

Mapping Security Cooperation in the Pacific Islands (2026 edition)

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Abbreviations

AOSIS	Alliance of Small Island States	PICP	Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police
APG	Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering	PIDC	Pacific Immigration Development Community
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum	PIDF	Pacific Islands Development Forum
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations	PIDP	Pacific Islands Development Program
CERT	Computer emergency response team	PIF	Pacific Islands Forum
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting	PIFS	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
CNMI	Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands	PILON	Pacific Islands Law Officers' Network
CROP	Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific	PLG	Polynesian Leaders Group
DDoS	Distributed denial of service	PMSP	Pacific Maritime Security Program
EEZ	Exclusive economic zone	PNA	Parties to the Nauru Agreement
EOMs	Election Observer Missions	PNG	Papua New Guinea
FAO	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation	PPA	Pacific Power Association
FEMAT	Fiji Emergency Medical Assistance Team	PPDP-R	Pacific Police Development Program – Regional
FFA	Forum Fisheries Agency	PPE	Personal protective equipment
FIU	Financial intelligence unit	PPI	Pacific Policing Initiative
FLNKS	Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste	PRG	Pacific Response Group
FOC	Forum Officials Committee	PSC	Pacific Security College
FSM	Federated States of Micronesia	PSIDS	Pacific Small Island Developing States
FSRS	Forum Officials Subcommittee on Regional Security	PTCCC	Pacific Transnational Crime Coordination Centre
GCF	Green Climate Fund	PTCN	Pacific Transnational Crime Network
HADR	Humanitarian and disaster relief	RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands
IUU	Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing	RAPID	Rapid Assistance for Pacific Incidents and Disasters
JHoPS	Joint Heads of Pacific Security	RMI	Republic of the Marshall Islands
JPIDD	Japan Pacific Islands Defense Dialogue	SIDS	Small Island Developing States
MAP	Mutual Assistance Programme	SIDS SAMOA	SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway
MOU	Memorandum of understanding	SPC	Pacific Community
MSG	Melanesian Spearhead Group	SPDMM	South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution	SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	SPTO	South Pacific Tourism Organisation
NZDF	New Zealand Defence Force	TC	Tropical cyclone
OCO	Oceania Customs Organisation	TCU	Transnational crime unit
PacCERT	Pacific Islands computer emergency response teams	UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
PaCSO	Pacific Cyber Security Operational Network	UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
PALM	Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting	UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
PASO	Pacific Aviation Safety Office	USP	University of the South Pacific
PFC	Pacific Fusion Centre		

Introduction

In the 2018 Boe Declaration on Regional Security, **Pacific Islands Forum (PIF)** leaders recognised that the Pacific Islands region is facing ‘an increasingly complex regional security environment driven by multifaceted security challenges’. This raises the question of how Pacific Island states and territories¹ will respond to these wide-ranging, but frequently interconnected, challenges, including what role regional security cooperation can play. As in other regions, Pacific Island states have recognised through multiple security declarations that security cooperation can help them address the increasingly transnational and globalised nature of threats – such as pandemic diseases, climate change and transnational crime – that are difficult for states to respond to individually. These declarations reflect a broadening understanding of ‘security’ that has occurred globally, particularly in the past decade, with security challenges no longer narrowly defined as primarily military matters, but now covering a wide range of cross-cutting and transnational issues. Since the adoption of the PIF Leaders’ Blue Pacific Ocean of Peace Declaration in September 2025, foregrounding peace in Pacific security is a priority for the region.

The purpose of this Research Paper is to identify and map the various cooperative security agreements, arrangements and institutions between and among states and territories in the Pacific Islands region, and their partners. Mapping aids ongoing analysis of overlaps and gaps and informs our subsequent proposals on how security cooperation could be best orientated to address current and future regional security challenges.² While this paper focuses on state-centred cooperation, we acknowledge that a range of non-state actors play an important role in humanitarian response and peacebuilding, both formally and informally, and are part of the wider regional security landscape (Bhagwan-Rolls and Evans 2020).

Regional entities in the Pacific are themselves diverse, ranging from the comparably populous Papua New Guinea (PNG), with 10.2 million people, to Niue, with 1,600 people, and spanning large islands and small archipelagos. They also have differing political systems and levels of economic development. Pacific Island states and territories also span a range of different political statuses, from sovereign states through to colonised entities, as well as differing constitutional relationships with metropolitan states and diverse international relationships.

Security cooperation frequently involves the weaving together of state, bilateral and multilateral initiatives. Multilateral cooperation includes formal institutions and other processes, meetings and dialogues at which state officials primarily discuss security concerns. Some of the latter may be ongoing, while others may be formed in response to a specific crisis or event. It should be noted that no formal, overarching region-wide collective security architecture exists in the Pacific. Rather, security cooperation in the Pacific Islands is a

patchwork of agreements, arrangements and activities between Pacific Island states and territories and their security partners³ that reflects differing priorities and geopolitical dynamics (Wallis et al. 2023, 2025). In this regard, the resource constraints that most Pacific Island states experience mean that partners are active participants in security cooperation alongside Pacific Island states. The roles and focuses of these partners vary tremendously, as do their policy commitments, and the impact and effectiveness thereof.

We have adopted a definition of security cooperation as ‘common action between two or more states to advance a common security goal’ (Bisley 2012:23). We focus on state interactions for analytical simplicity and due to the confines of space; this should not be read as implying that the many intrastate local and community security initiatives and mechanisms practised in the region are unimportant.

This paper begins by identifying the major regional organisations and partners involved in security cooperation in the Pacific Islands. It is then structured around major security challenges that are dealt with cooperatively and recognised in the Boe Declaration: maritime security, environmental and resource security, humanitarian and disaster relief (HADR), transnational crime and cybersecurity. We conclude by identifying the questions our mapping raised for the future of Pacific security cooperation.

Regional security actors

Pacific Islands Forum

The most significant regional organisation focused on politics and security is the PIF. The PIF was established in 1971 and now has 18 members,⁴ plus Tokelau, Wallis and Fatuna, Guam, and American Samoa as associate members. The majority of funding for the PIF Secretariat and its activities has traditionally come from Australia and New Zealand, which are members, but since 2021, funding has been realigned so that 51 per cent comes from island member states. This change was made to dilute the influence Australia and New Zealand were perceived to have over the Secretariat from their previously dominant funding. Australia and New Zealand, and at times PNG, have provided additional ‘voluntary budget’ in excess of this mandatory membership funding (PIFS 2021).

In 2019, the PIF established a **Forum Officials Subcommittee on Regional Security (FSRS)**, which was a reinvention of the Forum Regional Security Committee that operated until 2015. As the name implies, the FSRS is subordinate to the region’s premier officials-level coordinating mechanism, the **Forum Officials Committee (FOC)**. It consists of officials and practitioners and is mandated to ‘develop a Pacific Security Dialogue through the FSRS in order to provide a more inclusive space for regional security discussions’ (PIF 26/7/2019:5). The FSRS meets biannually and regularly discusses the security issues facing the region; coordinates and monitors the implementation of all PIF security declarations and

commitments; prioritises regional security issues and formulates actions to manage the regional security environment; and keeps the FOC apprised of regional security issues and initiatives. The FSRS also has governance oversight of the **Pacific Fusion Centre (PFC)**, and since 2023 endorses the annual Pacific Regional Security Outlook Report. The PFC and the Pacific Security College (PSC) both attend the FSRS.

Regional technical bodies working on security issues are also allowed to attend the FSRS, including many **Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP)** agencies; the non-CROP regional law enforcement bodies, such as the PFC, **Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police (PICP)**, **Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO)**, **Pacific Immigration Development Community (PIDC)**, **Pacific Islands Law Officers' Network (PILON)**; and relevant international agencies, as required. The CROP, which is chaired by the PIF Secretary General, provides high-level policy advice to, and coordinates action between, the executives of regional organisations. The CROP currently consists of the **Pacific Community (SPC)**, **Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA)**, **University of the South Pacific (USP)**, **Pacific Islands Development Program (PIDP)**, **Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)**, **South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO)**, **Pacific Power Association (PPA)** and the **Pacific Aviation Safety Office (PASO)**.

