

The RAMSI Legacy for Policing in the Pacific Region



Research report
January 2018

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

Acronym	Title
AFP	Australian Federal Police
ANU	Australian National University
CPP	Close Personal Protection
CTF	Combined Task Force
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DPA	Department of Pacific Affairs
ECP	Enhanced Cooperation Program
FIA	Facilitation of International Assistance
FSM	Federated States of Micronesia
GBR	Guadalcanal Beach Resort
GLF	Guadalcanal Liberation Front
GRA	Guadalcanal Revolutionary Army
IDG	International Deployment Group
IFM	Isatabu Freedom Movement
IPMT	International Peace Monitoring Team
MEF	Malaita Eagle Force
NZ	New Zealand
PDT	Pre-Deployment Training
PFF	Police Field Force
PIC	Pacific Islands Country
PICC	Pacific Islands Contingent Commander
PICP	Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police
PMG	Peace Monitoring Group
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PPDVP	Pacific Prevention of Domestic Violence Programme
PPF	Participating Police Force
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands
RPNGC	Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary
RSIPF	Royal Solomon Islands Police Force
SIG	Solomon Islands Government
STAR	Special Task and Rescue
TCU	Transnational Crime Unit
TPA	Townsville Peace Agreement
UN	United Nations
WAN	Women's Advisory Network



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The project

For the past 14 years, approximately one-fifth of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) Participating Police Force (PPF) has comprised police from 13 Pacific Island countries, referred to as the Pacific Islands contingent. As RAMSI was drawing to a close, it was timely to assess the impact of their involvement on police and policing in the region. Supported by the Australian Federal Police (AFP), the research project was undertaken in 2017 by a team from the Australian National University's Department of Pacific Affairs.

This report draws from more than 100 interviews with key stakeholders and former Pacific Islands contingent members, and a short written survey of 37 former Pacific Islands contingent members. The focus was on the views and experiences of Pacific Islands contingent members concerning the impact of their deployment on them individually, their home police organisations and policing in the region.

Context

In response to fighting within ethnic and regional groupings, RAMSI was formed in 2003 as a regional and cooperative intervention at the invitation of the Solomon Islands government, and under the auspices of the Pacific Islands Forum Biketawa Declaration. Primarily funded by Australia, it was a police-led mission that was supported as required by armed peacekeepers. Key priorities for the PPF were restoring law and order, the integrity and the capacity of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) and community confidence in national policing.

Throughout RAMSI's 14-year tenure (2003-2017), contingent members from 13 Pacific Island countries deployed to the Solomon Islands, although the numbers dropped off in the second half of RAMSI in line with a decline in the overall size of the PPF. The PPF withdrew from frontline policing as a more stable operating environment was established and its focus switched to capacity building. RAMSI concluded in June 2017.

The contribution of the Pacific Islands contingent

The experiences and impact of RAMSI on individual Pacific Islands contingent officers differed according to three main factors: the timing of their deployment, their policing experience, and their home country and policing organisation. In particular, the very different home contexts in which police officers operate, and the size, culture and capabilities of their force all affected what they could contribute, what they learned and how they could apply their experiences in their home countries.

Pacific Islands contingent members often took a leadership role in reassuring and communicating with communities affected by the Tensions. They also made valuable contributions to other forms of policing including investigations, arrests, and domestic violence and public disorder incidents. They assessed their main contribution as:

- » providing culturally sensitive communications with communities
- » supporting and building the confidence of RSIPF members, especially new recruits

- » modelling professional standards and practices to RSIPF members
- » acting as critical intermediaries by 'translating' across language and cultural differences in support of Australian and New Zealand police.

Impact on professional and personal development

Pacific Islands contingent officers highlighted their appreciation of the pre-deployment training at Majura and the skills they gained.

In relation to their operational experience, responses were more mixed and depended on their prior experience, their postings and the timing of the deployment. Professional benefits were identified as increased performance standards and skills acquisition, such as driving, criminal investigations and close personal protection. Personal benefits included enhanced learning and self-confidence, as well as financial gains.

The post-deployment experience from a professional point of view was less satisfying for many interviewees because they were returning home to different and often challenging police environments compared with what they experienced in the Solomon Islands. Most commented that there was no debriefing either before leaving Solomon Islands or on return to their home organisations. There was also little assistance for re-integration into their home force and communities.

Organisational change and learning

Many factors influenced the impact on Pacific Island police forces, not least the huge variation in force size and professionalism. The advantages of RAMSI participation were most noticeable in smaller police forces, some of which adopted new standard operating procedures training modules, and forged stronger ties with regional police organisations such as the AFP.

RAMSI's contribution to regional policing was more often raised by the most senior officials, including former RAMSI leaders and current Pacific Islands Police Commissioners. Among those highlighted were RAMSI's contribution to:

- » enabling and supporting regional policing cooperation, including in community engagement, women's empowerment and gender awareness, and complex investigations
- » building the capacity of Pacific Island police forces to deliver training in the region
- » strengthening regional 'identity' among Pacific police forces and highlighting the benefits of collaboration across the region.
- » increasing engagement and involvement in regional networks, for example ongoing contact through the Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police (PICP) Women's Advisory Network, and the Pacific network of Transnational Crime Units (TCUs).

Lessons and recommendations

The benefits of the PPF experience for the Pacific region and its policing forces have been cumulative and diffuse, and have provided a base on which to build bilateral initiatives. The direct experience of working together and forging personal relationships have enhanced the potential for region-wide programs, elevated policing standards and built capacity.

Sustaining the benefits following the return of members to their home forces remains a significant challenge, and could have been more aggressively and strategically pursued through post-deployment initiatives and network building.

As well as RAMSI's acknowledged contribution to restoring law and order to Solomon Islands, the mission also had positive multiplier impacts on policing throughout the region. Follow-up is needed post-RAMSI to sustain gains both within Solomon Islands and throughout the region.

Based on the research, the project's recommendations relate primarily to lessons learnt for future large multi-country deployments in the region. These include active engagement of Pacific Island police in the design, preparation and management of such missions, as well as more specific measures to assist effective understanding and collaborative learning among members of the mission. The recommendations will be refined in a workshop and incorporated into a policy-relevant paper that draws on the project's conclusions.





INTRODUCTION

Four Vanuatu police officers paid for their trip out of their own pockets to attend the end of RAMSI celebrations in June 2017. Their willingness to pay their own fares illustrates how important the experience of participating in RAMSI was for many Pacific Islander police.

The establishment and impact of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) has been well documented, particularly from an Australian point of view. Less has been said about the Pacific Island countries (PICs) that made a significant contribution to RAMSI, particularly in respect to its policing and military components. The largest numbers of Pacific Islanders who deployed to Solomon Islands were police officers.

Although the size of the multinational police force varied over the past 14 years — from a total of 310 members in 2003, a rise to 325 in 2007, and a steady decline over the past 10 years to 92 in 2016–17 — the proportion of personnel from different parts of the region remained fairly consistent. The majority were Australians and New Zealanders, but on average almost one-fifth of the PPF were from 13 PICs, who formed part of what is known as the Pacific Islands contingent (see Box 1 for more detail).

This short introductory chapter presents a summary of the research project, including its objectives, the key research questions, and a brief overview of the approach and methods.

Project objectives

Funded by the Australian Federal Police (AFP) and supported by the Pacific Islands Forum and the Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police (PICP), the research project commenced at the end of 2016. With RAMSI ending in mid-2017 it was seen as a good time to review its effect and impact on the individual members of the Pacific Islands contingent police, their home police organisations, and, broadly, on regional policing. The research had two main goals. Firstly, to capture and describe the experiences and views of Pacific Islands contingent members and, secondly, to provide a more strategic and analytical assessment of the lessons learnt from this multi-country police-led mission.

The project was guided by several interlinked key questions:

- » What are the lessons learned from RAMSI about the deployment of a multi-country police operation in the Pacific?
- » How has RAMSI affected individual members of the Pacific Islands contingent and their policing practices?
- » What are the lessons learned from RAMSI about the role of women officers in the PPF, and, in particular, the prevention of community violence and violence against women?
- » How has the RAMSI experience affected the quality and integrity of Pacific Island policing and police forces?

- » How has RAMSI affected the degree and quality of relationships among police forces in the region?
- » How can the RAMSI experience be consolidated and built upon to enhance future connectivity between Pacific police?

Box 1: Composition of the Pacific Islands contingent

- » A total of 13 PICs have contributed to the Pacific Islands contingent — Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu, Niue, Tuvalu and the Federated States of Micronesia.
- » The overall size of the contingent fluctuated in line with that of the PPF as a whole, for example 40 deployed in 2011 and 17 in 2015.
- » Individual deployments of contingent members varied in length from six months initially to one year. Longer deployments, of more than a year, became more common during the second half of the mission.
- » The number of officers from each country varied depending on the overall size of PPF at the time, the size of the country's police force and the numbers that particular forces could release from domestic duties. The size of police organisations contributing to the Pacific Islands contingent ranged from PNG with an estimated staff of more than 6800 in 2016 to Niue which had only 15 (see Chapter Two).
- » During the second half of RAMSI, the largest numbers of contingent members were from Tonga, Samoa, PNG and Vanuatu. Countries with smaller police forces, however, tended to have a higher proportion of their members serving in RAMSI and consequently their participation often had a greater impact on these forces.
- » Most contingent members were male. Between 2010 and 2016, only 16 per cent of members were female. There is considerable variation in the proportion of female members in Pacific Island police forces, ranging from 7 to 38 per cent. Overall, the percentage of female police has been rising steadily.

Approach and methods

Undertaken by a team from the Department of Pacific Affairs (DPA, formerly the State, Society and Governance in Melanesia program) at the Australian National University (ANU) with expertise and experience in policing, aid and security in the region, six months of primary research was completed by August 2017. The research was approved by the ANU's human research ethics committee. A Reference Group comprising representatives of the AFP, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the ANU research team also met several times and was a useful forum for feedback and practical assistance during the project. The AFP, in particular, provided invaluable assistance, including background documents, advice on key contacts in Australia and the region, and comments on draft material.

The project's first phase involved reviewing RAMSI-related documents, particularly those dealing with the PPF, as well as the scholarly literature on RAMSI and Pacific Island policing. Key research instruments, including interview schedules and a questionnaire, were developed and trialled during this phase. The final versions of the interview schedules, questionnaire and participant information sheet are available from the authors.

The bulk of the research was conducted in the second phase. A total of 105 stakeholders were interviewed, mainly through face-to-face interviews, complemented by several group discussions. Due to time and financial constraints, it was not possible to visit each of the 15 countries that deployed police to Solomon Islands, so an online questionnaire was used to supplement face-to-face interviews. While there were 19 PIC participants in the survey, not all of the questions asked were answered. Despite the relatively low participation rate, the survey was useful in confirming recurring themes that emerged during the interviews. Where the questionnaire was completed as part of an interview, the answers were added to the online survey. As a result, the total number of questionnaires completed was 37. In the report, the results for this larger group of survey respondents are cited.

In total, 11 countries were represented in the interview and survey samples, including Australia and New Zealand.

The research was primarily aimed at eliciting the views of Pacific Islands contingent members. However, it was also complemented by interviews with a range of other stakeholders, mainly senior police officers and RAMSI executives, including former PPF Commanders and Special Coordinators.

Table 1 summarises the different groups and individuals that were interviewed or who participated in the survey. They are classified according to their country of origin and gender, and divided into two groups — key stakeholders and former Pacific Islands contingent members. Almost half of the 27 interviews conducted with key stakeholders were with Australians, while 78 were with former Pacific Islands contingent members in six PICs — Fiji, Kiribati, PNG, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu. Table 2 summarises the country of origin and gender of the participants in the online survey.

A good cross-section of key stakeholders and former Pacific Islands contingent members participated in the project. As the next chapter describes, we only have limited data on the size and composition of the contingents that were deployed from the PICs to Solomon Islands. Gender, country of origin and year of deployment were the main variables considered to ensure a reasonable cross-section. Police from nine of the 13 Pacific Islands contingent countries participated. Twenty-three per cent of the former Pacific Islands contingent members who were interviewed were female. Interviews were conducted with individuals who had deployed at different times during the 14-year-long mission, with a reasonable distribution across its various phases (see Chapter Two). An estimated 30 per cent of the former members of the Pacific Islands contingent interviewed were deployed during the period 2003–05, 26 per cent during 2006–08, 26 per cent during 2009–13 and 15 per cent during 2013–17.

Table 1: Country of origin and gender of interviewees

Country of origin	Male	Female	Total
Key stakeholders			
Australian key stakeholders	11	2	13
NZ key stakeholders	2	0	2
PIC key stakeholders	9	0	9
Solomon Islands' police	1	2	3
SUB-TOTAL	23	4	27
Former Pacific Islands contingent members			
Fiji	10	5	15
Kiribati	9	4	13
PNG	7	4	11
Samoa	17	2	19
Tonga	9	3	12
Vanuatu	8	0	8
SUB-TOTAL	60	18	78
TOTAL	83	22	105

Table 2: Country of origin and gender of on-line survey participants

Country of origin	Male	Female	Total
FSM	5	0	5
Marshall Islands	2	0	2
Niue	1	0	1
Tonga	0	1	1
Vanuatu	6	0	6
TOTAL	14	1	15*

* Note: Four participants did not answer this question; total n=19.

Source: Online survey of ex-PPF members, 2017.

Limitations

All research has some limitations. In this project, the most significant drawbacks or potential biases relate to not having been able to interview a robust sample of former Pacific Islands contingent members in all of the PICs, including those who were no longer serving in their country's police forces.¹ We could only invite serving police to participate, and for some of these their deployment was many years in the past. We nevertheless believe that the range of views elicited in the interviews conducted allow us to convey the significance and impact of the RAMSI deployment for many of those who participated.

Report outline

The report represents a synthesis of the research material, including information provided by the AFP, interviews, and survey results. Excerpts from interviews or interview notes are used to illustrate the points made in the report, and where relevant, survey results are included. The main findings are clustered under key themes in the third and fourth chapters, and summarised in the final chapter.

The next chapter sets the scene and describes the significant contextual factors that helped guide the conduct and interpretation of the research. It provides an overview of RAMSI and the PPF, including the composition of the Pacific Islands contingent. The events that led up to RAMSI's arrival are described before more detail is provided on the origins and organisation of RAMSI. The police-led character of RAMSI is discussed, as are the various phases of the mission and the changing role of the PPF, with the broad shift from executive policing to capacity development and eventual drawdown. A final section looks at the Pacific Islands contingent with a view to conveying the diversity among the 13 police organisations that comprised it.

Chapter Three focuses on the experiences and roles of the Pacific Islands contingent members. This chapter presents the views of the Pacific Islands contingent members on what they experienced during their RAMSI deployment, the roles they played, and effects on their professional development. There are five main sections: pre-deployment selection and preparation; police leadership and community engagement; gender equality in policing; family and sexual violence, and professional and personal deployment benefits. This chapter concentrates on roles, relationships and professional development.

Chapter Four canvasses the impacts of RAMSI on the police forces of contributing countries, including the experiences of Pacific Island PPF members after their return home, police organisational development and networks, and police cooperation in the region more generally.

Chapter Five provides a summary of the main conclusions under each of the key research questions. A short set of recommendations were developed on the basis of these conclusions and will form the basis of workshop discussions and a policy-relevant paper.



SOLOMON ISLANDS CONTEXT: CONFLICT AND INTERVENTION

Introduction

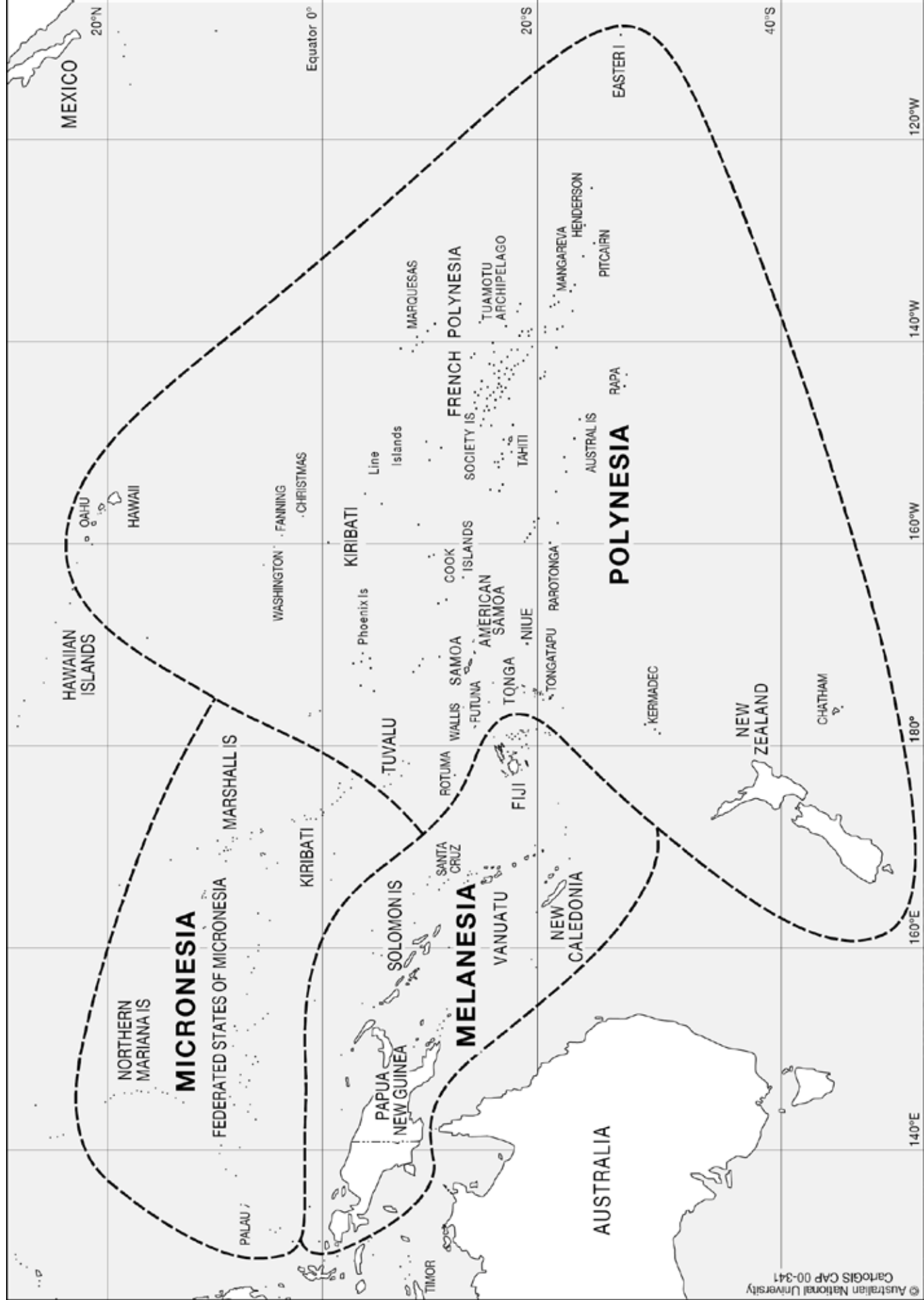
This chapter provides an overview of the broader context to RAMSI and the work of the mission's Participating Police Force (PPF), including members of the Pacific Islands contingent. Understanding Solomon Islands' recent history — including its key social, economic and political characteristics — is critical to appreciating the particular security and development challenges it faces as a young and relatively fragile nation, and the local context to RAMSI's work over the past 14 years.

