.

With the support of the Government and PPF advisors, the SIPF has committed itself to a range of projects to achieve its policy goals for the Police Force. As part of the

Government's commitment to providing for the peace and security needs of Solomon Islanders, issues of SIPF infrastructure, housing, equipment and training are being addressed. As all Solomon Islanders would be aware, the needs are great and unfortunately are beyond the capacity of the Government to address on its own.

The SIPF welcomes, indeed requires, ongoing assistance from the donor community in many areas of need, not the least of which includes addressing the housing situation facing our police officers. Already one RAMSI partner, New Zealand, has acknowledged this housing need with the New Zealand Prime Minister, Helen Clark, announcing at the recent PIF meeting, a significant contribution in this area.

Despite the extent of need, initiatives are well underway in the area of infrastructure and housing. At present, a new Police, Customs, Immigration and Quarantine Station at Kulitanai Bay in the Shortland Islands is being completed and will soon be operational to replace the police station at Korovou. This will provide a valuable combined agency presence in the border region with Papua New Guinea's Bougainville Autonomous Region. Police housing in Naha, Atori and Malu'u is being repaired or replaced. Work has commenced to repair barracks in Yandina. Plans are well advanced for housing to be constructed in Gizo and Auki. And work is well advanced on new police housing and a new police station at Marau Sound, Guadalcanal Province, to replace housing and the police station lost during the ethnic tension. There is also much ongoing work being undertaken to help maintain the existing housing stock around the Provinces.

An effective and efficient Police Force is not just about buildings however. It is the members of the Police Force who will lead its recovery and reformation into the Police Force that the Solomon Islanders need and justly demand. In conjunction with the Australian Federal Police and the Australian Institute of Police Management, a five year leadership development program has been put in place to help develop the future leaders of the SIPF. The recruit training program has been reviewed and the Police Academy has been refurbished, with generous assistance from the PPF, to provide local training for local police members to enable them to provide the police services required by the people of this nation.

The Police Force is also keen to build a capability within the SIPF to meet the operational risk requirement to capably respond to situations of serious crime, corruption investigations, trans-national crime, border security, maritime patrols, urban violence, riots and large scale civil disorder. Already much work has been done to build capability within the Force and I look forward to more growth in this area.

The Fire Service of the Solomon Islands is an important integral part of the SIPF. Work is being done to finalise the site for a new Fire Station in Gizo to house the fire truck provided by the Australian Government and also complete the new Fire Station in Auki. Further, planning is being progressed to further develop the urban fire service capability in Honiara and this should lead to a submission seeking to commence work on a new Fire Service HQ.

Preventing crime is a priority of the Police Force. The Police Force will continue work to establish community policing and the prevention of crime as a key priority. Yet the prevention of crime is not just a role for the Police Force. Everyone in the

Solomon Islands has a role to play in making Solomon Islands a safe, peaceful and prosperous nation. The Police Force will work with the community to establish local crime prevention committees that will use their local links and community contacts to maintain peace and good order across the nation and in particular in our remote villages.

The SIPF are also working with Government to establish a Solomon Islands National Crime Prevention Council with the role of bringing all members of our diverse communities together in the prevention of crime. The good work of the many organisations – the Police Force, the other Government agencies especially the Solomon Islands DPP, the Attorney General, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children Affairs, and the non-Government sector including the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary and Save the Children Australia – will be enhanced by a cooperative working together in preventing crime and helping our youth at risk. The Solomon Islands National Crime Prevention Council will provide this coordination and cooperative working environment.

No doubt people will be interested to establish what has worked during the time RAMSI-PPF have been working with the SIPF. However, the true measure of success is about the sustainability of what is presently being done and managing the expectations of what is in fact sustainable. I believe that the question is not what is currently working well but what will continue to work well after the support of RAMSI-PPF is withdrawn or is drawn down. To that end, I am keen to continue to establish in conjunction with our RAMSI-PPF partners performance measures which inculcate into the SIPF the need to perform independently to expected standards of conduct and capability.

Finally, I would like to reinforce the SIPF's commitment to work with the PPF and the donor countries in building a professional, capable and operationally independent Police Force that all Solomon Islanders are proud of. The SIPF acknowledges its neighbours who have so far committed so much to RAMSI and the nation. We will continue to work with these neighbours to identify future strategies for the Police Force that addresses as yet unanswered questions about the future police, security and defence needs of the Solomon Islands.

It is my assessment that the situation within the SIPF and its capability is the product of a measured and appropriate set of responses over the last five years. It is my assessment that whilst there have been significant gains in capability but that much is still to be done in accordance with plans agreed between the Solomon Islands Government and its RAMSI partners.

I have attempted to make the point that there is a lot of work to be done building the Police Force into one that this nation wants and needs. At present, the SIPF gets most, if not nearly all its assistance in this task of rebuilding from the PPF. The PPF also provides significant operational assistance and comfort to the SIPF. I believe that the provisions of the Facilitation of International Assistance Act make it possible for the PPF to be in this nation hence, by extension, the assistance provided in rebuilding the SIPF and this operational assistance is a product of the provisions of this Act. Simply put, this would have to be found elsewhere if the PPF was to be withdrawn for

any reason. This would be an enormous loss for the people and nation of the Solomon Islands.



Peter Marshall

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18 September 2008