Annual PIF leaders' meetings have also addressed security concerns and led to a number of declarations relating to security in the region, as outlined in Table 1. These declarations are also recognised in the overarching strategy of the PIF, the **2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent (2022)**, which offers the vision of a 'resilient Pacific Region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion and prosperity, that ensures all Pacific peoples can lead free, healthy and productive lives'.

Since 2000, the Biketawa Declaration has provided the framework for regional crisis management and has been endorsed by all members of the PIF. Most significantly, it was invoked to support the **Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI)** (2003–13) that responded to escalating instability in Solomon Islands in 2003. RAMSI was made up of police personnel from Australia, the Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, PNG, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu; military personnel from Australia, New Zealand, PNG, Fiji and Tonga; and civilian personnel from Australia, New Zealand, PNG, Fiji and Tonga. The **Pacific Regional Assistance to Nauru** initiative (2005–10) that responded to a deterioration in governance in Nauru was also authorised under the Biketawa Declaration. The Biketawa Declaration also facilitates Election Observer

Table 1: Declarations relating to security in the Pacific Islands region

Declaration	Security issues addressed
<u>South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (1985)</u>	Banned the use, testing and possession of nuclear weapons in the South Pacific
<u>Honiara Declaration (1992)</u>	Transnational crime Law enforcement cooperation
<u>Aitutaki Declaration (1997)</u>	Widened regional security agenda to include threats from natural disasters, environmental damage, economic, social and environmental policies and external threats to state sovereignty
<u>Biketawa Declaration (2000)</u>	Emphasised 'good governance' and the rule of law Acknowledged the principle of 'non-interference in the domestic affairs of another member state' Asserted that in a 'time of crisis or in response to members' request for assistance, for action to be taken on the basis of all members of the forum being part of the Pacific Islands extended family'
<u>Nasonini Declaration (2002)</u>	International counterterrorism measures
<u>Auckland Declaration (2004)</u>	Greater regional cooperation on security issues
<u>Niue Declaration (2008)</u>	'Growing threat posed by climate change to the economic, social, cultural and environmental well-being and security of Pacific Island countries'
<u>Waiheke Declaration (2011)</u>	Sustainable economic development and enhanced regional cooperation and integration
<u>Rarotonga Declaration (2012)</u>	Gender equality
<u>Majuro Declaration (2013)</u>	Committed forum members to 'demonstrate climate leadership'
<u>Palau Declaration (2014)</u>	Ocean sustainability

Table 1: Declarations relating to security in the Pacific Islands region (cont.)

Declaration	Security issues addressed
<u>Port Moresby Declaration (2015)</u>	The threat ‘posed by climate change to the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being and security’ of the region
<u>Boe Declaration (2018)</u>	‘Expanded concept of security inclusive of human security, humanitarian assistance, prioritising environmental security, and regional cooperation in building resilience to disasters and climate change, including through regional cooperation and support’ Under the Boe Declaration Action Plan, PIF member states are encouraged to develop national security strategies that provide ‘an adaptable framework for a country to meet the basic needs and security concerns of citizens (human security) and address external and internal threats to the country’. These strategies will ‘enable [PIF] Members to coherently and holistically identify their national security priorities and what they require (capacity and capability) to address them’ (PIFS 2019:21). Samoa (2018), Vanuatu (2019), Palau (2022), Cook Islands (2023), Solomon Islands (2025), Tonga (2025) and Niue (2025) have launched national security strategies or policies. ⁵
<u>Kainaki II Declaration (2019)</u>	Urgent climate change action
<u>Teieniwa Vision (2020)</u>	Regional commitment to progress Pacific unity against corruption, which extends to principles of good governance contained within the Biketawa Declaration ‘Recall[s] our collective aspirations captured in ... the Boe Declaration on Regional Security’
<u>Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the Face of Climate Change-Related Sea-Level Rise (2021)</u>	Safeguarding of EEZs
<u>Declaration on the Continuity of Statehood and the Protection of Persons in the Face of Climate Change-Related Sea-Level Rise (2023)</u>	Safeguarding the perpetuity of statehood; territorial sovereignty in the face of climate threats
<u>Statement on the Fukushima ALPS-Treated Nuclear Wastewater Issue (2023)</u>	Nuclear-free Pacific and ocean/ environmental safeguarding
<u>Declaration on the Establishment of the Pacific Resilience Facility (2023)</u>	‘To build systemic resilience to the impact of climate change’
<u>Revitalised Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (2023)</u>	Human security and sustainable, equitable development
<u>Pacific Regional Framework on Climate Mobility (2023)</u>	‘To ensure the protection and practice of the rights, cultural values and heritage and traditional knowledge of Pacific peoples in global and regional protocols for climate and disaster risk reduction, and mobility including relocation, migration and displacement’
<u>Lagatoi Declaration (2023) made by the Pacific ICT Ministerial Declaration</u>	‘Reaffirm(s) our commitment to the Boe Declaration on Regional Security emphasising cybersecurity as a component of strengthening regional security and combating cybercrime’
<u>Blue Pacific Ocean of Peace Declaration (2025)</u>	Leader-level commitment ‘to safeguard our ocean, our people and our future’ to ensure that the Pacific remains ‘a zone of peace, free from conflict and rivalry, where cooperation and respect guide relationships’

Source: compiled by the authors.

Missions (EOMs) such as Cook Islands (August 2022), Solomon Islands (April 2024), Samoa (August 2025) and Tonga (November 2025). Outside of the Biketawa Declaration, in October 2024 a high-level **Forum Troika Plus Mission to New Caledonia** was undertaken to understand local perspectives since the unrest of May 2024, and to identify ways to support ongoing dialogue about New Caledonia’s future.

Table 2 summarises key regional strategies that respond to the leader-level security-related declarations identified in Table 1.

Pacific Community

The **Pacific Community** (SPC) is the principal scientific and technical institution in the region. It plays a key role in managing, and promoting cooperation in, the fields of human and resource security in the Pacific Islands. It has a wider membership than the PIF.⁶ SPC opened a Melanesia office in Vanuatu 2017, and since 2022 also established subregional offices in FSM and Tonga.

Pacific Islands Development Forum

The **Pacific Islands Development Forum** (PIDF) was formed in 2013 after Fiji was suspended from the PIF in 2009. The PIDF sits adjacent to the existing regional CROP architecture. Membership includes Fiji, FSM, Kiribati, Nauru, RMI, Palau, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Timor-Leste. The PIDF continued even after Fiji resumed active membership

of the PIF in 2014, although since Fiji’s change of government in 2022 has considerably reduced activity and now appears dormant for all intents and purposes.

Subregional groupings

Pacific Island states have also developed subregional groupings. The **Melanesian Spearhead Group** (MSG), which includes Fiji, PNG, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste (FLNKS),⁷ is the most established, having been formed in 1988 and with a secretariat located in Vanuatu, the construction of which was funded by China. The **Polynesian Leaders Group** (PLG) was established in 2011 and includes Samoa, Tonga, French Polynesia, American Samoa, Cook Islands, Tokelau, Niue and Tuvalu. It has also hosted Māori delegations from New Zealand, as the organisation is open to Polynesian societies rather than nations. Unlike the MSG, the PLG maintains a working relationship with the PIF and holds its meetings on the margins of PIF fora. The **Micronesian President’s Summit** was established in 2001 and involves leaders of Palau, Kiribati, Nauru, RMI and FSM meeting annually to discuss issues of ‘Micronesian solidarity’. A similar **Micronesian Chief Executives Summit** was initiated in 2003 and includes the presidents of Palau, FSM and RMI, as well as governors from the US territories of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), Guam and the FSM states of Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei and Yap.