The first section provides a short review of the country's colonial history and development since it was granted independence from Britain in 1978. This includes reference to the high level of normative and legal pluralism found in Solomon Islands society, as with its Melanesian neighbours in Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu. Alongside the institutions of the modern state, community norms and local forms of social organisation continue to exert a significant influence in everyday life, including the management of disputes and provision of security. Local identities and allegiances remain strong, while national institutions are relatively weak, as compounded by a small population dispersed across a fragmented archipelago. Outstanding development challenges remain, including meeting the social and economic expectations of a youthful and growing population in a rapidly globalising region.

Section two covers the internal conflict or Tensions period and its evolution over the five years before RAMSI's arrival, morphing from an interethnic conflict between two island groups to a generalised breakdown of government and law and order. This included the effective collapse of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF), with some elements implicated in serious crime and violence, and a resulting loss of public confidence and trust in the police. The following section looks at the origins and organisation of RAMSI, including the decision to intervene, the legal foundations of the mission and its mandate, its leadership and main components, and the three broad pillars around which its development work was organised. The police-led character of RAMSI is discussed, as are the various phases of the mission and the changing role of the PPF and members of the Pacific Islands contingent, with the broad shift from executive policing to capacity development and final drawdown.

A final section looks at the Pacific Islands contingent with a view to conveying the diversity among the 13 police organisations that comprised it. Variations between these forces relate to their respective sizes and that of their national populations, differences in their home policing environments and governing legislation, relationships with other police organisations and previous experiences of regional and international deployments. A number of tables convey the make-up of the Pacific Island contingent during the mission, including in terms of the gender of participating officers.

MAP OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS REGION



Solomon Islands

Solomon Islands consist of a double chain of six large islands and several hundred smaller ones, lying 1800 kilometres off Australia's north-eastern coast. The country shares similar levels of sociolinguistic diversity to those of its Melanesian neighbours, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu. Around 70 distinct languages are spoken among a population of around 650,000 that is widely dispersed throughout the country. Administered as a British protectorate from 1893, Solomon Islands became independent in 1978. Prior to colonial annexation, the archipelago comprised a patchwork of small, self-regulating societies scattered across the islands. Subsistence agriculture and fishing were combined with extensive trading networks in some areas. Warfare and raiding were commonplace in many parts, as were elaborate processes of peacemaking. Patterns of leadership included the ascribed status of individual big-men in some places, hereditary chiefs in others, and, often, a combination of both. Bonds of kinship, shared language and ties to ancestral land, along with moral frameworks drawing on customary beliefs and practices, provided the basis for social ordering in these small-scale societies.

Colonial authorities viewed the diversity of local social orders and the absence of centralised institutions as evidence that local societies lacked organised systems of governance or law, thereby necessitating the importation of external systems. A small armed constabulary, with European officers and 'native' police, was an important instrument of colonial pacification and administration. While a rudimentary court system was introduced, most local disputes continued to be managed through customary approaches that viewed disputation as embedded in complex patterns of social relations. Christianity, as promulgated by the churches and missions, had a significant influence on local beliefs and regulatory practices, often reinforcing older restorative approaches to disputation. The modestly resourced colonial administration adopted the British model of indirect rule involving pragmatic accommodation with local forms of authority. The resulting hybrid arrangements included the appointment of district and village headmen, and other village-based officials, as intermediaries between the colonial government and local social orders.

Decolonisation and eventual independence in 1978 entailed the establishment of a modern system of centralised government. Solomon Islands' fragmented geography, social diversity, patrimonial politics and small economy have presented considerable challenges to processes of state consolidation in the decades since. While Honiara is growing rapidly, around 80 per cent of the population reside in rural areas and many citizens have difficulties accessing government services, including policing and law and justice. Minor disputes and daily security needs continue to be managed informally at local levels in most rural, and some urban, communities, with little resort to government agencies. The prevalence and variety of these local approaches to security and justice are documented in research undertaken on behalf of the Solomon Islands' Ministry of Justice and Legal affairs (Allen et al. 2013). Three broad and overlapping systems of rules were identified, distinguished by the different sources of authority upon which each is primarily based, namely state, church and *kastom*. The same research revealed how these local approaches have come under increasing stress in light of broader processes of social and economic change. Newer forms of contestation have emerged that these local approaches struggle to manage.

Although inevitably challenged by the country's widely dispersed population and archipelagic topography, the RSIPF performed adequately as a small and largely urban-based police organisation for most of the post-independence period. Prior to the crisis in the late 1990s, there were relatively few major law and

order challenges, unlike in, for example, Papua New Guinea. While there were growing problems of corruption, by and large, criminal violence and public order were not significant concerns in Honiara and other urban centres, while neo-traditional forms of authority and leadership appeared to manage everyday dispute resolution and security needs in most rural areas. Some international assistance had been provided to the RSIPF, including an in-country training project supported by the Australian aid program in the early 1990s.

The causes of the crisis or 'tension', as it became known locally, are complex and contested (Allen 2013; Fraenkel 2004; Moore 2004). Solomon Islands' small formal economy — logging, fishing and, increasingly, mining — has failed to match the needs and expectations of its fast-growing and youthful population. Spatial inequalities associated with long standing patterns of uneven development encouraged internal migration from less developed regions to areas offering better economic prospects and access to services. Migration from the densely populated island of Malaita to Honiara and adjacent areas in rural Guadalcanal served to accentuate cultural differences between 'settlers' and indigenous groups. Local resentments were directed at the perceived monopolisation of employment and other opportunities by Malaitans, as well at their involvement in land transactions viewed as contrary to Guadalcanal custom. These grievances were most acutely felt among the inhabitants of the remote and poorly developed southern Weather Coast and it was mainly young men from that area who started the attacks that heralded the beginnings of the Tensions.

The Tensions

In late 1998, groups of young Guadalcanal men, initially calling themselves the Guadalcanal Revolutionary Army (GRA) and later the Isatabu Freedom Movement (IFM), began a violent campaign of harassment and intimidation directed at, mainly Malaitan, settlers. Around 35,000 settlers were forcibly evicted from their homes in rural Guadalcanal and peri-urban areas surrounding Honiara. These developments prompted the formation of a rival militia, the Malaita Eagle Force (MEF), claiming to represent the interests of displaced Malaitans. The MEF had close ties with elements of the Malaitan-dominated RSIPF, including the paramilitary Police Field Force (PFF). The PFF had evolved from a police mobile field unit established in the 1960s to undertake patrols to remote areas and which also doubled as a riot squad to respond to urban disturbances. In the absence of a defence force, the PFF provided an armed capability for dealing with situations that the general police were neither equipped nor trained to manage. Regular incursions across Solomon Islands' maritime border by members of the PNG Defence Force in pursuit of Bougainvillean rebels occurred during the decade-long Bougainville conflict (1988-1997). These prompted the Mamaloni government to establish another special police unit — the National Reconnaissance and Surveillance Force, which was tasked with border patrolling, offshore surveillance, remote area policing and reinforcement of general duties policing. Most of the armed police operations against Guadalcanal militants during the early days of the Tensions were undertaken by members of a largely untrained Rapid Response Unit, set up in 1997 and made up of officers from various police units, including the PFF and an armed Special Prison Task Force (Amnesty International 2000:11). These units subsequently regrouped as the Special Task and Rescue (STAR) division, working closely with the MEF, and acquiring a notoriety for brutality and alleged human rights abuses (Amnesty International 2004:52).

The ethnic imbalance in its membership contributed to the fracturing of the RSIPF. In 1999, it was estimated that around 75 per cent of the approximately 897 members of the police came from Malaita (SIG 1999). As

the security situation deteriorated, many non-Malaitan officers left their posts in Guadalcanal and returned to their home provinces or villages. The gradual collapse of the RSIPF as a professional and neutral law enforcement organisation, and the complicity of some of its members in serious acts of criminal violence, led to a profound loss of public confidence and trust in the police. It also left the beleaguered Solomon Islands government with no effective law and order capacity in the face of a rapidly deteriorating security situation. Several agreements between militant factions were brokered by a Commonwealth envoy, while a small unarmed Multinational Police Peace Monitoring Group, initially comprising 20 officers from Fiji and Vanuatu, arrived to monitor the surrender of weapons. However, these efforts achieved little in the face of escalating Guadalcanal militancy and growing Malaitan frustration over the government's failure to restore order. Commercial enterprises in Honiara and adjoining areas gradually ceased operations, while many foreign residents departed in the face of mounting insecurity.

On 5 June 2000, the MEF and elements of the PFF seized control of key installations in Honiara, including the national armoury and the stockpile of high powered firearms and ammunition that had been acquired during the Bougainville Crisis to bolster border security. The incumbent prime minister was forced to resign at gunpoint. Following this de facto coup, acts of intimidation and reprisals against civilians increased in the national capital. A 'Joint Operation' between the MEF and elements of the police controlled the national capital, which had by then become a Malaitan enclave, as well as launching attacks against suspected IFM positions, using an Australian-donated patrol boat to shell positions on the eastern shoreline. Armed skirmishes occurred between the rival militia groups on the outskirts of the capital. Police officers were implicated in serious human rights abuses, including murder, sexual assault, torture and other serious acts of intimidation (Amnesty International 2000). Around 200 conflict-related fatalities occurred during the Tensions.

Renewed efforts by Australia and New Zealand to broker peace between the rival militias culminated in the Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) in October 2000. Under its terms, police who had deserted or participated in militant activities were eligible to return to the RSIPF without fear of sanctions. A general amnesty would take effect once all weapons and ammunition had been surrendered within a 30-day period under the supervision of an unarmed International Peace Monitoring Team (IPMT) and a local Peace Monitoring Council. The IPMT comprised personnel drawn from Australian and New Zealand police and defence forces, civilian government departments, as well as from several Pacific Islands police forces including Vanuatu, Cook Islands and Tonga (Hegarty 2001). Former combatants were to be repatriated to their home villages and provided with counselling and rehabilitation services. The TPA also sought to address broader grievances including, for example, calling for constitutional reform to allow for greater provincial autonomy; an investigation of land acquisition and property claims on Guadalcanal; the provision of compensation for lost and damaged property; and acceptance of the 1999 Guadalcanal demands.

While ending the spectre of an all-out ethnic war, the TPA failed to provide the basis for a sustainable peace process, seriously over-estimating the capacity of the Solomon Islands government to implement its provisions. The IPMT was an unarmed monitoring body rather than an enforcement mechanism and few high-powered weapons were surrendered. Allowing seriously compromised officers to remain in the RSIPF accentuated the organisation's internal divisions, as well as sustaining the massive loss in public trust and confidence. Members of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army were reported to be providing security in Choiseul and Western provinces. Government attempts to absorb ex-militants into the police

as 'special constables' also proved to be profoundly counterproductive. By the end of 2001, around 2000 special constables had been appointed (representing twice the size of the RSIPF's authorised establishment in 1999). With many retaining access to illegal weapons, these individuals became an additional source of insecurity and criminality, and a further drain on rapidly diminishing public funds.

The Solomon Islands crisis entered a new and distinct phase following the TPA, with conflict between ethnic militias displaced by fighting within ethnic and regional groupings, opportunistic criminality and the corruption of compensation processes pursued in the name of peacemaking. These developments were facilitated by the absence of a functioning policing organisation and, consequently, high levels of impunity. The original militia groups began to fracture, particularly on the Guadalcanal side. A vicious feud among Weather Coast leaders in South Guadalcanal prompted another 'Joint Operation' comprising police, special constables and ex-militants in an attempt to capture Harold Keke, the maverick and increasingly homicidal leader of the breakaway Guadalcanal Liberation Front (GLF). Serious atrocities, including murder and rape, were committed by both Keke's group and those pursuing him. The repatriation of ex-militants to Malaita was accompanied by local outbreaks of criminal violence. A highly respected former police commissioner was assassinated in 2003. The alleged killer, a serving police officer, was arrested but subsequently escaped from Rove prison. In order to fund the insatiable demand for compensation payments, the weak and compromised Solomon Islands government negotiated a large commercial loan from Taiwan. Government coffers, by then largely dependent on periodic tranches from this loan, emptied rapidly in the face of extortion, theft and corruption.

An internal crisis that had initially been driven by historic grievances had become progressively captured by a relatively small group of ex-militants, corrupt leaders, shady business operators and outright criminals motivated primarily by greed. This situation, with the effective paralysis of government and complete breakdown of law and order, led many commentators to conclude that an external circuit breaker was the only realistic prospect for overcoming Solomon Islands' predicament and ensuring a sustainable recovery.

The origins of RAMSI

Decision to intervene

In June 2003, following a request for assistance from the Solomon Islands government led by Sir Allen Kemakeza, Australia agreed to finance a large stabilisation and recovery mission. Several earlier requests for international intervention had been declined and an approach to the UN in 2002 was abandoned after it became apparent that any Security Council vote was likely to be vetoed by China owing to Solomon Islands' diplomatic recognition of Taiwan (Ponzio 2005). Australia's decision to act on the 2003 request reflected a number of considerations. Concerns about instability in the so-called regional arc of instability had been growing following political upheavals in a number of Australia's near neighbours. These intensified and became increasingly security-focused following bombings in Bali and the 9/11 attacks against the United States in 2001 (Ayson 2007). The emergent 'war on terror' provided a new lens that linked instability and conflict in weak states to major regional and global security threats. Applying this lens to events in Solomon Islands, as did an influential Australian Strategic Policy Institute report in 2003, provided a compelling case for intervention aimed at both stabilisation and longer-term state-building (Wainwright 2003).

Legal foundations

Australian leadership of RAMSI was contingent on securing the consent of Solomon Islands' authorities and member states of the Pacific Islands Forum, comprising 16 independent or self-governing Pacific countries including Australia and New Zealand. Securing this support was critical to the legitimacy of the mission. The Forum's Biketawa Declaration on Mutual Assistance of 2000 provided specific grounds for regional intervention by allowing for collective action in response to a security crisis in a member state. This was the first time that the Biketawa Declaration had been invoked. On 4 July 2003, the Solomon Islands Governor-General formally requested assistance from the Australian government, while on 11 July the Solomon Islands Parliament unanimously passed the Facilitation of International Assistance Act 2003 (FIA Act), setting out the powers and immunities of mission personnel. Described as a form of 'cooperative intervention' by the then Australian foreign minister, RAMSI was to operate through Solomon Islands national laws and respect the island nation's sovereignty. Under the FIA Act, the Solomon Islands parliament was to review RAMSI annually and could terminate the mission by revoking its consent. The RAMSI Treaty was signed on 23 July, initially by representatives of six Pacific Islands Forum member states. It was subsequently signed by all remaining member states. The first security elements of the mission were deployed to Solomon Islands the following day, 24 July, seven weeks after Prime Minister Allen Kemakeza's request for assistance.

RAMSI's mandate

RAMSI's mandate was agreed between the Solomon Islands government and the Pacific Islands Forum countries. It sought to address outstanding challenges facing Solomon Islands, including civil unrest and lawlessness, economic decline and stagnation, and a dramatic deterioration in government standards. The mandate was outlined in the *Framework for Strengthened Assistance to Solomon Islands: Proposed Scope and Requirements*, which was endorsed by the Solomon Islands cabinet and parliament. Under the framework, RAMSI's mandate was to:

1. Restore civil order in Honiara and throughout the rest of the country, including confiscating illegal weapons, investigating and prosecuting new criminal offences, strengthening the courts and prison system and protecting key government ministries.
2. Stabilise government finances, including securing revenue collection and controlling expenditure, strengthening financial administrative safeguards and obtaining donor and international financial institutions' support.
3. Promote longer-term economic recovery and revive business confidence, including implementing economic reform, dealing with corruption and improving debt management.
4. Rebuild the machinery of government, including the functioning of the national parliament, the cabinet, the public service and the electoral process.

RAMSI's mandate around security and the maintenance of law and order is also provided for in Article 2 of the RAMSI Treaty, which states:

The Assisting Countries may deploy a Visiting Contingent of police forces, armed forces and other personnel to Solomon Islands to

assist in the provision of security and safety to persons and property; maintain supplies and services essential to the life of the Solomon Islands community; prevent and suppress violence, intimidation and crime; support and develop Solomon Islands institutions; and generally assist in the maintenance of law and order in Solomon Islands.

RAMSI leadership, organisation and the three program pillars

RAMSI's senior executive group comprised an Australian Special Coordinator, supported by a New Zealand Deputy Special Coordinator and a Pacific Island Assistant Special Coordinator, as well as the Commander of the Participating Police Force (PPF) and the Commander of the military contingent, the Combined Task Force (CTF), and the civilian head of the development program. Australian government departments represented in this group included Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Australian Federal Police, the Australian Defence Force, Australian Aid, as well as representation from the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The Commander of the PPF was also sworn in as Deputy Commissioner of the RSIPF (Article 5, section 2, RAMSI Treaty).