Table 2: Key regional strategies to implement security declarations

Declaration	Security issues addressed
<u>Boe Declaration Action Plan (2019)</u>	Sets out specific, achievable and targeted activities under the relevant strategic focus areas prioritised under the Boe Declaration on Regional Security. Reviewed in 2025.
<u>2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent Implementation Plan (2023)</u>	The Peace and Security Pillar is one of seven strategic focus areas of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent and identifies seven regional collective actions that include attention to the Boe Declaration Action Plan, the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration, national climate security assessments, peacebuilding initiatives and collective Pacific diplomacy in global security discussions (PIFS 2023).
<u>Pacific Regional Framework on Climate Mobility (2023)</u>	Guides Pacific Island governments in ensuring climate-induced mobility includes staying in place and is rights-based, peoples-centred, culturally appropriate and respects national sovereignty. Its Implementation Plan is for the period 2025–30, establishes a Climate Mobility Action Hub, facilitates peer-to-peer exchanges on planned relocation and includes a Sub-Group on Human Rights, Traditional Knowledge and Climate Mobility under the Technical Working Group on Human Mobility.
<u>Teieniwa Vision Implementation Strategy (2024)</u>	A regional roadmap to unite Pacific Island nations against corruption. The 52nd PIF Leaders’ Meeting established a taskforce in November 2023, supported by PIFS and UNODC. Since 2024, it has convened on a bimonthly basis.

Source: The authors.

Of all the established subregional political organisations, the MSG has demonstrated the broadest ambition to develop a role in the area of security cooperation. The MSG established a regional security working group mechanism in 2019 and it has met annually since. Implementation activities have to date primarily included subregional police training activities with funding support from associate member Indonesia. In 2024, MSG leaders endorsed the draft MSG Security Strategy 2023–2028.

Major regional partners

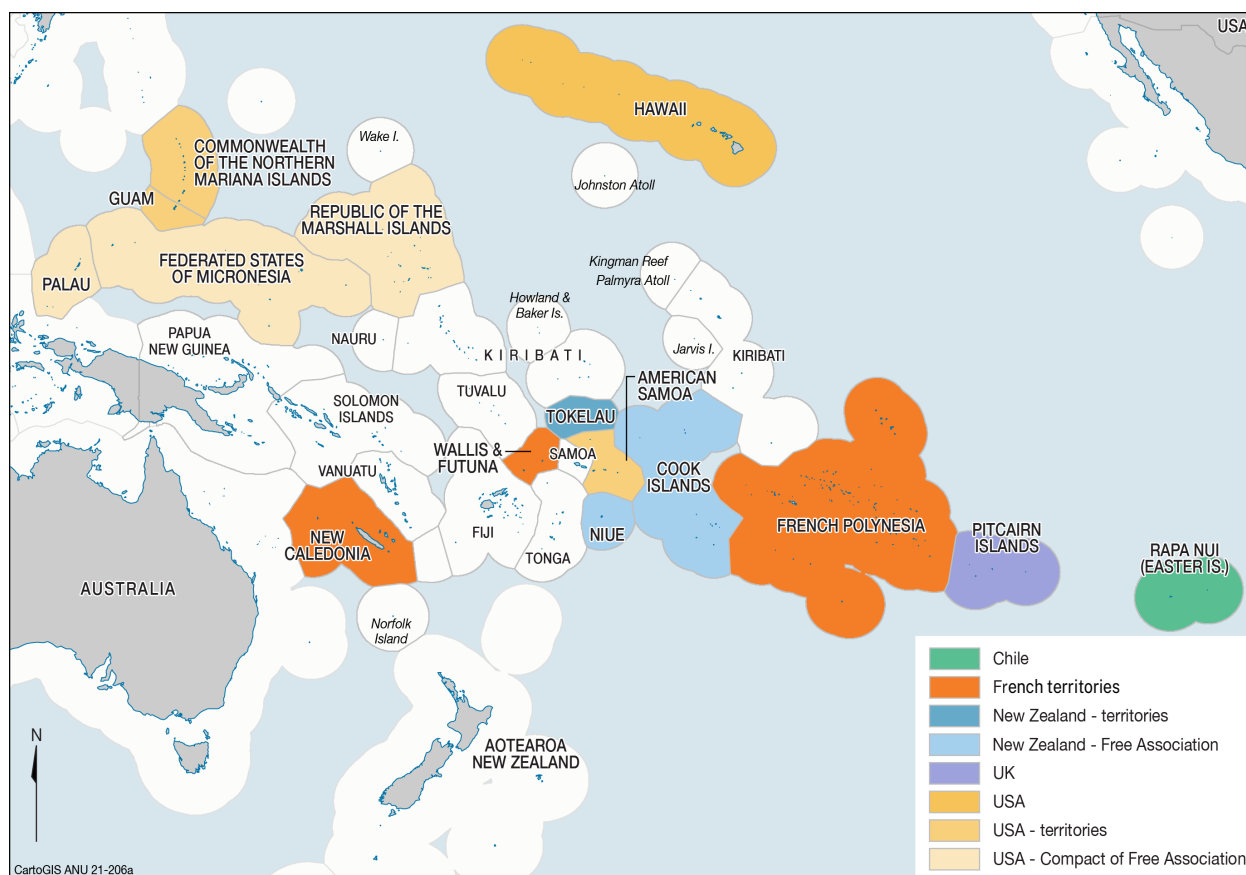
Partners have many reasons for engaging with the Pacific region, ranging from colonial legacy to geographical proximity and geopolitical interests. However, it is indisputable that interest in the Pacific Islands has increased over the past decade.

Australia

Australia is the most engaged and financially supportive partner across the Pacific Islands region (Lowy Institute 2025). Its ‘Pacific Step-Up’ policy was announced in 2018 by the Morrison government. The Albanese government elected in May 2022 has continued and expanded that policy along the theme of centring the ‘Pacific Family’. Implementation of Australia’s Pacific policy is coordinated by an inter-agency Office of the

Pacific (within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade) that was established in 2019. Under this policy, Australia has provided increased opportunities for labour mobility and permanent migration to Australia as well as infrastructure investment, and has established a diplomatic presence in all PIF member states. Australia also created the Pacific Fusion Centre, which has been located in Port Vila, Vanuatu, since 2022, to provide strategic assessments and analysis of open-source material to Pacific Islands senior leadership, policymakers and senior security officials on Boe Declaration themes, and the Pacific Security College, an educational institution intended to strengthen regional security through collaborative learning and enhanced people-to-people links. Regional assistance also includes the longstanding **Pacific Maritime Security Program**, and in 2024 Australia launched the **Pacific Policing Initiative (PPI)** (endorsed by PIF leaders) and the **Pacific Response Group (PRG)** (endorsed by the South Pacific Defence Ministers’ Meeting). A specific Pacific unit of the Australian Defence Force Mobile Training Team was created to help facilitate capacity building in the region. This built on Australia’s network of defence attachés located in Vanuatu, Tonga, Solomon Islands, PNG, Fiji and Hawai’i, as well as its longstanding Defence Cooperation Program, which has projects and personnel in many Pacific Island states.

Figure 1: Pacific constitutional relationships



Source: Map reproduced with the permission of CartoGIS Services, Scholarly Information Services, The Australian National University.

Australia has pursued bilateral security treaties and agreements across the region, including:

- a treaty with Solomon Islands that enables the rapid deployment of troops and assistance (2017)
- a *vuvale* partnership⁸ with Fiji (2019, renewed in 2023) intended to encourage cooperation in a range of areas, including security
- a comprehensive strategic and economic partnership (2020), security agreement (2023) and mutual defence treaty (2025) with PNG
- a security agreement with Vanuatu (2022, although it has not been endorsed by the Vanuatu parliament and negotiations for a security-centred Nakamal Agreement are ongoing)
- an economic-and security-focused memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Kiribati (2023)
- an economic- and security-focused bilateral partnership agreement with Samoa (2023)
- the Falepili Union Treaty with Tuvalu (2023) which provides that ‘Tuvalu will mutually agree with Australia any partnership, arrangement or engagement with any other State or entity on security and defence-related matters in Tuvalu’
- a treaty with Nauru (2024) which commits Australia to investing in Nauru’s economic and security sectors, including banking.