The CTF was initially much larger than mission planners hoped to need and was designed, in part, to persuade former militants to surrender and deter further acts of criminal violence. Its visible demonstration of overwhelming numbers and military capabilities was intended to have a 'shock and awe' effect upon potential spoilers, and, in this regard, it was spectacularly successful. The CTF was composed of military personnel mainly from Australia and New Zealand but also including contingents from the three Pacific Island countries with defence forces — PNG, Tonga and Fiji. Its size peaked at 1989 in the early months of the deployment and subsequently fell to around 60 soldiers in 2005–06, before rising again following the disturbances in Honiara in April 2006 (Fraenkel et al. 2014:34) and then falling again in subsequent years. The role of the CTF was primarily to support the PPF, by providing protection, logistics and transport support, as well as providing a Quick Reaction Force. The CTF was eventually stood down from 1 July 2013.

In addition to its security and policing work, RAMSI's state-building and development efforts were organised around three broad pillars:

1. *Law and Justice*: included some assistance to the police (such as police housing and station refurbishment) and a focus on strengthening the courts, prisons and public law offices.
2. *Economic Governance*: entailed fiscal stability and financial management, as well as economic reforms aimed at improving investor confidence and stimulating growth.
3. *Machinery of Government*: involved strengthening accountability mechanisms, electoral and civic education, and public service reform.

RAMSI's development programs began to be absorbed into Australian bilateral aid programs and the programs of other donors from mid-2013 leaving the PPF as the sole component of the mission during its final four years.

A police-led mission

From the outset, RAMSI was a police-led mission, with the PPF in the lead, rather than the military as was the case in most international peacekeeping interventions. The PPF was the key agency responsible for restoring security in Solomon Islands and for helping to rebuild the RSIPF. The Pacific Islands Forum described the mission as a 'police-led operation to restore law and order, supported as required by armed peacekeepers and assistance to strengthen the justice system and restore the economy and basic services' (34th Pacific Islands Forum Communique, 16 August 2003). The prominence of policing in RAMSI reflected broader international thinking about the importance of effective domestic security capabilities as a critical precondition for achieving long-term stability and development.

International policymakers have placed growing emphasis on the role of police in facilitating processes of rebuilding and recovery in conflict-affected areas of the world, moving away from the formerly exclusive reliance on military peacekeepers. Suitably trained civilian police are believed to be well positioned for such a task and more likely to win the confidence of traumatised populations than heavily armed military. The landmark Brahimi Report on UN Peace Operations in 2000 highlighted the critical role of civilian police and called on member states to establish more trained pools of civilian police that could contribute to international peacekeeping and reconstruction operations.

For many decades, Australia had provided police personnel to overseas peacekeeping missions, with members of the former ACT Police and Commonwealth Police (forerunners to the AFP) and state forces participating in UN missions as early as 1964. While these contributions were typically made to large multilateral UN missions, Australian police and soldiers had also been involved in several bilateral and regional engagements. Prior to RAMSI, this had included deployment to Bougainville. Members of the AFP had served in both the Truce Monitoring Group and the Peace Monitoring Group (PMG) during the Bougainville peace process. There were also AFP members of the IPMT on Solomon Islands from 2000 to 2002. Australian police also had a long history of providing what is now called capacity-building assistance to regional law enforcement agencies. This included extensive engagement with the PNG police dating back to the 1980s, as well as a variety of, mainly training, programs with other Pacific Islands countries in the years since. The establishment of the AFP's International Deployment Group (IDG) in early 2004, was a tangible Australian response to the message in the Brahimi Report, and was designed to enable the strategic deployment of police personnel undertaking international and regional peacekeeping operations and capacity-building initiatives. The IDG training facility at Majura in the Australian Capital Territory began to provide pre-deployment training for Australian police going on overseas missions. Members of RAMSI's Pacific Islands contingent also received their pre-deployment training at Majura after the facility commenced.

Different phases of the mission

While core elements of the work of the mission — codenamed Operation Helpem Fren — remained relatively constant throughout its 14 years, it is important to appreciate that the mission evolved and adapted considerably in response to changing circumstances, as well as reflecting learning on the part of mission managers. RAMSI's ability to adapt and learn has been highlighted in several reviews as one its notable strengths (Braithwaite et al. 2010:156–62; Fraenkel et al. 2014:22). While important as a way of documenting how the mission developed, the identification of different phases should not obscure the overlap between them in practice and the non-linear character of many aspects of RAMSI's work. This

included fairly regular shifting between executive policing and capacity development on the part of some elements of the PPF.

The following broad phases of the overall mission are taken from the recent joint report marking RAMSI's final drawdown in June 2017 (SIG/RAMSI 2017:27–28).

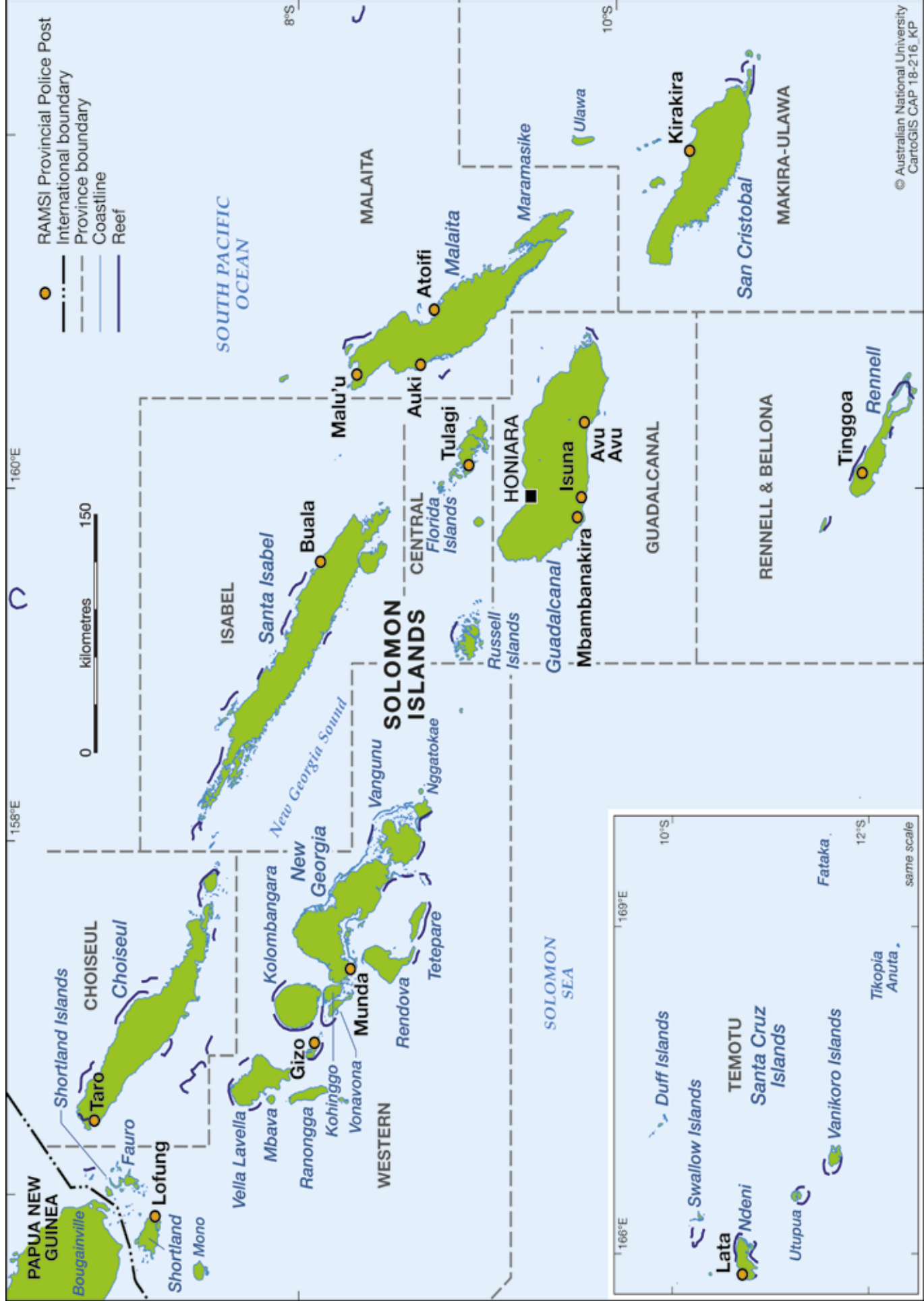
1. *Intervention and stabilisation (2003–04)*: law and order was restored quickly and government finances were stabilised. This phase included the surrender of the bulk of weapons and arrest of militant leaders. Government services restarted as public servants began to be paid again, and institutional strengthening began with the police, courts and prisons, as well as key central government agencies including the Ministry of Finance and the Treasury.
2. *Institutional strengthening (2004–05)*: RAMSI's priorities at this time were re-establishing the rule of law, restoring integrity to government finances, prison reform and progressing Tension-related trials. In 2005, RAMSI began to focus on strengthening the machinery of government.
3. *Capacity development amid political volatility (2006–08)*: RAMSI concentrated on institutional strengthening and capacity development against the backdrop of a major deterioration in bilateral relations between Honiara and Canberra. Serious unrest occurred in Honiara in April 2006 leading to extensive property damage and looting, mainly in the city's Chinatown. Police and military reinforcements helped restore order in the capital. The unrest followed the announcement of a new prime minister after national elections. As a result, a new government was installed with a different leader and he immediately began to push back against a number of key areas of RAMSI's reforms. This led to a period of political volatility and heated exchanges between senior political leaders in Australia and Solomon Islands, although the mission remained popular among most Solomon Islanders and its practical work continued apace. Changes of government in both countries ultimately led to a restoration in the bilateral relationship that was critical for RAMSI to fulfil its mandate.
4. *Re-energised partnership towards 'RAMSI's Transition' (2009–13)*: the 2009–13 Partnership Framework was designed to strengthen the cooperative partnership between the mission and the Solomon Islands government and advance RAMSI's capacity-development efforts. The framework identified shared objectives, targets and timeframes across the three main pillars. The targets were set to facilitate a conditions-based drawdown of RAMSI and the transition of support from the mission to bilateral development programs in the areas of law and justice, economic governance and machinery of government.
5. *Police development and drawdown (2013–17)*: RAMSI's remaining military contingent left in 2013 and the main development programs were transitioned to bilateral development partners. This left the mission as solely a police assistance mission from mid-2013. The PPF withdrew from 13 of its provincial bases and the RSIPF assumed responsibility for policing across the country. Mission assistance for the final two years focused on further developing the capacity and professionalism of the RSIPF, including through the rearmament of two specialist units. Policing assistance will continue following the final drawdown in mid-2017 through bilateral arrangements between the governments and police services in Solomon Islands, Australia and New Zealand.

Early successes - weapons disposal and the arrest and prosecution of former militants

Among RAMSI's most significant and applauded achievements, was the rapid and peaceful manner in which it helped restore security to the troubled Pacific Island nation. Joint PPF/RSIPF patrols were taking place on the streets of Honiara within hours of the mission's arrival, while RAMSI also quickly established itself in 16 police posts outside Honiara. These provincial police posts were located at:

- » Tulagi (Central)
- » Taro (Choiseul)
- » Avu Avu, Isuna, Mbambanakira and Tetere (Guadalcanal)
- » Buala (Isabel)
- » Kira Kira (Makira)
- » Ato'ifi, Auki and Malu'u (Malaita)
- » Tingoa (Rennel/Bellona)
- » Lata (Temotu)
- » Gizo, Munda and Lofung (Western).

Location of RAMSI Provincial Police Posts



Cleaning up the RSIPF

While the RSIPF was clearly a critical partner in restoring security, it was well understood that its ranks contained numerous individuals who had engaged in serious acts of corruption, intimidation and criminal violence. RAMSI, through the PPF, was mandated to work in cooperation with the Police Commissioner, [to] reform the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force, introducing expatriate police personnel into line positions, and providing increased resources” (National Parliament of Solomon Islands 2009, 22). Working alongside officers who might subsequently be investigated for major wrongdoing set up an interesting dynamic in the early phase of the mission. Ben McDevitt, the first PPF commander, mentions working as a deputy commissioner in the RSIPF alongside two other deputy commissioners who were being investigated and both of whom ended up being arrested and charged with serious offences (Interview #6; 2003-04).

One of the first tasks that was accomplished within weeks of RAMSI's arrival was the disbanding of the notorious STAR Division, which included the officers from the Police Field Force that had played a central role in the raids on the police armoury and de facto coup of June 2000. Remaining special constables were also quickly demobilised.

Identifying compromised officers involved a process of vetting, recertification and internal investigation of RSIPF personnel (Dinnen et al. 2006:98–99). The idea of ‘vetting-before-reform’ was based on the assumption that the organisation should be ‘thoroughly cleaned out’ in order that the reform process proceed with uncompromised officers. By February 2004, over 50 police officers, including the two deputy commissioners, had been arrested and charged with over 285 offences, including for serious crimes such as murder, robbery, assault, intimidation and corruption. By the end of the first year, more than 400 officers had resigned or been removed, amounting to more than one quarter of the entire workforce.² Even so many of the old guard, some with compromised policing records, remained.

Strategic leadership and the exercise of decision-making in this highly sensitive work was fairly closely controlled by a relatively small group of experienced Australian police officers with the requisite skills and training. Maintaining the utmost confidentiality was clearly critical to this task. Investigators used a variety of sources but relied mostly on witness testimony in determining decisions on prosecution and employment termination. Such work required striking a balance between a comprehensive root and branch institutional change and the need to retain sufficient numbers of experienced officers in middle and senior ranks to help train and lead newly recruited personnel, and provide some element of continuity in a context of profound transformation. While some members of the Pacific Islands contingent were involved in intelligence gathering and undertaking arrests, by and large they were not involved in critical strategic decisions around this process.

Internal disciplinary and accountability systems also had to be revitalised and strengthened and rigorous processes of merit-based recruitment developed to begin the process of refilling the depleted ranks of the RSIPF. On average, there were 70 new recruits per annum over the period 2003–2013. Around 63 per cent of the membership of the RSIPF at the time of RAMSI's deployment in mid-2003 had left the organisation by mid-2013 (Fraenkel et al. 2014:37). By the time the mission approached its final drawdown in 2017, almost two-thirds of the RSIPF membership comprised officers who had been recruited after the commencement of the mission.

Capacity development

The switch from executive policing to capacity development of the RSIPF was an incremental and non-linear shift in practice, with elements of the PPF moving between operational and advisory roles in accordance with changing needs and circumstances. The hollowing out of the RSIPF resulting from the cleaning-up phase required PPF officers to continue to supplement operational capacity in various areas.

Capacity development is an intrinsically difficult and imprecise endeavour. Whereas the earlier operational phases of the police-led mission produced quick and quantifiable outcomes in the form of arrests, weapons surrendered and prosecutions, capacity development is a more opaque process and inherently hard to measure. The slow and uneven progress of this work, by no means unique to RAMSI, also reflected the low starting base presented by a police organisation that had effectively collapsed and which faced a massive loss in public confidence. Compounding this was the gradual process of recruiting and training new personnel, as well as the debilitating effects of lingering divisions in the organisation deriving from the Tensions (Braithwaite et al. 2010:59).

The shift to capacity development presented particular challenges to members of the PPF, as to all international police-capacity developers. Instead of the proactive problem-solving approach employed in their home policing environment and in their earlier operational role in the mission, they were now expected to stand back and mentor local officers in how to do the job. PPF officers were also presented with what some observers describe as the police-building paradox, namely having to choose between performing their mentoring role or actually getting the job done when their RSIPF counterparts experienced difficulties, with the temptation to do the work themselves often proving overwhelming (Harris 2010:94–95, Braithwaite et al. 2010:60). The distribution of capacity development skills among PPF officers has also varied and in the early days there was little focus on this area in either pre-deployment training or recruitment processes. At that time, the priority was as much about securing the required number of PPF personnel as on finding people with the right skills set. Establishing effective relationships between international and local police was also affected by the relatively short postings of PPF officers in the early stages, with RSIPF counterparts regularly facing uncertainty about the skills of the next adviser.

While by no means as fraught as in large UN missions, the situation was also complicated by the fact that the PPF came from different countries, and in the case of Australia from different police jurisdictions, with their own procedures and systems. Linguistic and cultural differences presented challenges to many PPF members who were not from the Pacific Islands police forces, particularly in the case of those working in rural outposts. Pacific Islands police, who shared a broad cultural affinity, generally proved more adept at communicating and interacting with Solomon Islanders, whether fellow police officers or members of the community. Many of these issues were recognised and resulted in the adaptation of training and recruitment processes as the mission evolved. For example, pre-deployment training was extended and more coverage given to mission-specific matters, including cultural awareness and basic language training, as well as attention to the task of capacity development. Rotations were also extended for certain positions, while considerable work went into developing more effective strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation.

Disparities in the resources available to the PPF and RSIPF, and in their respective conditions of service, contributed to the perception of two separate police forces for much of the mission's duration. While the reality of two separate police forces was necessary in the initial phases of the mission owing to the tasks of

restoring law and order and cleaning up the RSIPF, it later became increasingly counterproductive as the focus switched to empowering the RSIPF to resume full responsibility for policing. The early success of the PPF in its operational role as executive police served to demonstrate the effectiveness of the mission police while inadvertently highlighting the ineffectiveness of the local police organisation by comparison (Dinnen and Allen 2013). This was confirmed in various Peoples Surveys, as well as an independent review of the PPF commissioned by RAMSI which found that:

‘The impact which this perception of the two “forces” then had on the community was similarly stark with their perception that the RSIPF was less efficient, less competent and less trustworthy than the PPF officers’

(Independent Review of PPF 2009:31).

It was not really until after the 2010 national elections that the PPF began to seriously focus on the strategic development of the RSIPF and the transferring of responsibility for frontline policing, which occurred in Honiara in 2011 and across the country from 2013. Areas covered by capacity development included: leadership, general duties, community policing, family violence, maritime policing, investigations, fire and rescue, emergency and disaster response, learning and development, and corporate support. Cross-cutting themes included: governance, accountability, responsibility, discipline and gender equality. The focus on capacity development in the second part of the mission was also accompanied by a gradually more selective approach to requisite skills sets on the part of PPF officers, including members of the Pacific Islands contingent, allowing for a better match between the skills and experiences of individual advisers and their deployment roles.

Transition and drawdown

In 2011 the PPF, in partnership with the RSIPF, developed the RAMSI PPF Transition Strategy 2011–13 with the aim of withdrawing from everyday policing and shifting the focus towards capacity development. During this time, the PPF withdrew from all but two provincial posts, reduced its frontline policing in Honiara, and commenced a series of intensive training programs with the RSIPF to enable them to assume full responsibility in policing. This process was continued under the PPF Drawdown Strategy 2013–17 which guided the graduated reduction in the PPF's operational and resourcing footprint, including in the number of PPF advisers in the mission. Components of the Drawdown Strategy included training and support focused on public order management, operational safety training and limited rearmament of the RSIPF, as well as support to governance and high-level leadership training.

Complete control of policing was handed back to the RSIPF with the formal ending of the mission in June 2017. Continuing assistance will be provided to the RSIPF post-RAMSI under bilateral arrangements with the governments of Australia and New Zealand, the AFP and the New Zealand Police.

The Pacific Islands contingent

While the bulk of PPF membership comprised officers from the AFP, it also included members from several Australian state forces, as well as police from New Zealand and from another 13 Pacific Island countries. PPF from the Pacific Islands countries (other than New Zealand) were known as the Pacific Islands contingent. The size of the PPF started at around 310 in 2003, rising slightly after the 2006 disturbances in Honiara, and then declining steadily over subsequent years. On average, 70 per cent of the PPF have been Australian officers, mainly from the AFP, while 11.8 per cent have come from New Zealand and 18.2 per cent from the Pacific Island countries (Fraenkel et al. 2014:36–37). Article 5 of the RAMSI Treaty bestowed executive policing authority to PPF officers. At their height, the PPF comprised around one fifth of the RSIPF (Peake and Brown 2005:523).

There has been a tendency in some of the RAMSI documentation and related literature to treat the Pacific Islands contingent as a single and homogenous body of police. However, the reality was very different with considerable variation in the size, experience and proficiency of the different policing organisations making up the contingent. This diversity reflects that of the broader Pacific Islands region. One obvious source of variation is in the size of the different countries, including in terms of their overall populations and that of their domestic police organisations (see Tables 3 and 4).

Table 3: Pacific Island populations and size of police organisations

Country	Population*	Year	Police organisation (2016)**
Cook Islands	14,974	(2011)	113
Federated States of Micronesia (FSM)	102,843	(2010)	266
Fiji	837,271	(2007)	3968
Kiribati	109,693	(2015)	570
Marshall Islands	53,158	(2011)	194
Nauru	10,084	(2011)	103
Niue	1611	(2011)	15
Palau	17,661	(2015)	141
Papua New Guinea	7,059,653	(2011)	6822
Samoa	187,820	(2011)	671
Tonga	103,252	(2011)	410
Tuvalu	10,782	(2012)	101
Vanuatu	234,023	(2009)	675

* Source: Population estimates based on data from identified census year. Taken from Pacific Community website: <https://prism.spc.int/regional-data-and-tools/population-statistics/169-pacific-island-populations>.

** Source: Unpublished data provided by the AFP, February 2017.

Table 4: Police to population ratios, 2006

Country	Police: population ratio
Federated States of Micronesia	1:616
Fiji	1:321
Kiribati	1:326
Marshall Islands	1:354
Papua New Guinea	1:1423
Samoa	1:383
Solomon Islands	1:497
Tonga	1:317
Vanuatu	1:452

Source: Police to Population Ratios — Pacific Neighbours. Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police Secretariat, Wellington, New Zealand, 14 October 2009. Smaller police services in the region are not represented in these figures as the variation in the data does not provide a sound foundation for analysis.

Papua New Guinea remains the regional giant with by far the largest population and a police force of around 7000 personnel. If PNG is removed from the picture, the other countries are essentially micro-states with small populations and police forces.

Different kinds of policing challenges are faced in the different Pacific Islands countries. More complex law and order environments tend to be found in the larger countries, with bigger populations, more challenging geographies and higher levels of social and ethnic differentiation. The Melanesian countries — the most populous in the region — have experienced more serious internal problems of insecurity and instability than their smaller Micronesian and Polynesian counterparts, although differences in size and scale are obviously not the only factors at work. In addition to Solomon Islands' Tensions period, Fiji has experienced successive bouts of political instability, while Vanuatu has also suffered from political instability and periodic urban disturbances. PNG had the decade-long Bougainville Crisis as well as facing major law and order problems throughout most its post-independence history that have severely tested its small and under-resourced police force.

For members of some of the smaller forces from countries with relatively low levels of crime and insecurity, deployment to Solomon Islands with its recent violent past was likely to have been a much more daunting prospect than it was to colleagues from PNG. For some of the latter, Solomon Islands may well have appeared relatively peaceful compared to parts of their own country. A government review of the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary (RPNGC) published in 2004, a year into the RAMSI deployment, commented that "the present law and order situation in PNG, with everyday armed street violence and the threat posed by armed groups and clans, is much worse than the situation in the Solomon Islands which led to the intervention of the Regional Assistance Mission' (GoPNG 2004:3).

As well as operating in very different home environments, the various police organisations comprising the Pacific Islands contingent also have their own policing cultures and traditions, including legacies from their own colonial pasts or, in some cases, continuing associations with metropolitan countries in the case of the non-independent states. Without wishing to overstate such differences, different policing styles and

approaches among members of the contingent also reflected these longer histories of police development in the region. An important part of the richness of the RAMSI policing experience was in bringing these different policing traditions together in the service of restoring security to Solomon Islands.

Table 5: Political status of Pacific Islands contingent countries

Country	Political status	Pre-independence administrator
Cook Islands	Freely associated with New Zealand	
Federated States of Micronesia	Freely associated with the USA	
Fiji	Independent	Britain
Kiribati	Independent	Britain
Marshall Islands	Freely associated with the USA	
Nauru	Independent	Australia
Niue	Freely associated with New Zealand	
Palau	Freely associated with the USA	
Papua New Guinea	Independent	Australia
Samoa	Independent	New Zealand
Tonga	Independent	
Tuvalu	Independent	Britain
Vanuatu	Independent	France and Britain

Another source of differentiation between the Pacific Island police forces was their experience of service in other regional and international deployment prior to RAMSI. Relatively few had such experience, although the RAMSI experience appears to have whetted the appetite of many Pacific Islands officers for opportunities for future service on UN or other international police missions. The Fiji police, arguably the most proficient Pacific Islands police organisation, has the longest and most varied international police experience, having served on a number of UN peacekeeping operations. Figures from around 2004 indicate that approximately 830 Fijian police officers had served in 14 different international missions (PICP Secretariat 2005:3). Since then a small number of officers from Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu are believed to have also served in UN deployments. Prior to RAMSI, officers from Fiji, Vanuatu, Cook Islands and Tonga had also served with the short-lived Multinational Police Peace Monitoring Group in Solomon Islands in the early days of the Tensions and then, following the Townsville Peace Agreement, with the International Peace Monitoring Group. Police from Fiji and Vanuatu also served in Bougainville with the Truce Monitoring Group and then with the Peace Monitoring Group (Wehner and Denoon 2001).

Available figures for the number of officers who served in the Pacific Islands contingent only cover the period from 2010 to 2016. These figures are presented in the following tables.

Table 6: Pacific Islands contingent officers, country of origin 2010–16*

Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	TOTAL
Cook Islands	1	2	0	1	1	2	1	8
FSM	0	2	1	2	2	0	1	8
Fiji	0	4	2	3	2	2	0	13
Kiribati	0	4	2	0	1	2	0	9
Marshall Islands	2	2	1	2	1	0	1	9
Nauru	0	2	2	1	3	1	0	9
Niue	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	3
Palau	4	2	2	2		1	0	11
Papua New Guinea	8	4	2	2	1	2	0	19
Samoa	7	4	2	3	4	2	0	22
Tonga	7	6	2	3	3	2	2	25
Tuvalu	1	2	2	0	4**	0	0	9
Vanuatu	5	6	2	2	2	1	0	18
TOTAL	35	40	21	21	24	17	5	163

* Note: based on start date.

** Note: Two from Tuvalu are noted as having a previous deployment in 2012–13.

Source: AFP lists provided October 2016.

Table 7: Total number of Pacific Islands contingent officers, country of origin by gender, 2010-16

Country	Females	Males	TOTAL
Cook Islands	1	7	8
Federated States of Micronesia	0	8	8
Fiji	3	10	13
Kiribati	1	8	9
Marshall Islands	0	9	9
Nauru	0	9	9
Niue	1	2	3
Palau	1	10	11
Papua New Guinea	7	12	19
Samoa	1	21	22
Tonga	7	18	25
Tuvalu	1	8	9
Vanuatu	2	16	18
TOTAL	25	138	163

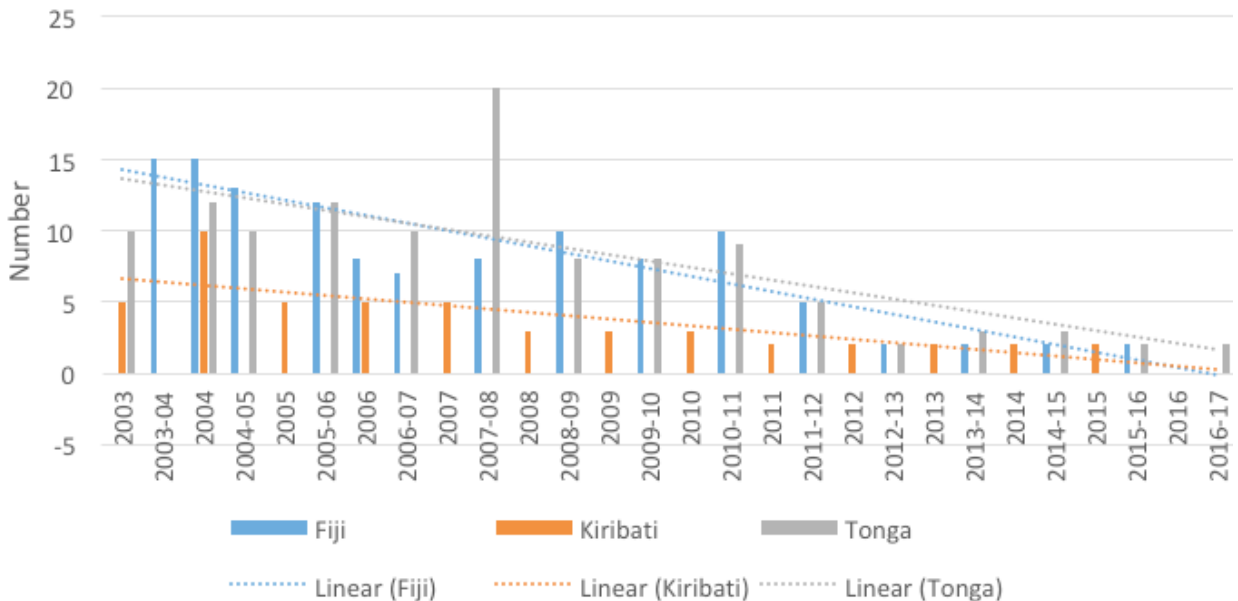
Source: AFP lists provided October 2016.

Some points arising from this data were already summarised in Box 1 in the first chapter, including that during the second half of RAMSI, the largest numbers of Pacific Islands contingent members were from Tonga, Samoa, PNG and Vanuatu. For the countries with smaller police forces, however, the proportion of their members that served in RAMSI tended to be much higher and consequently their participation had more ramifications for those forces. During the second half of RAMSI, from 2010 to 2016, the majority of Pacific Islands contingent members were male, with 16 percent of the members being female.

Data are available for the deployment of contingent members from Fiji, Kiribati and Tonga for the full 14 years of RAMSI's deployment (2003-2017). These also show the overall downward trend in the numbers deployed by Fiji, Kiribati and Tonga. Notably, for both Fiji and Tonga the numbers were reduced significantly from 2011-12 (see Figure 1).

Fiji sent a total of 119 officers over the 14 years, and the records indicate how the length of deployment lengthened over time. Initially they were deployed for seven months, this was extended to 10 months in 2004-05, and 13 months in 2006-07 before being reduced to 12 months in 2008-09. From 2013-14 there was more variability, with the last two officers being deployed for 20 months. Kiribati sent 15 contingents, totalling 49 officers of whom 43 completed the mission. Tonga sent 16 contingents comprising a total of 116 officers although 10 of these are recorded as being from the fire services or prisons. Out of the 116, seven are recorded as not completing the mission.

Figure 1: Numbers deployed, Fiji, Kiribati, Tonga, 2003 to 2017



Note: Between 2004-05 and 2007-08, the Tongan contingents included 10 personnel who were from the prison or fire services.

Sources: Unpublished data from the police forces of Fiji, Kiribati and Tonga.

Conclusion

Deploying such a substantial police-led mission, comprising so many different parts, and sustaining it for 14 years, was a major achievement for all those involved in the mission. There were significant logistical, technical and other issues involved in bringing together police personnel from so many different countries and backgrounds and coordinating their work in restoring security and rebuilding the local police force. The Solomon Islands context also brought its own distinct challenges. Rebuilding the police started from an extremely low base given the effective collapse of the RSIPF and the massive loss of public trust in the organisation.

While most aspects of RAMSI, including its policing dimension, have been documented in an extensive policy and academic literature, much of this has been written from the perspective of Australia and New Zealand, the region's leading metropolitan powers and the two largest contributors in terms of personnel, funding and other resources. Less has been said about or from the perspective of the members of the 13 Pacific Island police forces who comprised around one-fifth of the PPF and who made a significant contribution to the mission. In the chapters that follow we draw on interviews and discussions with members of the Pacific Island contingent, and other key stakeholders, to document their distinctive contribution and to consider the impacts of the RAMSI experience on individual Pacific Island officers, their home police organisations, and Pacific policing more broadly.



THE RAMSI PACIFIC ISLANDS CONTINGENT – ROLES AND EXPERIENCES

This chapter presents the views of the Pacific Islands contingent members on what they experienced during their RAMSI deployment, the roles they played, and the effects on their professional development. The views of contingent personnel have not been captured before and provide important insights into the RAMSI experience and its impacts. Clearly there were individual and country differences, mediated by the timing of deployments and the positions filled, but examining the range of individual experiences helps us gain a richer understanding of this multi-force deployment, and how its benefits might be built upon in future regional policing collaborations.

Our findings demonstrate the overwhelmingly positive experience of those who participated in the Pacific Islands contingent. Of those that answered the survey, 58 per cent rated the experience of working in the PPF as 'very good' and 35 per cent said it was 'good'. At the same time, the 78 officers who participated in our interviews were also able to reflect critically on their experiences and suggest areas where key issues, such as community engagement, building community trust, gender equity and professional development, could be enhanced.

This chapter is divided into six main sections dealing with the professional experience of members of the Pacific Islands contingent; their pre-deployment selection and preparation; approaches to policing and community engagement; policing partnerships; gender equity; domestic and family violence; and professional and personal deployment benefits. It concentrates on roles, relationships and professional development, while the chapter that follows will examine RAMSI's impacts on policing through a focus on organisational development and networks.

Pre-deployment selection and preparation

For most interviewees the deployment to Solomon Islands was the first time they had been overseas. A few officers from Fiji, PNG, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu had some overseas policing experience, either through United Nations missions or regional peacekeeping operations in places like Bougainville and Timor, or involvement in pre-RAMSI operations in Solomon Islands such as with the International Peace Monitoring Team. Those with prior experience often viewed their role in RAMSI as leaders and trainers, and assessed the mission's professional development benefits for themselves less highly than did their colleagues who were deploying for the first time. This is just one example of the considerable variation within the Pacific Islands contingent. Others, as we explore below, related to culture, language, skills and expectations.

Motivations to serve and the selection process

While the motivations for participating in RAMSI varied, survey responses indicated the most common were 'skills development' followed by 'helping another country', 'experience', 'money' and, finally, 'promotion'. In many of the smaller forces, the opportunity to work in a large operation with significant training opportunities was attractive. For many officers from Melanesian countries, as well those with relatives in Solomon Islands, there was a strong sense of wanting to help neighbours or *wantoks*, expressed as wanting to 'help another country' or 'brothers in need'. Many also acknowledged the incentive of additional pay and the opportunity to finance a better life for themselves, their families and communities. Different motivations behind participation influenced different assessments of the experience. Those with

aspirations to lead and mentor wanted positions that would allow them to do this. However, this was not always possible in a mission that was primarily focused on restoring security and stability to Solomon Islands, and building the capacity of the RSIPF.

The selection process for RAMSI service was largely left up to the sending police organisation. Most interviewees reported that the selection process involved putting in expressions of interest or applications that were then processed by a panel of senior executives. In some countries, past experience was a priority. For example, several Samoan interviewees said that they were chosen in the first phase of RAMSI because of previous deployments to East Timor. However, for most countries no such criteria existed as prior opportunities to serve overseas were not available. The variability of selection processes and the diversity of sending police forces with respect to capacity resulted in a wide range of police skill sets within the mission, adding to professional management challenges. On the other hand, the range of policing backgrounds and the small team policing approach contributed to a diverse and dynamic mission, with many interviewees commenting favourably on the learning-on-the-job environment.

In the latter phases of the mission, the PPF became more specific about what kind of skills they required from deployees, particularly for specialist areas, such as gender violence, close personal protection (CPP), or criminal investigation. Even so, the sending police forces retained the authority to decide who to deploy to RAMSI, and, in practice, the majority of contingent members were not selected to fill any particular positions. Interviews with a small number of RSIPF officers indicated that they appreciated the targeted skills selection in areas where they had low levels of experience. The mix of targeted and generalist positions in the final phases of the mission appears to have worked reasonably well, bringing needed skills to Solomon Islands, and except for where they were deployed to perform security duties at GBR, allowed sending countries to enhance the existing skills of their officers. The blend of targeted and generalist appointment meant that less experienced officers were not excluded from participating in RAMSI.