The 2025 Australia–PNG Mutual Defence Treaty (Pukpuk Treaty) was perhaps the most significant initiative, as it created Australia’s first new alliance in more than 70 years (and PNG’s first ever), including agreement that the two countries ‘would act to meet the common danger, in accordance with its constitutional processes’.

Australia is a full member of the PIF.

New Zealand

Since 2018, New Zealand has adopted three policy approaches to the Pacific under two foreign ministers and three governments: the ‘Pacific Reset’ (2018–21); the ‘Pacific Resilience’ approach (2021–23); and the Pacific Reset ‘Reinvigorated’ (2023–). New Zealand’s ‘Pacific Reset’, launched in 2018 by the Ardern-led coalition government, sought to reorient New Zealand as a Pacific nation (Niue, Cook Islands and Tokelau are part of the Realm of New Zealand) and deepen its regional involvement across diplomatic spheres, defence engagement, policing and economic development. The pivot to the Pacific was labelled as the government’s ‘top [foreign policy] priority’ (MFAT 2019) and the reset was described as a ‘refreshed New Zealand approach to the Pacific region ... driven by our strong Pacific identity and interconnectedness with the region, coupled with the direct impact the Pacific’s stability and prosperity has on New Zealand’s national interests’ (MFAT 2019). The reset included establishing the Pacific and Development Group within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade; expanding New Zealand’s diplomatic footprint by 10 new diplomatic positions in the region

and four to promote Pacific policy globally; and increasing development spending by NZ\$714 million. The second Ardern government launched the Pacific Resilience approach which reflected Foreign Minister Nanaia Mahuta’s broader Mahuta Doctrine placing Te Tiriti o Waitangi at the heart of New Zealand foreign policy. The Pacific Resilience approach was framed as building on the Reset and called for the embedding of Pacific cultural frameworks in daily practice, and strengthening cultural competence and knowledge of the Pacific. The election of the Luxon-led coalition government in 2023 saw the return of Winston Peters, the chief architect of the Pacific Reset, as foreign minister and a Pacific policy approach Peters described as the Pacific Reset ‘reinvigorated’ (Peters 19/7/2024). A core theme of the three policy approaches has been the importance of Pacific regionalism — often termed Pacific Centrality — which reflects the value small states such as New Zealand place on multilateral arrangements as platforms for influence and collective security.

New Zealand has sought to strengthen its security relationships including:

- The New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) Vaka Tahī Pacific Partnership Model, which was developed to guide the NZDF’s engagement and cooperation with its Pacific partners (although it is unclear how this is applied in practice).
- The Pacific Defence Gender Network, which was launched in Samoa in 2019 and meets annually.
- The Pacific Small Armies Forum (Fiji, Tonga, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste and New Zealand), which has met annually since 2020.
- The Pacific Leader Development Programme, which has trained over 2,500 defence and security leaders across Tonga, Fiji, PNG and Vanuatu and built training centres in each country to support ongoing leadership training.
- The Fiji–New Zealand Defence Partnership Programme, which was expanded to include assistance on military justice reform and legislation; in 2022 New Zealand signed the the Duavata Partnership with Fiji focused on strengthening security assistance and cooperation; and in 2023 the two countries signed the Statement of Intent on Defence Cooperation (2023–25) and a Status of Forces Agreement (2023).
- A 2025–2029 Partnership Statement with PNG which includes a focus on enhanced security cooperation.
- The Mutual Assistance Programme (MAP) Under New Zealand has provided technical advisors to the Cook Islands, Timor-Leste, Fiji, PNG, Vanuatu, Tonga and Solomon Islands, including in embedded roles such as deputy chief of staff with the Papua New Guinea Defence Force.

By 2025, the enduring foreign policy emphasis on sustaining a deeper, comprehensive focus on the Pacific and ensuring a stable, prosperous and resilient

region was self-assessed to be progressing in the right direction (MFAT 2025:23). For the first time in 17 years, a high-level ministerial visit to the North Pacific took place in 2025 (RMI, FSM and Palau) and RMI and FSM ambassadors were accredited to New Zealand for the first time also. New Zealand has a Treaty of Friendship (1962) with Samoa, and a 2019 Statement of Partnership on security cooperation.

New Zealand is a full member of the PIF.

United States (US)

The US's 2019 Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy included a 'Pacific Pledge' to increase its involvement in the region, particularly through development assistance. The US has territories in the region (Guam, CNMI and American Samoa), and the independent states of FSM, RMI and Palau maintain Compacts of Free Association with the US (granting access to live and work in the US and aid support in return for American oversight of their security and defence interests). The funding elements of the compact agreements were renegotiated and agreed for FSM and Palau in 2023 and RMI in 2024. The US also has military bases in the region, including Anderson Air Force Base on Guam and the Ronald Reagan Ballistic Missile Defence test site on Kwajalein Atoll. The US Indo-Pacific Command is located in Hawai'i and provides strategic and operational direction to the US Pacific Fleet, US Pacific Air Forces, US Army Pacific and US Marine Corps Forces, Pacific (approximately 375,000 personnel). The US Coastguard currently has shiprider agreements with 12 Pacific Island countries, including FSM, Palau, PNG, Samoa and Vanuatu. The US signed a Defense Cooperation Agreement with PNG in 2023 and an Acquisition and Cross Servicing Agreement with Fiji in 2024. In 2025, the Papua New Guinea Defence Force participated in the multilateral Exercise Talisman Sabre alongside the US and Australia.

The US is a dialogue partner of the PIF and appointed its first-ever US envoy to the PIF in 2022. Also in 2022, the US led the formation of the Partners in the Blue Pacific in collaboration with Australia, Japan, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, with the intent to facilitate 'more effective and efficient cooperation in support of Pacific island priorities'. However, since the US's 2025 withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, increased trade tariffs and immigration restrictions, as well as the closure of USAID, and the removal of ambassadors, there has been some uncertainty regarding its policy on the Pacific Islands region. In 2026, the Trump administration announced its withdrawal of membership from SPREP, but has retained membership of SPC.⁹

France

France sees the Pacific Islands as key to its 'Une stratégie Indo-Pacifique', under which it seeks to create 'a security continuum which extends from Djibouti to French Polynesia' (Guitton 2019). France has three territories in the region: New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna. The first two are at different stages of decolonisation, with increasing degrees of autonomy

negotiated; Kanaky New Caledonia has been on the UN's list of Non-Self-Governing Territories Decolonisation since 1986, and French Polynesia since 2013, after both were withdrawn from the list in 1946/47. Following the violently tragic 2024 unrest in New Caledonia regarding the political transition of the territory, France imposed a disputed process for political resolution via the 2025 Bougival Agreement and has prioritised a full regional integration of French territories into the Pacific. The situation remains volatile and is a flashpoint for Pacific-based conflict. The January 2026 Elysée-Oudinot Accord signed by French President Macron and five New Caledonian parliamentary groups is designed to 'clarify' the Bougival Agreement. But as the FLNKS boycotted its negotiation and it requires both French parliamentary approval and ratification by referendum in New Caledonia, it remains unclear whether the new accord will provide a peaceful pathway for New Caledonia's political future (MacLellan 21/1/2026).

France has hosted periodic Oceania Summit meetings;¹⁰ the most recent in 2025 focused on shared climate commitments and ocean governance while the previous 2020 summit addressed the legacy of French nuclear weapons testing.

France is a dialogue partner of the PIF, but its engagement was boosted in 2016 when New Caledonia and French Polynesia became full members.

Japan

Japan sees the region as part of its 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' strategy, although its interests are more squarely focused on the South China Sea and South-East Asia. Japan has a significant and longstanding development assistance program to the region, although it is not seen as a significant security partner. Japan has hosted the Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM) every three years since 1997, and at its 2021 meeting announced its 'Pacific Bond' policy, intended to reinforce cooperation between Japan and the region. In 2021, Japan also hosted the virtual Japan Pacific Islands Defense Dialogue (JPIDD) which included 14 Pacific countries and seven partner countries (Australia, Canada, Chile, France, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the US). The second JPIDD meeting was held in 2024 at which Japan pledged patrol boats to Fiji. The most recent PALM, in 2024, focused on the controversial Fukushima ALPS-treated nuclear wastewater discharge.