Pre-deployment training

Pre-deployment training in sending countries was not common. Few interviewees had done pre-deployment training in their home countries, with the exception of the more internationally experienced Fijians who reported they had completed several weeks at home before going to Australia. The Fijian training could be quite rigorous, but rewarding. For example, a Fijian female police officer said that the training in Fiji with the military was very tough but she got fit and built her professional skills. Her training involved navigation, camping, obstacles, running and rope climbing (Interview #36). Following exposure to RAMSI deployment requirements, some countries initiated pre-deployment preparation. For example, a PNG interviewee said he introduced some preparatory training in Port Moresby following his return from RAMSI, as some RPNGC officers came from the Highlands and could not swim or operate small boats. In response, additional PNG training appears to have occurred, including route marches (fitness and navigation) and small boat handling (Interview #45). However, in the few cases where sending countries developed their own pre-deployment training, it was generally not well coordinated with the pre-deployment training provided for all by the AFP at Majura.

Pre-deployment training conducted by the AFP in Australia was highly structured and specifically designed for international and regional deployments such as RAMSI. It was modified during the course of the mission and potentially provides a strong foundation on which to build more broadly-based training for regional

police forces. Prior to the establishment of AFP's International Deployment Group (IDG) and its dedicated training facilities at Majura, pre-deployment training for RAMSI entailed a few weeks in Queensland and was not as extensive as that developed in Canberra. The Canberra-based training lasted about a month, involved a range of exercises, and was required of all members of the Pacific Islands contingent (see Box 2). There were also opportunities to participate in some training during the deployment in Solomon Islands. For example, several interviewees referred to evening classes in Solomon Islands Pijin and firearms training for those working in the CPP.

The pre-deployment training conducted in Canberra was highly regarded by all interviewed. Although often described as 'tough', this training was reported as preparing them well for Solomon Islands, as well as conveying new skills not developed by home forces. For example, the realistic scenario exercises (including police responses to kidnapping, and civil and village-based conflict), self defence and use of force, and team and individual confidence building activities were regularly praised. Survey respondents when asked about specific pre-deployment training indicated that they most valued driving skills (78 per cent said it was very useful) and survival and safety skills (68 per cent said it was very useful). Of those interviewed who subsequently went on to UN peacekeeping missions, all said the Majura training in Canberra was excellent preparation for these missions as well, highlighting the wider applicability of the training.

Box 2: RAMSI pre-deployment training — an overview

The RAMSI pre-deployment training conducted at the AFP's Majura facilities in Canberra covered a broad range of policing and other skills. In brief, the main components included:

- » professional reporting standards
- » effective team work
- » core policing training modules drawn from UN specific training, for example fundamental principles of peacekeeping, conduct and discipline, and community-based policing
- » basic land navigation
- » survival and bushcraft skills
- » equipment use and management
- » four-wheel driving skills
- » remote first aid
- » work health and safety (including personal health and hygiene)
- » village scenarios, including situational awareness, remote first aid, capture and captivity, and vehicle checkpoints
- » cultural awareness (and in some cases an introduction to local language).

The practical hands-on training worked well with the PPF officers, with many claiming that the training was useful for both Solomon Islands and their home policing context. Most felt that the program laid a strong foundation for future training of regional police officers.

A Samoan police officer who was deployed to RAMSI in 2005–06 described components of the training and pre-deployment preparation, highlighting the unique training opportunity and the value of combining technical skills training, team building and situational awareness:

Some of the things that were new included terrestrial navigation, logistics of night patrols in the bush, and self-defence techniques. The attention to improving report writing, investigation procedures and four-wheel driving on very rough roads was also valuable. There were exercises to heighten mental and physical preparedness for ambushes and violent confrontations.

The medical checks earlier on were good. These checks found illnesses in a few Samoans, like diabetes — very common in the Pacific, and helped them to manage their illness. For some it was the first time they had a thorough medical examination and follow-up care.

They were given an overview of what they would be doing and their roles as police advisers with a responsibility to strengthen local police capacity. There was a little information on Solomon Islands culture and a few Pijin classes but most language learning occurred on the job.

(Interview notes, #64; 2005-06)

Our discussions about skills training led to one senior contingent officer emphasising the importance of laying strong foundations for policing in such diverse missions. His RAMSI experience taught him to never assume even the simplest policing skills are present — always test and look for the missing elements. To illustrate his point from our interviews, two areas were consistently praised by contingent members as providing new policing insights — ‘safety first’ and ‘bush survival skills’. Safety first may have seemed pedestrian to Australian police, but the details of why and how to put ‘safety first’ in policing were a revelation to many from the Pacific Islands who claimed it had a major influence on their professional practice.

Another area which apparently extended basic skills was bush survival training. While village environments were obviously familiar to most contingent members, safety and survival in a police operation is very different to ‘village business’ and many who underwent this training valued it highly. One officer explained that just because many Pacific Islanders grew up in the bush, it did not mean they had the skills required for night police operations in a rural area. This training added to confidence, effectiveness, and willingness to conduct evening patrols in the Solomon Islands and in the officers’ home environments.

Approaches to policing and community engagement

Most Pacific Islands contingent police who participated in the research project had many years of policing experience in their home countries, usually for at least 10 years prior to their deployment. By contrast, many of the RSIPF police were new or recent recruits following the substantial cleaning-up of their organisation (see Chapter Two). These RSIPF officers appreciated the contingent members' ability to apply their police experience, drawing on similar development and cultural contexts. They also appreciated their willingness to share knowledge which helped to support and rebuild the confidence of RSIPF members, and to offer models of professional standards and practices suitable to the Pacific Islands context. Contingent officers often gave examples of how they 'took the lead' in community interactions, modelled good community policing, and helped to engage communities and re-gain trust (see Box 3).

Box 3: 'Taking the lead' and rebuilding community confidence in policing

Former Pacific Islands contingent members gave examples of where they took on leadership roles in community interactions and assisted fellow RSIPF and PPF officers, usually as part of small teams based in police outposts. For example:

- » A male police officer from PNG, deployed in 2005–06, described how when he first arrived at his outpost local people were reluctant to come forward to police. He was able to reassure them and make them feel safer because he had the 'same culture and tradition and language' while for many non-Pacific PPF police it was 'quite difficult' because they lacked a common language and culture. He described 'taking the lead' in community visits with the RSIPF by talking with leaders, youth and churches groups which often resulted in useful intelligence including, for example, the whereabouts of one of the rebel leaders. (Interview #45; 2005-06)
- » A female police officer from Tonga, deployed in 2006–07, gave an example of how useful it was to be a Pacific Island woman. She was working in general duties in Honiara on night shift when she and others were called out to a domestic violence incident. When they arrived, the woman wouldn't open the door and told them to go away. The female police officer stepped forward and convinced her to open the door and work with them to solve the problem. The officer was of the view that the door would not have been opened if she had not intervened. Hearing from her voice that she was a woman and from another Pacific Island country, the female officer believed that the victim felt safe enough to let the rest of the police into her home. (Interview #50; 2006-07)

While Melanesian officers often highlighted the advantages they had in communicating with local people, especially when compared with Australian or New Zealand police, other Pacific Islands police still struggled with some aspects of community engagement because of the linguistic and cultural diversity in Solomon Islands. Very few if any from Polynesia and Micronesia spoke Pijin when they first arrived, and they had to work hard to learn the language. Those from Kiribati emphasised their dual challenge given limited English language capability as well as a lack of Pijin. Reflecting on their experiences, most members of the Pacific Islands contingent appreciated the opportunity to learn languages, acquire English oral and writing skills, and gain exposure to diverse cultures within the mission and in the provinces. Many nevertheless wished that there had been greater appreciation among police leaders about the rich variations among Pacific Island employees.

Modelling professional policing – in the Pacific context

Most contingent members expressed an appreciation of the importance of modelling professional behaviour and supporting their RSIPF colleagues — however, there were divergent views, at times, about what ‘good policing’ consisted of in the Pacific Islands context. Most appreciated the importance of their position of authority and the need to enforce the law in a consistent way, as expressed by one Tongan officer:

People are not above the law, we had to enforce the law, contingent members had to help the RSIPF in Honiara, in Malaita. ... After one year, RSIPF were more confident because they were supported by officers with experience. We tried to model professional commitment and pride. For example, the RSIPF didn't wear their uniform after work; I still wore my uniform after work and answered questions from people. I took pride in the police uniform; appearance is important, it increases people's confidence.

(Interview notes, #55; 2003/04)

The importance of enforcing the law was mentioned by many interviewees (particularly those from Tonga, Samoa and Fiji). For some of the Polynesian police the local customary practice of compensation was foreign, and inappropriate for police to be involved in. For example, a Samoan police officer who was deployed in the first phase said:

The compensation issue was big in Solomon Islands. We don't do it here [in Samoa], it's not part of our culture. The price is way over a fine, it's too much. Even the local police can be complicit. We discouraged them, said they should speak to elders, the chiefs. [An example] was in [remote place] a pig went missing, another family was blamed. It came to us and we did an investigation, but could not confirm who took the pig. We told them the police are not involved in compensation, and they would have to go to the village leaders. It seems many didn't want to take legal action, they saw the courts as taking too long. They wanted a quick result which is where compensation comes in. It is the same all over the country.

(Interview notes, #61; 2003)

Another Samoan officer emphasised that part of their modelling 'good policing' practice included not being drawn into mediating cultural differences associated with *wantok* relations and compensation (Interview #62; 2003). But he acknowledged that some RSIPF officers were wary of the cultural implications of enforcing the law without reference to common *kastom* practices. It was hard for local officers to confront local people with whom they might be related or have some other form of continuing association. Some acknowledged that teaming up with 'outside' police officers could help create professional 'distance', and perhaps seed different expectations of police.

Despite professional concerns about compensation, payback and other social practices that have their roots in culture rather than state law, many of our interviewees acknowledged that the role of *kastom* in policing and community conflict resolution needs more attention. According to a Fijian police officer, it would have been helpful if pre-deployment training paid greater attention to the impact of *kastom* on policing in Solomon Islands and the challenges it poses for the RSIPF:

Culture matters to policing and can affect relationships between receiving and visiting forces. Perhaps there needed to be more attention to the relationship between culture, and law and order. In Solomon Islands they try and use culture to avoid law enforcement; culture should not carry weight in policing, it should be professional and law abiding; culture should not affect police decision-making.

(Interview notes, #36; 2009)

Knowing and appreciating culture can enhance policing success, according to a PNG police officer deployed in 2011–12. While part of a four or five person community policing team in Honiara, he recounted how he drew on his experience in Port Moresby to help with social mapping and to prepare a community directorate of leaders and organisations, something which he said had never been done by the RSIPF before. This helped to provide the basis for a more networked approach to policing that could better draw on community resources and respond to law and order problems within communities. This could be particularly important as everyday law and order issues dealt with by police in Solomon Islands involve community-based issues, such as local gambling, illegal production of *kwaso* (home-brew) and the resolution of youth disturbances, all of which depended on working closely with community and non-government organisations (Interview #44; 2011–12).

In many cases, an appreciation of *kastom* can boost policing success, by demonstrating a respect for the people and their values, and using *kastom* to build police–community relations. It was in this delicate area of cultural understanding and cultural competence where differences could arise between perceived 'Western' and 'Pacific' ways of policing, and where members of the Pacific Islands contingent appeared to have a distinct advantage over their non-Pacific Island PPF colleagues.

Building community trust – respecting *kastom*

Pacific Island police referred to their sense of understanding and familiarity with village life and the importance of family and kinship ties. This way of life includes: sharing of food; respecting cultural, religious and political mores (for example church and 'traditional' leadership structures); and appreciating local

hardships and the need to 'pull together' to provide needed services and transport. Pacific Island officers often looked for ways to connect to community, and those connections often went beyond conventional policing norms as defined in Western society.

For example, community engagement by contingent members often included church attendance, as well as sporting activities, not typically viewed by Australian or New Zealand officers as part of professional policing. In the later stages of RAMSI, these approaches and their value were recognised and made more integral to RAMSI policing efforts. For example, contingent leaders argued strongly for a church outreach program that permitted uniformed officers to attend services and talk about law and order issues, and this did ultimately win support from the PPF leadership. One Fijian contingent officer who was involved in the RAMSI outreach program to churches highlighted the central importance of churches as a platform for police–community engagement. As she put it, at the church you get the whole community. In just one year (2009), she estimated that the RAMSI church outreach program met with over 67,000 people. This amounts to just over 10 per cent of the population. She argued compellingly that it is hard to imagine many other approaches with such reach.

Another area of difference was the sharing of food which is a common and valued practice throughout the Pacific Islands, but which was discouraged under RAMSI's standard operating procedures (Box 4). This meant some protocols were honoured more in the breach than in practice for the sake of good community relations. These different cultural inflections on what constituted best practice in community engagement may help explain the lukewarm response to the question in the survey about whether the PPF executive understood Pacific Island cultures, with 65 per cent (n=26) saying they understood 'ok' and the remainder either negative or positive in equal proportions.

A more nuanced understanding of Pacific Island culture and social interactions, and their implication for policing, was slowly diffused beyond the ranks of the Pacific Islands contingent over the course of RAMSI's 14-year duration. Even so, many Pacific Island officers wished that a more culturally sensitive approach to the 'rules of the game' could have emerged more quickly to better reflect the particularities of the Solomon Islands policing context. In this context, several interviewees speculated on whether this might have occurred with more Pacific Islanders in leadership positions, particularly in the broad area of community policing.

Box 4: The role of food exchange: a vignette

A Vanuatu police officer who was posted to a provincial police station described his frustration at PPF rules that prohibited accepting gifts of food from local Solomon Islanders. He said that to refuse gifts of food went against local kastom and did nothing to build police relations with the local community; but he found it hard to influence PPF policy on this issue.

Several interviewees commented on how, as a member of the PPF, they were often able to play strong community building roles because of the considerable resources at their disposal. For example, they could act swiftly to help with minor infrastructure, transport those in need of medical assistance or contribute food for community events. While these forms of engagement helped to build local communities' sense of trust and confidence in police, they often entailed departures from a 'strictly by the books' approach.

We had the logistics and financial resources which we were expected to share. It made the job very easy, for example, vehicles and basic tools, but it also raised expectations, for example to help build a road or put up new buildings for public servants to go back to rural areas. Local people appreciated what we were doing. We could make a big difference, unlike in our home countries where resources are more scarce, for example within a few weeks we got a contractor in Solomon Islands to put up a police station.

(Interview notes, #48; 2005-06)

Playing sport with local people and with the local police was often cited as a crucial means to engage with the community. Basic sporting equipment was supplied to the police so they could organise games with villagers and local communities. A Samoan police officer who was deployed in the first phase gave the following example of how they engaged with the community at the outposts:

At my posting there were a lot of young people who were tough, often fighting and drinking. We needed to break the pattern. After hours, every afternoon, we tried to engage the youth, we organised sport such as volleyball or soccer, and started sport competitions, instead of drinking. Lots joined including the [local] police. It had never been done before, but it rebuilt community relations.

(Interview notes, #62; 2003)

Beyond cultural connections, the importance of symbols was noted. Several interviewees mentioned how displaying their country's flag on their uniform could engender trust and respect. A Tongan police officer felt that wearing his flag on his uniform helped to generate respect because of his country's proud history in the security sector (Interview #53; 2012-13). Wearing the Kiribati flag was helpful, according to another police officer, because communities would know she was 'one of them', given Kiribati's close association with Solomon Islands and the historical migration patterns that resulted in many Gilbertese living in Solomon Islands (Interview #101; 2014).

Policing partnerships

Most interviewees valued the professionalism and skills that they acquired from working side by side with Australians and New Zealanders and from being part of a multinational police force that was well resourced and organised. A PNG police officer who was deployed to various outposts during the early phases of RAMSI said he learnt a lot especially from Australians and New Zealanders, who he said guided him with criminal investigations. One of the consequences for him was that he felt more pride in being a

skilled police officer (Interview #48; 2005–06). Police from the smaller forces especially appreciated the opportunity to work with colleagues from the region when facing new procedures and types of crime, as exemplified in the area of Close Personal Protection (CPP) (Box 5).

Box 5: Fostering integration within Close Personal Protection (CPP)

Some Pacific Islands contingent officers were posted in the CPP where they benefited from additional training from Australian colleagues, and also contributed to local police skills. The Pacific Islanders appreciated the specialised training, the expertise of the Australian team leaders, and the opportunity to work in a professional unit with an emphasis on national security and strong team building. Those contingent members deployed to the CPP team had previous experience, so while they were learning they could also contribute to the team effort. Notes from an interview with a Tongan police officer illustrate how he drew on his experience in the Tonga Tactical Response Group to help Pacific Island and RSIPF colleagues:

The focus was on improving the capacity of the RSIPF. My experience in Tonga helped me show the RSIPF what to do. I was based in Honiara GBR. ... The CPP and guns training was mainly done by Australians. Some Pacific Islands police did not have a CPP training, so I could contribute to the training. For some officers, it was the first time in this role. Everyone needed my help ... There was a lady officer from another Pacific Islands police organisation and it was the first time she had carried a firearm. She needed my support. I spent a day training her and the next day she passed her test. She was very grateful. It was a multi-force training effort.

(Interview notes, #56; 2015-16)

Dealing with differences

Differences in policing styles were frequently noted, particularly between what some described as the 'Australian' and the 'Pacific' ways. The former was characterised as more aggressive and action oriented, compared with a Pacific way of policing which was based on talking and problem solving, working with *kastom*, and building community relations through, for example, the sharing food and other resources. Because of these differences, Pacific Islands contingent members portrayed themselves as acting as critical intermediaries between the RSIPF on the one hand, and Australian and New Zealand officers on the other, with an ability to translate across language and cultural differences. At the same time, those with much more experience of working and training with Australian and New Zealand police were able to sort out misunderstandings about RAMSI's standard operating procedures and their rationale — many of which had practical purposes and were neither culturally biased nor intentionally disrespectful, for example security protocols for moving on and off of the main base, limitations in the sharing of intelligence, or hierarchical command structures.

Within the PPF, the Australians were more likely to be in positions of authority as team leaders, and they dominated the senior executive. A number of contingent members wished there had been more opportunities for leadership. On occasions, this caused resentment among some Pacific Islanders because they felt their years of policing experience or senior ranking in their home police forces was not adequately recognised. Despite some misgivings about the apparent absence of recognition of rank and experience, most Pacific Islanders appreciated the strong team approach to policing, particularly when all members had an opportunity to contribute to decision-making processes.

Aside from leadership, most complaints from interviewees related to what they perceived to be unequal treatment or opportunities between themselves and their Australian and New Zealand PPF colleagues. Key concerns related to a lack of parity in access to firearms, in allowances and in the type of postings. It did seem more likely that there was discontent or complaints among those who were deployed in the last few phases. This can partly be attributed to the reduced opportunities for community engagement and operational policing at that point in the mission, when members of the Pacific Islands contingent were often restricted to security duties with Zulu 7 at GBR or working in offices in Honiara.

Differences in policing approaches were not just experienced between Australians and New Zealanders, on the one hand, and Pacific Islanders on the other. Policing approaches could also differ among Pacific Island countries based on colonial heritages, the kinds of crime encountered in their home environments, as well as the size, competencies and international experience of their home police organisations. A Fijian police officer noted that colonial heritage created differences in policing styles among those police forces with ties to American, Australian and New Zealand policing systems, yet this was rarely acknowledged. In addition, a Fijian welfare officer found significant differences in policing skills and standards, English literacy and acceptance of his authority depending on the country from which contingent members came. He believed it was easier for Fijians to work with the Australians because they were already familiar with the Australian police culture (Interview #37; 2009).

Leadership aspirations

Within RAMSI, cultural differences and the need for greater opportunities for contingent member leadership were partially addressed in 2010 with the appointment of a Pacific Islands Contingent Commander (PICC) who worked as part of the RAMSI executive and dedicated welfare officer positions. The value of appointing a PICC is outlined in Box 6.

Box 6: Leadership of the Pacific Islands contingent

A Fijian Pacific Islands Contingent Commander spoke of the value of his PPF leadership role. He worked closely with the PPF commander on discipline and other problems within the contingent. He felt this made a major contribution because of his deep understanding of culture, family and personal problems experienced by Pacific Islanders. The role also demonstrated that contingent members were valued and could take on leadership positions. The officers felt it was better that a contingent member deal with some of the discipline and behaviour problems, and that they work as a community to enforce higher standards.

In general, most welcomed this new position for the leadership opportunity and the recognition of the key role played by the contingent. However, one national contingent commander noted that the PICC role may have benefited from a more critical evaluation over time, including as to what structures and approaches to leadership worked best for this position. Another view was that the approach taken by successive holders of the PICC role varied considerably, reflecting different personalities and leadership styles rather than the mission's operational systems and commitment to professional standards (Interview #37; 2009). Our sample size was too small to rigorously assess this view, but it is worthy of reflection for future missions.

The contingent welfare officer position was positively assessed as a necessary and valuable function that could deal with personal issues which required a nuanced understanding of Pacific cultures and social obligations. But again, there appeared to be variability in the processes, reach and achievements of this position. It appears that both roles — PICC and the contingent welfare officer — could have been strengthened if they had been better defined, documented and evaluated, and lessons learned recorded from both the perspective of the PPF commanders and PICCs themselves.

Despite changes to create more contingent leadership roles, some still felt they could have contributed more. One respondent claimed:

Pacific Islands contingent members were often used to fill gaps that the Australian and New Zealand officers did not want to do, for example in duties in rural outposts. They were always the team members and the Australian and New Zealand officers the team leaders; they would have liked to be more of the team leaders.

(Interview notes, #101; 2014)

Notwithstanding such misgivings, most recognised that Pacific Islands contingent members made up a small component of RAMSI and that participation, while perhaps not meeting the expectations of all deployees, did nevertheless present a unique opportunity for learning, development and regional assistance.

Welfare issues

Interviewees were very complimentary about the standard of care and support provided to them on deployment. They were appreciative of the accommodation and food at RAMSI's GBR base in Honiara, although life at provincial outposts could be more challenging. Contingent members felt well-equipped and well looked after. The social life was frequently mentioned, again primarily at GBR, and Pacific Islands contingent members appreciated the opportunities to maintain and build fitness by participating in sport and working out at the gym.

The few with experience of UN missions compared the PPF's approach very favourably, noting that connectivity with family was much harder in other deployments. Knowing your family was all right helped you to focus on your professional job.

Most of the interviewees had partners and children. Several women were single mothers and had to make arrangements for their family to look after their children while they were deployed. Every three months the contingent members would return home for a month. In the initial phases of RAMSI they stayed in touch with family by phone. Some missed their families, especially if they had not been overseas before. Over time there were improved means of communicating with family, as this Samoan officer explains:

There are big changes since he was first deployed 14 years ago. There is now very fast technology — social media, twitter, Facebook. Back then there was only telephone to stay in touch with family, and he had to use radio while at the outposts. During the first mission, there would be a long queue at the phone box. There were six phones at the mess. You'd use one phone and then move on to another one. In the middle of the night was the only time you could have a long conversation, otherwise usually five minutes.

(Interview notes, #62; 2003–04)

Each country's unit had a commander who was responsible for maintaining discipline and watching over the welfare of the unit's members. The size of the units varied, with bigger contingents in the early phases. A number of unit commanders were interviewed and they described their role as checking on how members were going, raising issues with PPF executive, maintaining standards and dealing with discipline problems. One mentioned meeting with the other unit commanders once a week and discussing common issues and concerns, and then raising them with the PPF executive, providing a useful channel of communications to allow problems and concerns to be dealt with quickly and effectively, however once again the arrangements were rather ad hoc.

Gender equity

Most contingent women police officers we interviewed highlighted how their confidence in their own skills and abilities had increased as a result of their deployment to RAMSI, and felt that they and their male counterparts had benefited from seeing women involved in training and policing duties that were typically done by men back in their home countries. A PNG policewoman attributed her increased confidence in large part to the Australian women police officers with which she worked. She admired and was inspired by their attitudes, confidence and professionalism, and claims to have become more proactive and assertive since her return home (Interview #47; 2008-09).

Several women interviewees referred to helping RSIPF women officers, many of whom were new to policing. Prior to the intervention there were relatively few female police officers in the RSIPF. This changed significantly in the early recruiting rounds following RAMSI's arrival. As a result, young Solomon Islands policewomen needed role models, confidence building and supportive networks — some of which was provided by RAMSI. In later years there was ongoing support as a product of the strong professional friendships created. For example, one senior Fijian policewoman helped RSIPF women officers gain additional training on gender-based violence in Fiji at the Women's Crisis Centre (Interview #31; 2009).

Views concerning gender equity and opportunities within RAMSI varied depending on the home police force. For example, most Fijian officers felt that their home force already had plenty of opportunities for women and a number of Tongan women police officers had a similar view. By contrast, a Kiribati woman officer said that there were few female officers in her home country and that they mostly did office jobs. She emphasised that for her:

RAMSI was challenging and new. We were treated the same as the men; we did all the same work – arrests and patrolling. We often were paired up with men, and that was good; it was safer. ... Really enjoyed RAMSI; it was like real policing, especially for the women

(Interview notes, #93; 2004).

In such a culturally diverse and complex mission, the role of policewomen can be challenging to manage given quite different expectations of various stakeholders. For example, there were different views about the safety and appropriateness of pairing male and female police officers, especially in provincial outposts or on general duties at night. Several interviewees saw it as an opportunity for the male officer to protect the female officer, as noted above. In contrast, one female officer who had a bad experience with a male officer argued that there should always be two female officers in an outpost. Such arrangements were rarely, if ever, possible given the small size of many provincial outposts. In this case of harassment, the woman officer made contact with her Honiara-based supervisor and was able to return to GBR where she was well supported.

Family and sexual violence

Women officers played an important role in dealing with domestic violence. A Fijian female officer said she was concerned that gender-based violence in Solomon Islands communities was often not investigated. Instead, the emphasis was often on reconciliation. To change this and look after the welfare of women, more community-based policing work was needed, including police visits to schools, churches and villages (Interview #39; 2012). Box 7 highlights the experience of a female police officer from PNG and how she worked on gender violence issues during her deployment, as well as on her return to PNG. Her experience is not unique. Family and Sexual Violence Units have been established in police stations in different parts of the Pacific Islands and, in some cases, benefit directly from officers who gained practical skills while deployed with RAMSI. Kiribati now has a Family and Sexual Violence Unit headed by a former female RAMSI deployee, while Fiji has strengthened its Family Protection Unit and developed training and reform initiatives led by a former PPF member.

Many of the women police officers interviewed believed that their presence had helped with community policing and responses to domestic violence incidents in Solomon Islands. Several referred to the 'calming' effect their presence had. A PNG female officer believed that in general the women officers were better at communicating with local people than the men. She said the gender issues in Solomon Islands villages were very familiar as they were similar to PNG (Interview #47; 2008-09). A Tongan female officer said it was important to have female officers at provincial outposts as most incidents reported to the police involved domestic violence, and female officers were better placed to deal with women victims (Interview #50; 2006). A separate issue, that of assisting children affected by the Tensions and similar communal conflict, was raised by a number of interviewees as outlined in Box 8.

Box 7: Building police capacity to address domestic and family violence

A PNG female officer who was deployed in the final phase of RAMSI described how she could draw on her policing experience in PNG to work in Solomon Islands training local police and raising community awareness about the newly introduced Family Protection Act. Similar legislation had been introduced in PNG several years before. She undertook training in Fiji on the creation and maintenance of a family-based violence database as part of a New Zealand–run project. She helped implement the system in Solomon Islands and later in PNG when she returned home.

Here in PNG everyone deals with [family violence]. [Before RAMSI] I assisted to set-up a family violence desk in [the highlands of PNG]. Negotiating, networking with women, other agencies, with another officer.

The experience I had in PNG helped me a lot because I was in a better position to relate to them. We use the term wantok which basically means like a friend. I was happy to be from PNG and they could relate to us ... Most of the issues the police deal with over there are very similar to the challenges in PNG especially in regard to family violence.

Men see themselves as superior, most of the time women feel like they are inferior. Always afraid to report matters to police. We did a lot of awareness to help women to come out. It was a slow start in terms of policing. The men would sometimes send the police women away saying it was a family problem and they should deal with it.

Eventually the [men] respected us. At first, it was hard. One thing we did, once a month, we'd go around and collect statistics on family violence, on every matter reported at the front counter. Each month we'd call into the police stations, this was on the main island, Guadalcanal. ... We had to sit down and evaluate the cases that were reported. We had a database from the PPDVP [Pacific Prevention of Domestic Violence Programme] — a NZ run project. Police were sent over for training in domestic violence, police from all over. I had an opportunity to go to Fiji, to attend the database training, and I was able to pass on that knowledge to the women I worked with, as an adviser.

(Interview notes, #43; 2013-15)

Box 8: Children in conflict

While there is growing awareness of gender and family issues in policing, many officers who worked in rural posts worried that not enough attention was given to children. Many children had been traumatised by the Tensions and the violence they witnessed. RAMSI and the community policing program did include outreach to schools, but this was more to explain the role of policing, rather than to help the recovery of affected children. Those children are now young adults with long memories of the past. It takes special skills to deal with these issues, which may not be present locally, or part of the contingent or RSIPF community policing 'toolkit'. Several community policing officers highlighted how hard it could be to speak with children about traumatic events and how these had coloured their perceptions of policing. These officers thought that more effort to engage with children was needed to deal with the anger and fear that will otherwise be carried into adulthood. This could be an area for additional attention post-RAMSI.

From professional to personal benefits

Most interviewees and survey participants were pleased with their experience in RAMSI, and reported multiple benefits. An indication of the range of professional and personal benefits identified by interviewees is provided in Box 9.

The main professional benefits identified by interviewees related to leadership experience, acquisition of new skills and promotions on return to home forces. Nearly all, but particularly the younger officers, acknowledged the benefits of mentoring by more experienced police from other countries. Confidence among deployees was also enhanced through strong identification with other members of their national contingents and a sense of national identity forged by the overseas experience, particularly in the case of the larger and more socially fragmented Melanesian countries. A number noted that they expected RAMSI friendships and professional connections to 'last a lifetime'.

Box 9: Professional and personal benefits identified by contingent members

While there were many benefits raised during interviews, those most mentioned included:

- » gaining new, or building existing, skills useful for policing (for example driving, criminal investigations, technology use, report writing and logistics)
- » acquiring and improving language skills — English and in some cases Pijin
- » boosting professionalism, for example measures to support standard operating procedures, command and control, rule of law and appropriate use of force
- » enhancing personal and professional deportment
- » attaining greater understanding of occupational health and safety (including malaria prevention, diet, exercise, and the detection of diabetes)
- » receiving financial benefits that, for example, enabled paying off debt or investing in personal or family education and property
- » gaining an opportunity to travel and learn about other countries and police organisations
- » building self-confidence; for example, public speaking, leadership training, communication skills to engage more effectively with people of other nationalities
- » strengthening gender equity through targeted training and mentoring of women police officers by Australia, New Zealand and more experienced Pacific Island police personnel; subsequently through friendships and networks.

RAMSI also enhanced professional pride. The emphasis on professional practice, on properly worn and used uniforms and equipment, and on personal grooming and deportment added to their pride as police officers and a feeling of belonging to a distinct and professional regional police community. For many, this nurtured a long-term commitment to policing, a feeling of moving ahead in their chosen professions. An Australian officer commented the lack of resources, police politicisation and weak leadership that afflicted the home organisations of many contingent officers held back policing and could be professionally demoralising (Interview #15; nd)³. On returning home, those limitations impinged again and made sustaining progress hard. However, many of the former deployees at least had a clearer vision of what they wanted to achieve professionally.

Box 10: Professional benefits from RAMSI deployment

One Pacific Islands contingent officer from a small island country emphasised that many of the types of crimes and investigations encountered in RAMSI were new and required skills she didn't previously have. She explained that routine cases tend to be more straightforward in smaller Pacific Island countries. In RAMSI, the logistics of operations were more structured than in her home force. For example, she had to learn how to apply standard procedures for checking liquor licences and conducting effective and safe roadblocks. The latter was a particularly valuable skill for policing back home. This officer was also exposed to a wider variety of policing activities, some confronting and unfamiliar. For example, she had to conduct a body search of a woman accused of stealing a lot of money from her employer. This was a daunting task for her and an area of policing for which she had no previous experience. (Interview #94; 2004-05)

Another female officer reflected on her policing experience and the new skills she gained. She was assigned to community policing, but didn't want to do it because she was apprehensive about being in an unfamiliar community. It wasn't something she had done before, but none of her colleagues would trade with her. In the end, she felt it turned out to be the best experience she had because she learned so much. She was also involved in the review of the Police Act and assisted with community consultations where she learned many new skills. She believed she would never have done such work without RAMSI. Having acquired new confidence, she told us that she had taken on leadership roles and applied her new skills for community consultations, project monitoring and evaluation, and budgeting on her return home. (Interview #33; 2011)

Yet another deployee spoke of acquiring practical new skills in how to use computers and enter data. By the end of his time in Solomon Islands he was proficient in these areas. He also learnt how to take on leadership roles and to give professional advice to Solomon Islands colleagues. As well as acquiring people skills working alongside people from different backgrounds, his ability to communicate in English improved a lot in the first month. (Interview #52; 2004)

As evident from the above, key personal benefits that emerged from the interviews included enhanced self-confidence and the financial advantages of deployment. In relation to the latter, interviewees gave examples of how they and their families had used their earnings to purchase or upgrade property, educate themselves or family members, and pay off debts. Among the survey respondents, the majority (64 per cent) said deployment had 'a positive effect' on their family, and 25 per cent said it had 'no effect'. While there were clearly personal challenges for those deployed and their families, the benefits were generally seen as outweighing the drawbacks.

Conclusion

The RAMSI policing experience provided many valued opportunities for skills enhancement, network extension and personal development among members of the Pacific Islands contingent. Those interviewed emphasised the importance and high impact of the pre-deployment training in Canberra and hoped that others would continue to benefit from the program even after the drawdown of RAMSI. Those that participated in pre-deployment training in their own countries (mainly PNG and Fiji) observed that the programs were not strongly aligned with the Australian training, but instead evolved in a rather ad hoc and unsupported manner.

While the reflections on the policing experience were overwhelming positive, the following areas were identified as those with scope for improvement:

- » greater opportunities for Pacific Islander leadership
- » better recognition and management of diverse policing cultures and skills among participating forces
- » more structured evaluation of key positions such as contingent commanders and welfare officers to ensure consistency across appointments and learning through evaluation.

In general, concerns related to areas for fine tuning in a mission that most were pleased to serve in. The 'learn-by-doing' approach was viewed by most as successful model for building professional confidence and capacity. Women, in particular, appreciated the positive role models and greater range of policing tasks available to them on deployment. This was particularly so for officers from small forces with limited opportunities for female advancement. It is notable that when asked if they would participate in a similar mission, nearly all responded with an enthusiastic 'yes'.



POLICING BACK AT HOME AND IN THE REGION

RAMSI's impacts have rippled throughout the region, albeit unevenly. To the extent our research has allowed us to judge, this chapter canvasses the impacts of RAMSI on the police forces of contributing countries, on individual Pacific Island PPF members after their return home and on policing cooperation in the region more broadly. The first section discusses the challenges of returning home faced by some after their deployment, the opportunities the interviewees said they had to use their newly acquired skills and the means by which many stayed in touch with their fellow PPF members. The second section considers organisational change within contributing Pacific Island forces as a result of RAMSI, and the wider impact of reciprocal learning within the multinational PPF. There is a focus on the unique challenges of PNG before the final section on regional relationships and identity.

Returning home – the challenges of reintegration

Not all interviewees found that their time in RAMSI resulted in tangible post-deployment benefits to their policing careers. Some were promoted but others were disappointed in the lack of career benefits and that they were not placed in a job that would enable them to build or apply the experiences and skills they had acquired. Among those who responded in the survey about the changes in what they did as a police officer on returning home, half said they had been promoted, 22 per cent said they worked in a different role, 9 per cent had another overseas deployment, and 16 per cent said there were 'no changes' (n=32). This is roughly equivalent to the responses we received from our interviews.

Some struggled to adjust when they returned home. When in Solomon Islands, they had ready access to resources and equipment (including computers, internet and transport) and a high level of support (including accommodation, food and sports facilities) that were lacking back home. One officer described her time at RAMSI as 'being in heaven' and said she had found it very hard to settle back into her old position and to the multiple and ongoing challenges of being a police officer in a less well-resourced and less effectively managed police organisation. Despite being very happy to be home with his wife and children, a Samoan police officer revealed he was still talking about his time in Solomon Islands four years later and he would share memories with other Samoan police. He said he went back to his old job back home 'as if nothing had happened' (Interview #74; 2006–07).