Japan is a dialogue partner of the PIF.

China

China has diplomatic relations with 11 Pacific states (Cook Islands, FSM, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu). China has extensive — although declining — development assistance and lending programs in the region, including through its Belt and Road Initiative, and Chinese state-owned enterprises are engaged in the commercial sector. Chinese military and security cooperation in the Pacific has concentrated on the PNG, Tongan and Fijian militaries (the only Pacific states with military

capabilities), as well as Vanuatu's mobile police force, including through renovating infrastructure, port visits, training, grants and officer exchanges. Since 2022 China has established a policing cooperation program with the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force, including multiple rotations of the China Police Liaison Team with a focus on public order management, combating cybercrime and drug trafficking, as well the provision of equipment including drones and vehicles, and security for the Pacific Games. In addition, China has policing cooperation with Fiji, Kiribati, Vanuatu and Tonga. China also funds the annual China–Pacific Island Countries Economic Development and Cooperation Forum; the most recent was held in 2025 and reaffirmed shared commitment to nuclear non-proliferation.

China is a dialogue partner of the PIF and increasingly pursues bilateral agreements with Pacific Island countries. For example, since 2021 China has signed six bilateral security agreements, although in 2022 it failed in a broader attempt to put in place a regional agreement.¹¹ While trailing behind other traditional partners in the Pacific with regards to humanitarian assistance, China is increasingly engaging in post-disaster relief efforts in the region with the establishment of the China–Pacific Island Countries Disaster Management Cooperation Mechanism and the China–Pacific Island Countries Center for Disaster Risk Reduction Cooperation in Guangdong in early 2023.

Taiwan

Taiwan has diplomatic relations with Tuvalu, RMI and Palau. Taiwan provides development assistance, technical assistance and support for small-scale infrastructure projects. In 2025, Taiwan signed a security cooperation agreement with RMI focusing on maritime awareness, cyber defence and countering malign influence; and the Kaitas Treaty with Tuvalu to facilitate future cooperation between the two countries.

Taiwan is a development partner of the PIF under the 1992 Honiara Communiqué. As Taiwan is not a PIF Dialogue Partner it meets with its partners separately. Taiwan's status has created tensions. Most notably this led to Solomon Islands' decision not to invite dialogue or development partners to the 54th PIF Leaders' Meeting in Honiara in 2025.

Indonesia

Indonesia presents itself as part of the region by virtue of five provinces it characterises as Melanesian (Papua, West Papua, Maluku, North Maluku and East Nusa Tenggara) (see May 2021:12). In 2019, it convened an Indonesia South Pacific Forum in Jakarta and subsequently announced a 'Pacific Elevation' strategy intended to enhance economic engagement, promote greater cooperation on common concerns such as climate change and respond to the changing geostrategic environment. In 2021, Australia and Indonesia agreed to a trilateral cooperation partnership with the Pacific; PNG could become the third member although this is not yet settled. Indonesia has sponsored

a range of police and law enforcement exchanges with MSG member states.

Indonesia is a dialogue partner of the PIF, and has been an associate member of the MSG since 2015.

United Kingdom (UK)

Since 2018, the UK has been engaged in a 'Pacific Uplift' strategy, which has included re-establishing diplomatic missions in Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu that were closed down earlier in the century and doubling the size of its diplomatic presence in Fiji. The UK retains Pitcairn Island as a territory in the Pacific. The 2021 signing of the AUKUS agreement with Australia and the US has had broader implications for the UK's renewed Indo-Pacific presence and 'tilt strategy' (Saddington 2024). In 2022, the UK and Fiji signed an MOU focusing on Fiji's maritime borders. The UK's signalled interests in global climate-ocean governance have centred its Pacific re-engagement. The UK has also increased its defence engagements, including maritime security, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, in the Pacific through rotational deployments of the HMS Spey; as well as supporting training and secondments at the Pacific Fusion Centre.

The UK is a dialogue partner of the PIF.

India

India adopted an 'Act East' policy in 2014 that has included a greater strategic focus on the Pacific Islands, although there have been few tangible outcomes to date. India established the Forum for India–Pacific Islands Cooperation, which first met in 2014 in Fiji and in 2015 in India; the third summit was held in 2023 in PNG, and the fourth, most recent was held in New York in the margins of the UN General Assembly's 80th session in 2025.

India is a dialogue partner of the PIF.

Other PIF dialogue partners

Canada, Chile, Cuba, the European Union (EU), Germany, Italy, South Korea, Malaysia, Norway, the Philippines, Spain, Singapore, Thailand and Turkey are also PIF dialogue partners.

Development assistance

Bilateral and multilateral development assistance programs play a major role in addressing the full spectrum of security challenges in the Pacific. These range — as much of the following discussion will illustrate — from 'hard' security programs (building the capacity of police and defence forces) to environmental and resource security (for example, disaster response and fisheries) to human security (health, gender and biosecurity) and everything in between. Several Pacific Islands scholars have observed that development and security are two sides of the same coin (Koro 14/4/2021; Naupa 3/12/2025; Naupa and Brien 2021). It is estimated that from 2008 to 2023, bilateral donors and multilateral institutions spent US\$55 billion in aid in the region (Lowy Institute 2025).¹²

Maritime security¹³

Fisheries are the most important maritime security issue for the Pacific Islands, as they provide a significant source of government revenue, employment, nutrition and economic development. The Pacific Ocean is the largest tuna fishery in the world, and tuna from the western and central Pacific Ocean has an annual market value of US\$6.3bn (FFA 2024). For many Pacific Island states, fisheries revenue contributes over 50 per cent of their gross domestic product. It should not come as a surprise, therefore, that there is a long history of regional cooperation in this sector, and relations between Pacific Island countries and security partners are deep and well established.

Seventeen Pacific states¹⁴ are members of the **Forum Fisheries Agency** (FFA), based in Solomon Islands. The FFA provides policy and regulatory support for fisheries management in the region and coordinates an Australian-funded aerial and satellite surveillance centre to monitor fisheries compliance and detect illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. The **Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission**¹⁵ has responsibility for managing migratory fish stocks (such as tuna) and is based in FSM. The South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation¹⁶ is responsible for the management of non-migratory fish species (such as orange roughy and jack mackerel). It only includes two Pacific Island states (Vanuatu and Cook Islands), but is headquartered in New Zealand.

The **Parties to the Nauru Agreement** (PNA)¹⁷ is the only legally binding regional agreement regarding fisheries management in the Pacific. The parties (and Tokelau) follow the Vessel Day Scheme, which limits the number of days each party can have active fishing boats. The alternative Te Vaka Moana Group¹⁸ advocates limits on the quantity of fish caught (rather than days fishing), with a focus on skipjack tuna. It is said to have developed to 'cushion the growing influence of the [PNA]', but, alongside the MSG Fisheries Committee, has limited influence (Aqorau 2015:225; 2020). The regional **Pacific Heads of Maritime** meeting¹⁹ in 2024 approved the development of Pacific One-Maritime Framework to facilitate technical cooperation, with an early focus on maritime transport.

Pacific Island states' efforts to improve maritime security receive considerable support from partners. Most significantly, under its **Pacific Maritime Security Program** (PMSP), Australia is providing (and sustaining) Guardian-class patrol boats to PNG, Fiji, FSM, Tonga, Solomon Islands, Cook Islands, Kiribati, RMI, Palau, Samoa, Tuvalu and Vanuatu to help them police their extensive exclusive economic zones (EEZs), primarily for IUU fishing. These boats replace those provided under the program's precursor, the Pacific Patrol Boat Program. The PMSP is the largest single component of Australia's defence cooperation program in the Pacific Islands region. Under the auspices of the PMSP, Australia in 2024 also redeveloped the Lombrum Naval Base on Manus Island, PNG, in cooperation with the PNG and US

governments. It is also upgrading wharf infrastructure in all 13 Pacific Island states that participate in the PMSP to accommodate the larger Guardian-class boats. The PMSP is a 30-year commitment which includes aerial surveillance of EEZs coordinated by the FFA for up to 365 days per year. The NZDF complemented the work of patrol boats in Fiji through Operation Wasawasa, and continues to undertake similar operations to support efforts combatting IUU fishing in the region. The Australian Defence Force also complements the PMSP with efforts such as Operation Solania, which deploys ships and aircraft for regional fisheries surveillance efforts. Similarly, the Royal New Zealand Navy monitors EEZs for IUU fishing alongside compliance officers from Pacific Island states under Operation Calypso. The US Coast Guard also has a presence in the region, supporting US territories such as CNMI and American Samoa. The US helps Pacific Island states manage fisheries compliance through Shiprider Agreements that allow law enforcement officers from participating Pacific Island states²⁰ to embark on US Coast Guard and US Navy vessels to observe, board and search vessels suspected of violating laws or regulations within their EEZs or on the high seas. Partner states also support annual FFA exercises through Operation Kurukuru. Australia, New Zealand, France and the US cooperate as the Quadrilateral Defence Coordination Group to conduct regional surveillance operations on IUU fishing, support the work of the FFA and combat transnational crime maritime interdictions, as will be discussed shortly.

Environmental and resource security

Beyond fisheries, Pacific Island states face a number of environmental and resource security challenges, most notably from climate-related changes and maintaining the sustainability of natural resources. At the regional level, a number of relevant bodies are focused on scientific and policy support. The **Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner**, which advocates on behalf of the region on ocean issues in collaboration with CROP agencies, moved to Palau in 2024. In 2025, the PIF led a talanoa on contentious resource management issues such as deep sea minerals exploration, although many Pacific Island states are also actively engaged in the International Seabed Authority discussions. SPC manages the **Centre for Pacific Crops and Trees**, the **Pacific Community Centre of Ocean Science** (funded by New Zealand) and a fisheries laboratory, providing scientific expertise to strengthen policy and advocacy measures.

The **Secretariat for the Pacific Regional Environment Programme**, a CROP agency,²¹ is based in Samoa and provides scientific and policy support for protecting and managing the environment and natural resources within the Pacific. SPREP is the secretariat for the Noumea Convention (1986), which aims to protect, manage and develop the marine and coastal environments of the Pacific Islands. Its projects are wide-ranging, from waste management to biodiversity losses in terrestrial and marine flora and fauna to coral bleaching and erosion.

SPREP is also responsible for climate change policy and information, and for funding distribution for projects related to climate change mitigation and adaptation. SPC manages the **Regional Pacific Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) Hub**, which helps members determine their Paris Agreement climate targets.²²

Regional groupings have evolved to negotiate climate issues on the global stage. The most prominent is the **Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS)**, which was established after the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Since 1991, the PSIDS have been active in global climate negotiations (Morgan et al. 2024). The PIF highlighted the role of PSIDS in 2013 with the Majuro Declaration on Climate Leadership. Individual Pacific Island states have also taken leadership roles on climate issues in the global arena. Samoa hosted the UN's Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in 2014, which promoted global partnerships for sustainable development, including on the issue of climate change through the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway. This pathway influences how international organisations prioritise their work; for example, the **Food and Agriculture Organisation** of the United Nations (FAO) has undertaken programming based on the Samoa Pathway. The **World Bank** has mobilised US\$140 million towards climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives in the Pacific region, which range from coastal infrastructure in Samoa to climate-resilient agricultural development in Vanuatu. The UNFCCC undertakes specific climate-related projects in the Pacific, as does the Green Climate Fund (GCF), to which many partners contribute (although not Australia or the US). In 2020, 14 Pacific Island states had projects funded by the GCF, to which SPREP is an accredited entity; it develops and implements climate projects on behalf of the GCF (SPREP 2020). A total of US\$200 million in GCF grants have been approved for the region, many channelled through international institutions. In 2025, the 14 countries received a US\$107.4 million GCF grant managed through SPC and Conservation International to address the redistribution of tuna stocks due to climate change and contribute to food security.

The **Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub** helps states within the Commonwealth access funding for climate-related projects and expertise to build local capacity. The Commonwealth Blue Charter supports states to take action on climate change and ocean pollution; Fiji and Vanuatu have taken leadership roles. Pacific Island states are also taking a leadership role in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to develop international law in response to the challenges posed by climate change. For example, the 2021 PIF Leaders' Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the Face of Climate Change-Related Sea-Level Rise and the 2023 Declaration on the Continuity of Statehood and the Protection of Persons in the Face of Climate Change-Related Sea-Level Rise have advanced efforts on the

perpetuity of statehood for sinking islands. Significantly, the Pacific's active role in the 2023 global adoption of the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction Treaty has shaped global ocean governance. This entered into force on 17 January 2026.

Further, Pacific Island states are advocating to take action to address climate change as part of international coalitions, including the **Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)**,²³ the Cartagena Dialogue,²⁴ the G77,²⁵ the Climate Vulnerable Forum,²⁶ the REEEP,²⁷ the MRV International Partnership²⁸ and the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty coalition.²⁹ The International Union for Conservation of Nature and the Coalition of Atoll Nations on Climate Change are also important voices in the climate change and environmental negotiations in which Pacific Island states participate. Key bilateral partners supporting climate change adaptation and environmental preservation in the Pacific Islands are Australia, New Zealand, the EU and France, followed by Japan and the US. India and China have so far made only modest efforts in this field.

The global Loss and Damage Finance Facility approved at COP27 (2022) and operationalised at COP29 (2024) is a long-awaited outcome of Pacific calls for greater access to climate finance. Through the Santiago Network, Vanuatu became the first Pacific country to commence a loss and damage policy in 2025 in anticipation of enhanced climate finance. The Pacific's growing focus on energy security has produced calls for partnerships towards a 100 per cent renewable Blue Pacific at the 2025 PIF Leaders' Meeting, ahead of COP31 (Island Minds Vanuatu and Smart Energy Council 2025).

Humanitarian and disaster relief (HADR)

The Pacific Islands are vulnerable to natural disasters and there is evidence that such events may increase with climate change. While affected communities are typically the first-responders to these disasters, capacity limitations mean that external support is often needed. In 2013, the MSG established the Humanitarian and Emergency Response Coordination Centre within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations at the MSG Secretariat in Vanuatu, focused on coordinating responses to disasters in the region. It appears this centre has never functioned. In addition, the FSRs was tasked with developing a regional mechanism for HADR response (PIF 2020).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2020 the PIF established the **Pacific Humanitarian Pathway** to facilitate easier movement of medical and humanitarian supplies which was primarily used for shipping personal protective equipment and COVID-19 testing supplies. Funded primarily by Australia and New Zealand, the program closed in 2023.

In 2024, **South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting (SPDMM)** leaders endorsed the Australia-backed **Pacific Response Group**, which will, on request, enable more effective co-deployments in the Pacific Islands region. The PRG is the region's first formalised multinational military asset in support of HADR missions. The PRG

includes a Pacific Special Advisory Team, a small, rapidly deployable group available to support Pacific civilian authorities and other organisations in an affected state to plan a disaster response and identify potential follow-on tasks. Its first operational test took place in December 2024 following the Vanuatu earthquake; PRG specialists were deployed to support the Vanuatu Mobile Force and the National Disaster Management Office. No PRG military assets were deployed.

HADR tends to be conducted primarily by partners in cooperation with affected states, as illustrated in Annex 1.³⁰ Indeed, alongside Australia's PMSP, HADR is one of the most visible ways military forces from partner countries engage with Pacific Island states. France, Australia and New Zealand have coordinated their HADR responses in the Pacific Islands under the FRANZ Arrangement since 1992. Partners also conduct joint humanitarian exercises in the region regularly, including the annual US-led Pacific Partnership mission, which also includes non-government organisations and humanitarian agencies.