Nearly all interviewed, when asked, felt they had not been properly debriefed about their RAMSI deployment. Many felt their own police leaders were not fully aware of the new skills they had acquired; some felt they would have liked to have more support for reintegration back into their home police force. A Fijian police officer described how difficult she found it and how for some officers there were professional and personal pressures upon return:

The hardest part of RAMSI was returning. There was no debrief and no support to reintegrate at home or at work. When I came back I was really depressed – I had to talk with RAMSI friends for support and regain self-confidence. I didn't really fit in easily back at home; I was unsure of my place there after a year's absence. There was no advice ... There's such high expectations when you return – especially for finances. Some

*people turned to drinking to release home pressures and expectations.
Reintegration is harder for women because of their carer roles.*

(Interview notes, #36; 2009)

Harnessing learning

In response to a survey question about the extent Pacific Islands contingent members had been able to use what they had learnt during their deployment, the majority (71 per cent) said they had used what they learnt 'a lot' and 21 per cent said 'a bit' (n=28). Only a very small number said 'not at all' (7 per cent). Our interviews suggested that many took it upon themselves to employ the skills they had acquired rather than it being a strategic decision by the police force.

In some instances, however, upon their return to their home police forces there were examples of interviewees being placed into positions that made the most of what they had learnt, for example in relation to legislation and training, and specialised areas such as CPP and sexual assault investigations. A PNG police officer described how, upon his return, he contributed to development of the framework and guidelines for the Police Force Presence Abroad Act 2004 and to project management for security arrangements for major events (Interview #46; 2004-08). A Kiribati police officer used the example of how he led and implemented changes to public order management upon his return, with the support of the police commissioner, which resulted in reforms to what he characterised as 'old colonial approaches'. Other examples related to reforming the complaints and follow-up process, and using former PPF officers to 'trouble shoot' as they could 'think critically' and 'do things better' (Interview #97; 2009). Survey respondents from the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) gave examples of CPP skills, discipline and as one put it, advising colleagues on how to approach 'victims or civilians'.

Some applications of new skills were less formal, but nonetheless important to police force functions and personal advancement. Most interviewed said their experience in RAMSI increased their confidence in areas such as public speaking and leadership, and in a number of cases this had positive impacts on their careers. For example, a Vanuatu police officer said that since he returned home he had been in a number of leadership roles and in his view, there was 'no way' he would have stepped into these roles if it was not for his experience in RAMSI (Interview #86; 2010).

For others, their RAMSI deployment opened doors to new professional opportunities, such as participation in UN peacekeeping missions. A Samoan police officer described how he returned home and worked in CPP for five years, but then had overseas deployments in Africa. He said he was given a performance appraisal while part of RAMSI which made him competitive for UN missions (Interview #64; 2005-06). Similarly, a Vanuatu police officer said that his RAMSI experience helped him to get on an international mission and take leadership of a multinational team in the UN mission in South Sudan (Interview #119; 2003).

A number of police officers spoke of the value of gaining stronger English language skills and how important that was for applying for higher education and further training, including in Canberra. These skills gave officers greater confidence in writing police reports, following written instructions and reading up on key laws or operational procedures. Even the officers from countries where English is widely spoken stated that without the RAMSI experience they doubted they would have gone on to further professional training

or to secure a promotion. This was noted by many, and exemplified by the comments of a Pacific Islands contingent officer: 'With my new skills and experiences I had more confidence to pursue higher education; I also had the money and confidence to do it. That helped me get a higher education certificate, secure a promotion and gain a position on the UN Mission in Sudan' (Interview #34; 2003).

Staying in touch

A bond was created between the Pacific Island police who served together in the Solomon Islands and, at a more general level, among all police who served in the PPF. Of those who participated in the survey, 81 per cent said they stayed in touch post-deployment with members of other police forces (n=32). This was primarily through Facebook and email, and to a lesser extent, by getting together at regional training and other meetings. From interviews, it was apparent that much of the contact was social and supportive, rather than specifically related to professional matters. Female RAMSI deployees were able to utilise the PICP Women's Advisory Network (WAN) to stay in touch and support each other in professional development. Some respondents explicitly referred to the example of the WAN, and wondered if there was not room for a broader, non-gender based, professional network.

Contingent members provided examples of the benefits of maintaining networks and contacts for seeking professional advice, facilitating professional and personal visits, and organising meetings with their former colleagues at training events. An example of how deployees sought professional advice from former PPF colleagues was given by a Fijian officer. He had a case that involved a New Zealand company which defrauded clients of money and did not deliver goods. He contacted a New Zealand police colleague from RAMSI to help understand the relevant law and what to do to advance the investigation and prosecution (Interview #32; 2010).

Quite a few interviewees referred to stronger ties between the AFP and their own police force as a result of RAMSI. For example, a Samoan police officer said the experience had 'helped to create a tight relationship between the AFP and Samoan police' (Interview #66; 2003-04). A strengthened bond between regional police forces and their members, and Australian and New Zealand police forces was evident in many interviews, with many expressing an interest in further exchanges and opportunities for bilateral and regional policing opportunities to continue to 'learn-by-policing'.

Organisational change and two-way learning

It is much more difficult to identify and assess the contribution of RAMSI deployment to particular police forces in the region over the past 14 years, than the benefits it provided to individual members of the Pacific Islands contingent. Many factors can influence the impact at the organisational level, not least the major differences between Pacific Island police forces themselves, bilateral cooperation programs and internally driven change. Our inquiries did not find evidence that any individual Pacific Island police services had systematically sought to track or measure the benefits brought about by their participation in RAMSI.

From anecdotal evidence, the advantages from RAMSI participation were most noticeable in the smaller countries (see Box II for an example). Some adopted new standard operating procedures, higher professional standards, and new training modules partially or entirely based on RAMSI experiences. These initiatives often benefited from additional bilateral assistance and training, and stronger ties to regional

police organisations such as the AFP. This was exemplified in Kiribati, where most interviewed felt there had been important changes to their national policing as a result of RAMSI, giving examples related to policing approaches such as 'safety first', community policing, and responsiveness to gender-based violence. In larger police forces, such as Fiji, few felt the police force had changed much but some officers claimed they had made change happen within their own specialist areas, noting for example better performance management, channels of communication, or more efficient project management and budgeting.

Box 11: Impact on smaller police forces

The Chiefs of Police of the smaller forces stressed the benefits to their organisations, including the increased skills and professionalism of their officers when they returned from deployment. An example was the Federated States of Micronesia, which has a national force of more than 90 officers. From 2006, two officers were deployed to the Solomon Islands for six months before changing to one officer per year. FSM officers who participated in the survey saw the experience as very beneficial because of the practical training, and their increased discipline and confidence.

In an interview, the FSM Chief of Police said the officers returned with 'more focus' on what they do, all were promoted, and one went on to head immigration and another became chief of criminal investigations. Former RAMSI officers were also assigned to provide security for visiting political leaders, including the prime ministers of NZ and Australia. The connections that were established during deployment often continued when officers returned home, and he gave the example of how an officer in the transnational crime unit asks for help from the colleagues in the region who he met while part of RAMSI. He would like to see a more structured forum for former RAMSI officers from all the countries that participated.

In aggregate, there was widespread appreciation of the opportunity to be part of a multinational police operation and the exposure it gave to different strategies, policies and approaches for dealing with policing issues. This knowledge became part of PPF members', and their teams', policing toolkit. Training exercises held under RAMSI certainly had collateral benefits for Pacific Island PPF members who also participated or supported them. Different forces benefited from different types of training: for example, Tongan police talked of consolidating and applying CPP training; Fiji police benefited from training and upskilling in family protection law and procedures; and Kiribati police officers incorporated experiences gained in domestic and gender violence response training. In a media interview in 2012, a number of Pacific Island chiefs of police acknowledged the new skills and approaches their officers had learnt through their participation in RAMSI.⁴

A key component of RAMSI was the joint deployment of police and military, with the police in the lead. Most Pacific Islands contingent members had little to say about this aspect of RAMSI because their

interactions with the military were limited. Only three countries in the Pacific — Fiji, Tonga and Papua New Guinea — have defence forces and were able to reflect on the nature of police–military relations in their home context. A few officers from these countries thought RAMSI provided a valuable model for improving relationships between the military and police. One officer from Tonga stated that the RAMSI experience provided a valuable demonstration that the two forces could be complementary, rather than competitive. For example, RAMSI used joint training activities to create stronger working relationships across the police–military forces.

Two-way learning

The learning occurring in the mission was not just one way. Our interviews with PPF commanders and other senior RAMSI executives acknowledged the importance of ‘two-way’ learning. In the words of one senior RAMSI official, ‘The Pacific Islands’ police knowledge of the local culture and sensitivities is an essential ingredient for a successful regional intervention’. Other key RAMSI leadership personnel shared this perception of the Pacific Islands contingent as a cultural and communications bridge, and valued that role highly. For example, a former PPF commander said that ‘the decision to use the Pacific Islanders was brilliant, purely because they understood the culture better than we did’ (Interview #8; 2007-09), and a former special coordinator echoed the sentiment: ‘They [the Pacific Islanders] are the mentors, the role models, more so than the Australians’ (Interview #4; 2011-13).

A senior Australian PPF member acknowledged the ways in which Australian police had learnt from their Pacific Islands colleagues:

My personal view is that they gave us a very good understanding of Pacific policing methodologies and approaches, customs, that understanding of the intersection between custom law and the rule of law in a legislative sense, and how that’s dealt with across the Pacific and how the mesh of those comes together. Certainly the Solomon Islands, like a number of the Pacific Island countries, struggles with that sometimes. What is that line? What are the offences that could potentially be dealt with at the community level, or the village chief level? What offences need to be dealt with in the judicial system? And I think the Pacific Islanders give us a good foundational understanding of how that’s done in the respective countries. From my perspective, that was a great thing that I leveraged from some of my staff, that understanding.

(Interview notes, #12; nd)

PNG: positive experiences, but uniquely challenging police context

The experience of PNG members of the PPF is worth a specific mention in this context. Most PNG PPF members we contacted through this research reported positive experiences in RAMSI. That said, there was also a consistent theme that the experience of reintegrating back into the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary (RPNGC), and of seeking to transfer and apply new skills and knowledge, was particularly difficult. This reflects the fact that, of all the PPF contributing forces, the RPNGC is the largest and faces

the most challenges in terms of capacity, resources and the home operating context. This meant that it was correspondingly harder for returning individuals to effect change in the RPNGC system.

The much bigger size of the RPNGC and distribution of police personnel across a very large country meant that the RAMSI experience was confined to a relatively small group of officers and some of these would be the only ones with such experience in their post-RAMSI postings. Maintaining contact with other RPNGC colleagues who had served on the mission and sustaining many of the positives associated with that experience was generally more difficult than for members of smaller police organisations on their return. This was a consequence of not only having proportionately fewer colleagues with RAMSI service but also reflected the unique challenges facing the RPNGC as a police organisation and the operational, resource and security challenges faced on a daily basis by most of its members. This must have accentuated the contrast between deployment in the well-resourced and well-managed policing organisation that was the PPF and the return to a home organisation that has experienced growing levels of organisational dysfunction over many years.

While the challenges facing the RPNGC might appear less dramatic than those confronting the RSIPF prior to RAMSI's deployment, they are arguably of a much greater order of magnitude. They include the manifestly inadequate size of the RPNGC in the face of a large and rapidly growing population; the range and severity of problems of crime and violence in the wider society, including armed violence; systemic problems of discipline and lack of public confidence in the police; as well as growing levels of factionalisation in recent years, often associated with political interference.

Another broad trend has been the growing investment in private security and the seemingly diminishing incentive among decision makers to invest in public policing. These are formidable and systemic challenges for which there are simply no quick or easy fixes, and that are, moreover, of a highly sensitive political character.

Insofar as the RAMSI experience has anything to offer in this context, it is more likely to be in respect of more locally or regionally circumscribed policing challenges within PNG, such as those facing Bougainville as it approaches the referendum on its future political status, or in relation to particular thematic areas such as policing family and sexual violence.

Building regional policing relationships

There was much pride among regional police officers in being part of a 'Pacific team effort' and to be able to demonstrate the value of 'a Pacific style of peacekeeping' that involved a strong appreciation of the value of working with, and in support of, social and cultural institutions while maintaining police professionalism. The public recognition of regional policing skills was valuable for public standing and community confidence in Pacific Island policing. RAMSI, along with other regional policing programs, has strengthened the foundations for future regional policing initiatives. A PNG officer observed that through his RAMSI experience he realised there is a common police culture among all police, irrespective of their nationality (Interview #45; 2007-08).

This view was shared by members of the RAMSI leadership. In a typical comment, a senior Australian member of the PPF stated:

I think we would still be doing the work that we are doing, but it [i.e. RAMSI] has enhanced it and has provided us with some local champions, perhaps, or local capacity which we can leverage and advance capacity development goals and objectives. ... I know I can travel anywhere around the Pacific and find a RAMSI person who worked for me and they would do anything for me, in a professional sense.'

(Interview notes, #12; nd)

Given the diversity in the region, it is not surprising that RAMSI's contribution to policing in the region was varied. Even so, several achievements stood out from the many interviews conducted across the participating forces, and these are summarised in Box 12.

Box 12: Some of RAMSI's main contributions to policing in the region

Enabling and supporting regional policing cooperation: after returning home, police officers spoke of keeping in touch via Facebook, using contacts in other countries to solve transnational crime, and contacting former supervisors for advice on investigations and points of law.

- » Building Pacific Island police forces' capacity to deliver training in the region: examples include the Cook Islands' police delivering command and control training to other regional police services and the RSIPF providing use of force and public order management training to Nauru and Samoa. The RAMSI experience helped to boost police training capacity among PPF members.
- » Strengthening regional 'identity' among Pacific police forces: including highlighting the benefits of collaborative training and working together across the region.
- » Increasing the reach of regional networks: for example, ongoing contact through the PICP Women's Advisory Network and the Pacific network of Transnational Crime Units (TCUs). Several officers who had worked in TCUs said that RAMSI had generated trust between individual officers and contributed to the networks that the TCUs depend on to operate effectively.

Although impossible to gauge with any degree of certainty, the diffuse and uneven impact of RAMSI on policing in the region has aligned with broader Pacific Island policing priorities and supported the objectives of bilateral and multilateral capacity building. One clear example is the commitment to 'maximise the contribution women bring to Pacific policing to best serve their communities' which is one of the PICP's six strategic goals. Box 13 describes broad trends in women in policing in the Pacific, and women officers who participated and benefited from RAMSI have no doubt contributed to these trends.

Another example is region-wide focus on building policing capacity to address domestic and family violence, through the Pacific Prevention of Domestic Violence Program (PPDVP) and bilateral aid programs. As described in Chapter Three, through the process of 'two-way' learning, police officers in Solomon Islands and in Pacific Island countries indicated that RAMSI had increased their awareness of the policing issues and responsibilities, as well as skills, needed to address domestic and family violence.

Box 13: Trends in women police officers in Solomon Islands and the region

The gender composition of police services has increasingly attracted attention in the past two decades, in Australia, New Zealand and among the Pacific Island nations. Concerted efforts have been made to increase the proportion of women entering and remaining within police services, and in improving the numbers at a senior level. Back in 2005, it was estimated that approximately 10 per cent of the 12,000 police officers were women in the 19 small island nation members of the PICP (Faletau 2005). Most of the Pacific Island police services first recruited women in the 1970s, and the proportion of women in the police services ranged from 3 per cent in the FSM to 20 per cent in Tonga in 2005.

Increasing the number and seniority of women in the RSIPF was an important priority in RAMSI's capacity building work. A capability assessment of the RSIPF back in 2006 noted that females comprised 9.9 per cent of the RSIPF's actual staff, and the majority had the rank of constable. It argued for special efforts to ensure gender specific needs were taken into consideration until female members occupied policy and command positions (AFP 2006). Faletau (2005) claims there had been an 80 per cent increase in the recruitment of women in the RSIPF in the years prior to 2005.

By 2016, the proportion of women in the police forces in the Pacific Island countries that had participated in the PPF increased across the board. The percentage of females (including sworn and unsworn staff) in 2016 ranged from 8 per cent in FSM to 38 per cent in Nauru. In the larger police forces, the proportions were PNG 13 per cent, Vanuatu 14 per cent, Fiji 19 per cent, Samoa 23 per cent and Tonga 24 per cent. The proportion in the RSIPF has increased from 14 per cent in 2005 (Faletau 2005) to 19 per cent in 2016. New Zealand and the AFP had 31 per cent and 35 per cent respectively, but with both of these there were higher numbers of unsworn female staff compared with female sworn officers. This was not the case for the Pacific Island countries, where, typically, sworn female officers were very much the majority of female staff.

Conclusion

In Chapter Three, it was clear that the deployment experience was well regarded by most with critical reflections generally more about enhancing the experience than transforming it. In contrast, for many their return home and reintegration into their home forces was less successful, with considerable scope for reform and change. The lack of any structured debriefing process certainly added to the challenge of re-adjustment, but also was a missed opportunity to ensure that the returning officer made the best use of their new skills or had guidance on how to continue with a productive learning pathway. Despite the lack of debriefing, it is still notable that the majority felt they were able to use their new policing skills.

There is little doubt that the relationships and networks formed during RAMSI were highly valued, with some of our interviewees providing examples of how keeping connected and sharing information benefited investigation and professional development. However, supportive structures need to be strengthened to ensure that this improved regional connectivity is sustained. While the RAMSI experience provides a strong basis, continuing to improve regional connectivity among different police organisations requires further leveraging beyond the current commendable work by the PICP.

RAMSI was a learning organisation and the learning flowed in many ways and forms. Contingent members at all levels felt they benefited from the interaction among regional police. Senior police officers and RAMSI managers, in particular, remarked on the unique and invaluable role of the Pacific Islands contingent with their strong cultural knowledge and considerable community policing skills. RAMSI made an important start for enhancing regional and bilateral policing relationships. The challenge ahead is to sustain and build on the gains made through RAMSI. In Chapter Five we examine how that valuable work could continue.



LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarises our findings on six key questions that underpinned the research. It picks up findings and lessons identified in earlier chapters and, for ease of reference, we have used footnotes to cross-reference the main links between this chapter and Chapters Three and Four. At the same time, though, this part of the chapter builds on, and adds to, earlier chapters because it draws more directly on our interviews with many of RAMSI's leadership figures, from both the policing and diplomatic sides, and from all periods of RAMSI's existence starting in 2003 and continuing through to 2017.

What are the lessons learned from RAMSI about the deployment of a multi-police force operation in the Pacific?

This project was not a history of the PPF although it clearly touches on many aspects of the way the PPF was run and managed with insights about the key stages and their objectives outlined in Chapter Two. The focus here is on the Pacific Islands contingent, which was always a relatively small part of the PPF, and on the policy and practical questions this posed.

Pre-deployment Training (PDT)

PDT for RAMSI evolved over time with additions and adaptations reflecting learning from Solomon Islands, from the AFP's Majura facility itself and from broader international practice. While the training program evolved, virtually all of those we spoke to, from all phases of RAMSI, spoke positively of their experience. PDT was acknowledged as building both individual skills and a team spirit among participants which was invaluable to PPF deployees in the field. The PDT provides a valuable basis for future deployments of a similar nature.

While most members of the PPF shared a common background in British colonial institutions and English law, each policing organisation had its own distinct professional culture and style of policing. A minority of former PPF members interviewed reflected that PDT could have been enhanced by a stronger focus on, and acknowledgement of, the practical challenges of operating in a multinational policing mission.

Most Pacific Island PPF members recognised that Pijin language skills were invaluable for operations in Solomon Islands, and some said that they would have benefited from more opportunity to develop language skills prior to deployment. Deployees from PNG and Vanuatu already had the basic language skills with their own national versions of Pijin, others acquired some Solomon Islands Pijin in country either on the job or through attending classes. While some ability to communicate in the local language was critical for all deployees interacting with Solomon Islanders — including Australians and New Zealanders — there are practical limits to the amount of time that can be set aside for language training. Several of those interviewed also emphasised the value of having Solomon Islanders participate in PDT to increase awareness of cultural contexts and other local conditions. Such involvement, which happened in the later stages, would have been beneficial in PDT throughout the mission.

Including Pacific Islanders in the PPF

Pacific Islanders were seen as crucial to RAMSI's success from the mission's outset. This was certainly one of the most consistent themes in all our interviews with key stakeholders. The value that Pacific Islanders

brought to the operation had a number of aspects. In one sense it was symbolic, signalling the regional character of the mission and underpinning RAMSI's legitimacy in the eyes of ordinary Solomon Islanders and the broader Pacific community. The inclusive character of RAMSI also helped to counter critiques that it was an Australian undertaking. The Pacific Islands contingent provided a greater breadth of policing skills, although these were not always fully utilised. Most important of all, Pacific Islanders were seen as bringing unique cultural and communications skills to an operation in which public outreach, community engagement and confidence building were critical to success.

An early PPF commander noted: 'I thought that their contribution far outweighed the numbers of police that they actually provided'. This sentiment was echoed on many occasions, even though some PPF leaders did not take full advantage of the presence of Pacific Islanders to improve Australian and New Zealand knowledge, skills and ability to operate effectively in the Solomon Islands context.

Pacific Islanders worked in frontline roles alongside Australians and New Zealanders from the outset, particularly in the outposts that were established in every province of Solomon Islands. Some Pacific Islanders felt that the team-based approach adopted by the PPF (that is, focusing on skills and ability to perform a task, rather than rank) could have been better explained prior to deployment. While a number of senior Pacific Islands contingent members appreciated the rationale behind the team approach, they nevertheless felt that there was more scope for using experienced Pacific Islanders as team leaders.

The core lesson is that operating alongside Pacific Islanders in a policing coalition paid rich dividends both for RAMSI and the AFP. As argued by one former PPF commander, this was a lesson that was not taken into account in the Enhanced Cooperation Program (ECP) in Papua New Guinea launched shortly after RAMSI deployed but which ended up suffering a very different fate.

Special arrangements for Pacific Islanders?

Over time, there was a range of factors that affected how and where Pacific Islanders were deployed in the mission. Such factors included their specific skillsets and/or lack of skills (which ranged widely between and within contributing countries), the year of deployment (i.e. broadly speaking, with a much stronger focus on executive policing in the early years, and a correspondingly greater focus on capacity building in the later years), and pressures external to RAMSI (for instance the preference on the part of Solomon Islands prime ministers for their Close Personal Protection Units to be staffed by Pacific Islanders rather than Australians or New Zealanders).

This meant that Pacific Islanders could not always be placed in their preferred positions, including those which gave them direct contact with Solomon Islands communities or police colleagues. There was clearly a phase in the later part of the mission when a relatively high proportion of Pacific Islanders were assigned to GBR base security — 'Zulu 7' duties. This disappointed some officers expecting greater engagement with the Solomon Islands community and meant that their deployment failed to meet their expectations. There were, of course, justifiable operational reasons for PPF placements: it was unrealistic to expect a perfect match between the demand for skills in the PPF and the supply. And, after all, the primary goal of the PPF in the second part of the mission was to build the capacity of the RSIPF, not that of the Pacific Islands contingent.

As the mission evolved, greater recognition was made of the Pacific Islands contingent as a distinct element of the PPF and one that required specific management responses. Such steps included:

- » establishment of the Pacific Islands Contingent Commander position in 2010, and the inclusion of that position as a member of the PPF Executive
- » establishment of a dedicated Pacific Islands contingent welfare officer
- » attempts to institute better selection procedures by, for example, approaching sending commands to provide officers with specific skill sets
- » organisation of more social and cultural activities at the main GBR base (e.g. 'Pacific Nights').

These steps did not necessarily solve the problem of how and where to deploy Pacific Islanders in the PPF to best effect but they did provide a stronger foundation for addressing those issues and for taking Pacific Islander views into account.

The nature of Pacific Policing

From the outset, PPF members — both in the leadership and rank-and-file — struggled with how best to implement the rule of law. While 'nobody was above the law', there was contention over how best to enforce law and order in a culturally appropriate and acceptable manner. A conception of policing as a problem-solving, community-based activity valued resolutions reached at the local level without recourse to the courts. It recognised that Solomon Islands communities, as with others in the Pacific Islands, had their own capabilities and distinct approaches for managing everyday disputes. Alternatively, a desire for consistent and rigorous law enforcement could be at odds to the 'policing as problem solving approach'. The PPF leadership looked to the Pacific Islands contingent to bring cultural competence (negotiation, discussion, patience) into the overall PPF skillset, while enforcing the law, as the following two quotes from senior Australian PPF leaders suggest:

This is where, I think, you saw the incredible contribution of the non-Australia and non-New Zealand Pacific Island countries. They were familiar with the chiefly system. They were fantastic in terms of attendance and bringing about reconciliation ceremonies. We had a lot of reconciliation ceremonies where we chose to respect the customary law rather than arresting or charging someone under the criminal law. And they were great at brokering those sort of agreements.

(Interview notes, #6; 2003-04)

...we call what we do today community policing. They've [Pacific Islanders] been doing it since [the year] dot. It's the sit down, have a cup of coffee, it's the discuss[ion], it's meet with the chiefs, it's what they do.

(Interview notes, #7; 2004-05)

While many appreciated the need and value of operating pragmatically within a local context characterised by legal pluralism, other Pacific Islanders, as noted in Chapter Three, endorsed the idea that ‘the law was the law’ and should be applied universally and impartially, and that police should not be part of community-level discussions leading to compensation payments as part of locally led resolutions. Even so, a number of Pacific Island members of the PPF told us they felt the PPF leadership (and/or the ‘Australian way’ of policing) did not leave enough leeway for the sort of problem-solving, community-based policing they felt comfortable with and which they thought was more appropriate to the circumstances in Solomon Islands. At no stage did this make RAMSI unworkable but the differences in styles was felt keenly by some Pacific Islanders, especially from the Melanesian countries:

Sure there were some negative things but I praise Australia for its leadership. Even so, the Australian policing concept won't work in Pacific societies. There's a need to adapt the curriculum, also the work plan.

(Interview notes, #86; 2010)

Most felt that the best way forward was open discussion and acknowledgement of differences in policing approaches as part of a pragmatic effort to find the best way of policing in a country such as Solomon Islands. While RAMSI has now concluded, this issue will persist in any cross-cultural policing initiatives in the region. The RSIPF has been actively considering such issues in its own strategic planning processes, including through the formulation and rollout of its Crime Prevention Strategy which entails extensive engagement with community leadership and incorporation of local approaches to dispute management. Policing in the region clearly needs a continuing conversation around these issues.

How has RAMSI affected individual members of the Pacific Islands contingent and their policing practices?

As noted in Chapters Three and Four, individual participants in the PPF reported a wide range of professional benefits flowing from their experiences. While these varied between individuals, the positive benefits were felt almost universally. Some of the most commonly cited benefits included: improved communications skills, both written and spoken, along with enhanced self-confidence; team-building skills; skills and knowledge in areas as varied as planning, report writing and record keeping, driving, investigations, command and control, detainee management and use of force; and a greater appreciation and understanding of the importance of professional standards and behaviour.

What are the lessons learned from RAMSI about the role of women officers in the PPF in the prevention of community violence and violence against women?

The experience of the female Pacific Islander police officers who took part in this research varied considerably, depending in particular on the status and role of women in their home organisations. While they understood and appreciated the AFP's best-practice approach to gender equality, some less-experienced female members of the PPF felt personally challenged by the expectation that they should perform the full range of policing duties alongside men. That said, virtually all female police surveyed or interviewed felt that their confidence in their own skills and abilities as police officers had been boosted by their participation in RAMSI.

Most female Pacific Island officers acknowledged that Solomon Islands was coming off a low base in terms of the role of women police in the RSIPF, and in the management of issues such as gender and family-based violence. Many felt that their presence had played a positive role both in improving community perceptions around the role of police in matters of family-based violence, and in serving as role models for a generation of younger Solomon Islands police. There was also some corroborative evidence for this from interviews with Solomon Islands police.

It cannot be claimed that RAMSI alone was responsible for raising the profile of gender, and gender-based violence issues, on the regional police agenda. Even so, it can be said that, at the very least, the RAMSI experience shared by scores of Pacific Islander police over the past 14 years has helped to reinforce the importance of gender and gender-related issues in Pacific police forces, among both the leadership and rank-and-file levels. As such, RAMSI has provided a platform for further work in this area.

How has the RAMSI experience affected the quality and integrity of Pacific Island policing and police forces?

Most former Pacific Islands contingent members reported that they had been able to use what they had learnt in RAMSI back in their own police forces. Indeed, we heard a number of examples of officers returning home to work in areas of direct relevance to their RAMSI experience. Some Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police agreed that officers returning from RAMSI deployments appeared to be more confident and professional, and were able to cite ways in which their forces had benefited.

Other less tangible, but by no means trivial, benefits of service in RAMSI include an enhanced sense of pride in good police work and a strong sense of identification with a broader 'police family'.

While important to distinguish between the impact of the RAMSI experience on individual police officers and its impact on police organisations, the latter is much more difficult to ascertain. The research revealed widely divergent views on this question of impact at the level of police organisations. In general, it appears that the benefits flowing from participation in RAMSI were most noticeable in the police forces of the smaller contributing countries. This makes sense intuitively, given that the smaller countries will in most cases have sent a larger proportion of their total police numbers to RAMSI than the larger countries, meaning that any impact at the organisational level would have a proportionately larger effect.

A number of respondents said that returning to their home police force after RAMSI was a somewhat dispiriting experience. Some felt that they were unable to utilise newly acquired skills and knowledge in their home organisation because of shortages of relevant resources (some respondents described the transition back home as going from a feast to a famine), or because more senior staff were not aware of, or interested in, new skillsets acquired on deployment.

While difficult to generalise, where new skills and knowledge were applied on return to home police organisations, this tended to occur in an ad hoc rather than a systematic way. In these circumstances, it is legitimate to ask how sustainable the dividends of RAMSI are likely to be. Are there steps that could or should have been taken at the time of return, or that could still be taken now that RAMSI has concluded, to maximise RAMSI's positive impacts, over a longer timeframe and wider geographical area?

How has RAMSI affected the degree and quality of relationships among police forces in the region?

It is very difficult to measure this, especially at an institutional level. The evidence we have captured is largely qualitative but suggests:

- » An almost universal sense of pride among Pacific Islanders in having taken part in a collective regional policing undertaking, resulting in an intangible, at times latent, but nevertheless lasting shared bond among PPF participants. For many, participation in the PPF was talked about as a life-defining experience.
- » As noted above, a strong sense of belonging to a broader 'police family' was engendered among participants in the PPF. This was particularly so, given that relatively few Pacific Islands contingent members had experience of other regional or international deployments, unlike many of their Australian and New Zealand counterparts.
- » In the majority of cases, a sense of gratitude and respect for the way the AFP led and managed the PPF, and a feeling of stronger links between individual Pacific police forces and the AFP.
- » In a number of cases, personal links between former PPF members from different Pacific Island countries were established and maintained for some time beyond the period of deployment, although in other instances such links did not seem to have been actively maintained.

RAMSI contributed to the sense of a 'police community' within the region among those who participated, and provided a platform for future cooperation between, and among, regional police organisations. It is plausible that without the RAMSI experience, we would not have seen examples of police-to-police development among Pacific Island forces such as the Cook Islands police delivering command and control training to other regional police services, or the RSIPF providing use of force and public order management training to Nauru and Samoa. Some interviewees provided examples of regional investigations benefiting from professional connections first established during RAMSI. Several respondents told us that cooperation within regional police cooperation mechanisms that stood outside RAMSI, such as the PICP Women's Advisory Network, and the Pacific network of Transnational Crime Units (TCUs), had been enhanced as a result of the building of trust and relationships between individual officers within RAMSI.

Beyond these findings, we found little evidence that RAMSI contributed in a structural or a systematic way to police networking in the Pacific, although it appears to have been leveraged in bilateral and regional

policing programs subsequently implemented. While police networking is fostered in many ways across the region, there may have been missed opportunity for maximising impact.

How can the RAMSI experience be consolidated to enhance the future connectivity and effectiveness of Pacific policing?

I'm sure I had an impact in my work in community policing in Malaita. It really helped my career [back] in Vanuatu. We really should keep together as one team. It gives us voice, it makes an impact. Our leaders recognise [that] we can help ourselves.

(Interview notes, #81; 2003)

It is possible to point to a range of management initiatives that would likely have reinforced RAMSI's impact on the capacity of Pacific police services, and on future police cooperation in the region, had they been implemented in parallel with RAMSI itself. Now that RAMSI has concluded, however, the time for implementing such measures has largely passed. Even so, it is worth noting for the record, and for future reference, that many of those who participated in this research were strong advocates of:

- » More systematic end of mission debriefing, aimed at capturing lessons learned progressively and iteratively as the operation matured.
- » Better, or in many cases, the introduction of any, procedures around reintegration back into home police services in order systematically to understand and exploit the benefits derived from RAMSI deployments, both at an individual and an organisational level.
 - » While it is likely that the introduction of such processes would in many cases have required the support of the AFP as part of existing bilateral assistance programs, the costs associated would have been relatively modest and would in any event have been consistent with Australia's broad capacity-building objectives in the region.

While the time for introducing such initiatives does appear to have passed, there are nevertheless some steps that could still be taken which could harness the goodwill that RAMSI generated and which still remains, and which would assist in reinforcing the mission's professional dividends. Whatever substantive gains RAMSI has made to policing in the region are likely to erode if not reinforced over the medium- to long-term.

Our experience was that former PPF members from the Pacific Islands were, by and large, keen to reflect on their experiences in RAMSI, that they had points they were keen to convey, and, finally, that they had not really had an organised opportunity to do this since their return from deployment to the PPF.

There was considerable enthusiasm among those we interviewed and surveyed for more structured and well-supported regional policing networks that build on the strong desire of many PPF members to remain connected to the regional policing community and to continue developing their skills. Many thought that such networks could help them problem solve, share policing experiences and raise awareness of regional training opportunities.

While some of those we interviewed mused on the value of a regional police academy, more seemed to favour a model of regional police capacity building that was based on 'learning-by-doing' and inclusive of a range of nations taking on training roles, rather than privileging one place or one training institute. Most saw value in more regional policing opportunities, not just in UN missions but in their own region where the experience of RAMSI had inspired and created a commitment to working with *wantoks* and neighbours, and an enthusiasm to continue to develop appropriate policing approaches that fit the culturally distinct and resource-limited contexts of the region.

The enthusiasm to reflect suggests that there could be much to gain from a more extensive and structured process involving, among others, PPF leaders from different countries, from different periods and at various ranks and career stages, in order to ensure that the RAMSI legacy for regional policing is sustained.

We note that at their meeting in Samoa in September 2017 Forum Leaders tasked the Forum Secretariat to initiate region-wide consultations on developing a 'Biketawa Plus' declaration 'as a foundation for strategic future regional responses recognising the importance of an expanded concept of security...'. This decision owes much to regional reflection on and satisfaction with the success of RAMSI, and the process mandated by Forum Leaders would give added relevance to any structured post-RAMSI activities initiated by the AFP.

Recommendations

The project generated a short set of recommendations aimed at capturing best practice from the involvement of Pacific Island personnel in RAMSI, and at sustaining and consolidating the gains made for policing both in individual police forces in the Pacific, and for relationships between police forces in the region. These recommendations were largely addressed to the AFP even if some of them may have broader relevance, and have been provided to the AFP. The recommendations will be discussed at workshops and other forums, and will inform the development of a policy-relevant paper.



ENDNOTES

- ¹ We do not know how many police have left their various police forces since deployment. However, figures from Kiribati suggest that by 2017 almost half had retired or were deceased.
- ² Figures provided by PPF Commander Ben McDevitt at the One Year Anniversary Press Conference held at the Office of the Special Coordinator in Honiara, 22 July 2004.
- ³ No date was recorded for this interviewee's deployment
- ⁴ From an interview on Radio Australia, '[Regional Police Pleased with their Contribution to RAMSI](http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/international/radio/onairhighlights/regional-police-pleased-with-their-contribution-to-ramsi)', updated 22 March, 2012, accessed November 2016., at <http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/international/radio/onairhighlights/regional-police-pleased-with-their-contribution-to-ramsi>

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