The lack of a regional HADR function is partly explained by the fact that there are only three Pacific military forces: the Republic of Fiji Military Forces, His Majesty's Armed Forces of Tonga and the PNG Defence Force. In addition, the Vanuatu Mobile Force is a paramilitary force that supports the police as early responders, alongside communities, during disasters. To date, none of these organisations has had the resources (whether financial or personnel) to undertake significant HADR cooperation beyond their national borders without external support. That is not to say, however, that the aspiration for mutual cooperation does not exist: in 2013, for instance, PNG and Fiji agreed to engage in closer military collaboration under a defence cooperation agreement, initially involving Fijian personnel providing training assistance to the PNG Defence Force. Fijian forces are trained at Blackrock Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Camp, which Australia has — in partnership with Fiji — upgraded with a view to transforming it into a regional hub for police and peacekeeping training and pre-deployment preparation. In 2015, with the assistance of New Zealand, Fijian soldiers deployed to assist with Cyclone Pam rehabilitation in Vanuatu. Tonga's armed forces also provided emergency response support to Vanuatu following Cyclone Pam and to Fiji following Cyclone Winston in 2016.

There are, however, ongoing discussions under the auspices of the Pacific Islands Emergency Management Alliance project (supported by Australia and New Zealand, with SPC) to develop a Regional Strategic Roadmap for Emergency Management. Australia established the **Pacific Humanitarian Warehousing Program** in 2023 to provide timely access to disaster relief supplies with national warehousing capabilities set up across Pacific Island countries. Since 2023, Fiji's WHO (World Health Organization)-accredited Emergency Medical Assistance Team (FEMAT) has also

been deployed to support regional HADR efforts, such as in the aftermath of Vanuatu's twin cyclones in 2023, and magnitude 7.3 earthquake in 2024. In addition, the US committed US\$10 million towards disaster resilience initiatives and hosts the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center in Hawai'i that alerts Pacific states to threats. However, this service was affected by federal budget cuts to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in 2025. Australia assists the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center and hosts the Australian Tsunami Warning System, which provides an early warning system to Australia and facilitates tsunami warnings for the Pacific Islands. Japan has developed a tsunami early warning system for Tonga.

The **South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting** sees defence ministers from Australia, New Zealand, France, Fiji, PNG, Chile and Tonga (with observers United States, United Kingdom and Japan) meet annually (biennially until 2020) to discuss defence and security cooperation in the region, ranging from policy to HADR. In 2015, the group agreed to a cooperative exercise framework named POVAI ENDEAVOUR that provides a coordinating mechanism for HADR-related exercises in the region, as well as maritime security, stabilisation operations and peacekeeping. There has recently been a significant focus on disaster resilience through the establishment of the PRG that enables military co-deployment in support of civilian-led HADR. The SPDMM has also developed the Regional Training Framework, an online information exchange platform and the **Pacific Defence Faith Network**. In 2025, French-led Exercise Croix du Sud was conducted across New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna to refine the PRG's coordination of military support during crises.

In 2016, the Pacific region adopted a Framework for Resilience Development in the Pacific that provides strategic guidance and integrated approaches to 'enhance resilience to climate change and disasters in ways that contribute to and are embedded in sustainable development' (SPC 2016:2). The long-awaited **Pacific Resilience Facility** was approved by PIF Leaders in 2023, with an annual target of US\$500 million; Australia has committed 20+ per cent towards the facility.

Transnational crime and border management

The most common transnational crimes in the region are drug trafficking, human trafficking, small arms trafficking, money laundering and environmental crimes, such as the illegal trade in endangered species, IUU fishing and illegal logging. Regional cooperation is well developed in this field. To address transnational crime and other border management challenges, the **Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police**, the **Oceania Customs Organisation** and the **Pacific Immigration Development Community** work closely together as part of a 2018 Declaration of Partnership. The declaration recognises the 'urgent need for border control agencies to collaborate and meet in regional and national security forums to promote cooperation

and general understanding of security issues in the Pacific' (PIDC 2019). Since 2023, the partnership has also included the **Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA)** and addresses IUU fishing. The **Australian-led Joint Heads of Pacific Security (JHoPS)** was established in 2019, bringing together annually Pacific nations' heads of immigration, customs, policing and defence agencies to discuss shared security concerns and approaches.³¹

The **Southwest Pacific Heads of Maritime Forces**³² have met annually since 2017 to link security agencies with navies. The agenda is wide-ranging, covering transnational crime, safety challenges and climate change. In 2024, the meeting was held in Tonga with a focus on information sharing. The 2025 meeting hosted by Fiji addressed the theme 'Guardians of the Pacific' and focused on IUU, trafficking and exploitation of underwater communication infrastructure.

To facilitate the ability of Pacific Island states to build and maintain legislative frameworks to regulate criminal behaviour, the **Pacific Islands Law Officers' Network** shares current legislative challenges and initiatives across the region. The PIF also has officers who assist individual members of this network with drafting appropriate legislation to secure criminal prosecutions. Australia and New Zealand have also funded the Pacific Judicial Development Programme to support courts and judges to strengthen the judicial systems in Cook Islands, FSM, Kiribati, RMI, Nauru, Niue, Palau, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Australia and New Zealand remain the key providers of law and justice assistance across the region.

To investigate and combat transnational crime, there are 28 **transnational crime units (TCUs)** spread across Pacific Island states and territories. The TCUs share intelligence and investigation information, particularly if there is an issue that crosses state borders. Some states, such as Kiribati, have multiple TCUs, due to the geographical (and temporal) distance between islands, such as Tarawa and Kiritimati. Australia and New Zealand also have newly established TCUs to facilitate regional intelligence sharing; New Zealand's multiagency TCU has an advisor specifically for capacity building Pacific TCUs. TCUs are part of the **Pacific Transnational Crime Network (PTCN)**, which is one of the seven networks³³ of the PICP³⁴ headquartered in New Zealand. The PTCN's physical centre, the **Pacific Transnational Crime Coordination Centre (PTCCC)**, is based in Samoa. It is headed by a Pacific national and made up of Australian and New Zealand policing advisors, as well as seconded Pacific law enforcement staff (from police, customs and immigration agencies). The PTCCC collates intelligence from states and international partners to analyse regional trends, create connections between states for joint investigations and provide support if required. The PTCCC has close connections with law enforcement organisations that also have intelligence networks for information sharing, including the PIDC, comprising

21 Pacific heads of immigration agencies, based in Samoa³⁵ and the OCO, comprising 24 heads of customs agencies, based in Fiji.³⁶ All three transnational crime organisations are funded mostly by Australia and New Zealand, with some state contributions.

The **Pacific Aviation Safety Office (PASO)** comprises 10 Pacific Island states³⁷ that are signatories to the Pacific Islands Civil Aviation Safety and Security Treaty. It is based in Vanuatu and is the only anti-transnational crime-related organisation that is a CROP member, focusing on training in compliance and safety for airport officials.

The regional TCU model is emulated by **financial intelligence units (FIUs)** around the region that provide research and analysis on money laundering and other financial crimes. The FIUs are similarly networked via the Association of Pacific Island FIUs, within the **Asia/Pacific Group (APG) on Money Laundering** based in Bangkok. The Egmont Group is an international organisation combating money laundering with a similar Asia-Pacific grouping of 28 FIUs, including Pacific FIUs, and is closely associated with the APG.

The placement of Australian Federal Police and New Zealand Police advisors in many Pacific Island states both underpins the regional networks previously described and supports those countries' extensive bilateral capacity-building programs in the region. Australians are located in PNG, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Vanuatu; while New Zealand has advisors in Solomon Islands, Pitcairn Island, PNG, Fiji (roaming), Tonga and Vanuatu. From time to time, Australia and New Zealand also support the creation of ad hoc groups to address specific criminal security challenges. An example is the **Transnational, Serious and Organised Crime Pacific Taskforce**, which was launched in 2019 by Australia, New Zealand, Tonga and Fiji to 'investigate and disrupt organised crime groups operating in the area, target groups using small craft to move illicit drugs through the region, share operational intelligence, and strengthen cooperation to conduct expanded and complex investigations' (AFP 2019).

Organisations such as **INTERPOL**, the **International Organization for Migration** and the **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime** provide intelligence and regional assessments of transnational crime threats to the region, and often attend regional border security conferences. They also provide training in international frameworks and complex areas, such as people smuggling. In that space, the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime is an Asia-Pacific regional grouping based in Bangkok, of which many Pacific states are members.³⁸

In 2024, INTERPOL launched the Project Blue Pacific 'to support participating national police organizations to use INTERPOL resources in a sustainable way for increased information sharing' (INTERPOL 2024). Funded by Australia, New Zealand and the UK, through PICP, it engages 11 Pacific Island countries.³⁹

Regional Law Enforcement Capacity-Building Programs

Australia and New Zealand are engaged in police capacity-building programs in the region. The Australian-led **Pacific Community for Law Enforcement Cooperation** coordinates training to ensure there is no overlap, duplication or gaps. Australia conducts a number of bilateral capacity-building programs with Nauru, PNG, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Samoa, and collaborates with New Zealand on the Tonga Police Development Programme. As part of its Pacific Step-Up, in 2018 Australia announced a Pacific Faculty of Policing at the Australian Institute of Police Management. The Australian **Pacific Police Development Program – Regional** (PPDP-R) also provides operational support such as in forensics and policy work, and facilitates Cyber Safety Pasifika training as part of the PICP network for uniformed personnel. The Australian-funded **Pacific Policing Initiative** launched in 2024 will provide training, establish three centres of excellence (in Fiji, PNG and Samoa) and coordinate deployments of multinational police forces to hotspots. The PPI model was practically and effectively demonstrated in the multinational police deployment to Samoa in 2024, in support of the country's hosting of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM).

New Zealand also supports bilateral capacity-building programs, in Cook Islands, Kiribati, Niue, Samoa, Tokelau, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. New Zealand has a dedicated policing Pacific Island Prevention Programme that builds on previous programs, such as the Pacific Prevention of Domestic Violence Programme. New Zealand also has specialist customs and immigration law enforcement capacity-building programs targeting transnational crime in the region. New Zealand Police and Customs work with police and customs in Fiji, Samoa, Tonga and the Cook Islands on the Pacific Detector Dog Programme. New Zealand and Japan have worked together to establish a law enforcement capacity-building program at the University of the South Pacific's Pacific TAFE, where there are also Pacific policing and border security tertiary qualifications for police and border security officials (supported by PICP and PIDC). Other states have an interest in transnational crime, including the US, which has conducted law enforcement training with security agencies throughout the region. China supports law enforcement capacity-building in Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Tonga and Kiribati through donating resources and training (either in China, or on-the-ground in Solomon Islands) focusing on cybercrime, forensics, disaster response and domestic unrest.

Cybersecurity

In recent years Pacific Island states' cybersecurity concerns have evolved from a focus on the protection of the public online to include resilience against and responses to cyber attacks against institutions and infrastructure. Presently, activity is primarily focused at the national and bilateral levels, rather than the regional level. However, regional cooperation is evolving. At the

national level, Pacific Island states are creating **computer emergency response teams** (CERTs) to protect against, detect and respond to cybersecurity incidents and attacks. Due to the immense cost and effort required to design, install and operate a CERT, many states relied on regional initiatives such as PacCERT, a regional CERT that worked with internet service providers to manage incidents. PacCERT is now defunct due to lack of sustainability and ongoing support (PRIF 2019). The **Pacific Cyber Security Operational Network** (PaCSO) launched in 2018 and is a network of 16 national CERTs.⁴⁰ PaCSO is evolving from a mechanism to share incident response tools to providing an avenue for discussion on broader cybersecurity issues.

Despite increasing policy and resourcing attention towards cybersecurity, a number of cyberattacks have occurred, and in some cases crippled affected Pacific governments' operations. For example, in 2022 Marshall Islands' National Telecommunications Authority was targeted in a large-scale 'distributed denial of service' or DDoS attack (*Island Times Palau* 29/3/2022). 'NTA services were disrupted ... over a 10-day period', affecting the entire country. The same year, Vanuatu state systems faced a debilitating ransomware attack that shut down government services, disrupting official communications, revenue collection and essential medical procurements across several months. The RansomHouse hacking group claimed responsibility, and exfiltrated 3.2 terabytes of data despite Vanuatu's CERT having regularly monitored and addressed suspected breaches throughout the year prior (Noone 1/5/2023). In 2024 the PIF Secretariat discovered its networks had been breached and infiltrated. In 2025, a cyberattack targeting PNG's tax office exposed sensitive data, raising concerns at the frequency of cyberattacks following a 2021 ransomware attack on PNG's Department of Finance (Langley 13/2/2025). Improving cybersecurity posture remains a priority across all Pacific Island governments.

Cybersecurity is one of the expanded elements of security within the Boe Declaration, and to implement it, the FSRS has asked CROP agencies for support to 'develop cybersecurity capacity and capability across the region' (PIF 2020). The PIF Secretariat led a cyber assessment recognising that the region has further work to do to improve regional cybersecurity (PRIF 2019). Other regional organisations have considered cybersecurity issues. For example, PILON 2018's conference was themed around cybercrime, and the network has supported information sharing on cyber issues between the regional legal community, judiciary and police. Several Pacific countries now have national cybersecurity policies and associated legislation, including Samoa (2016), Kiribati (2020), Vanuatu (2021), Nauru (2022), Tonga (2022), Cook Islands (2024), PNG (2024), Solomon Islands (2024), FSM (2024), Fiji (2025) and Palau (2025).

One of PICP's key networks is **Cyber Safety Pasifika**, a program of 18 nations that uses local police to promote cyber safety messages within the community,

particularly in schools. Australia is a key partner on cybersecurity in the Pacific. Under its Southeast Asia and Pacific Cyber Program (SEA-PAC Cyber), Australia has provided support for the development of state-based CERTs. The potential for attacks during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Leader's Week in 2018 provided the impetus for PNG and Australia to jointly fund the National Cyber Security Centre in Port Moresby. Australia has also been the executive lead on and biggest donor within PICIP to the Cyber Safety Pasifika program. This is part of a targeted approach to cybersecurity through the Australian Cyber Cooperation Program, established in 2016 (now known as Southeast Asia and Pacific Cyber Program). The program has five aims: compliance with international law; cybercrime prevention, prosecution and cooperation; cyber incident response; best technology for development; and human rights and democracy online. The Pacific Security College has run short courses on cybersecurity issues for Pacific government officials. Australia also funds the Oceania Cyber Security Centre to undertake cyber policy assessments and cybersecurity capacity assessments for Pacific Island states, initially focusing on Vanuatu and FSM. Australia has also developed the capacity to deploy, and has deployed, specialist 'Cyber RAPID' (Rapid Assistance for Pacific Incidents and Disasters) teams to Pacific Island countries in response to requests from governments which have experienced digital disasters and cyber attacks.

Conclusion

Our mapping reveals that security cooperation in the Pacific Islands is best described as an ever-expanding patchwork of agreements, arrangements and institutions that address the breadth of the Boe Declaration.⁴¹ The resource constraints faced by Pacific Island governments shape the many ways they engage partners' support. The way partners deliver their assistance differs across the region, reflecting varying constitutional relationships and geographic, historical and strategic factors, as well as partners' own priorities and interests. The resulting patchwork of regional security cooperation is further nuanced by the status of each initiative, ranging from an announcement, to a commitment, to implementation and finally, what outcomes it has achieved. Additionally, the quantum of resources directed at a security issue does not necessarily signal effectiveness. This is a challenge for analysing both the contributions of partners and the ambitions of Pacific Island governments themselves, and potentially also masks gaps in security cooperation. Further, ongoing analysis of the implementation of programs and announcements is required to assess their practical outcomes and ensure a more comprehensive map of security cooperation.

This raises a series of questions: **How are the interests of Pacific Island states and those of partners interacting to shape regional security cooperation?**

How well coordinated is partners' assistance to the region, and what challenges — including to targeting, overcrowding and absorptive capacity — does this pose to Pacific Island states?

While our mapping reveals considerable engagement by partners in Pacific security, it would be incorrect to depict Pacific Island governments simply as passive recipients of security assistance. Pacific leaders are actively engaged in this process within the extent of their sovereign capabilities, be they military, diplomatic, legal, financial, or (national and regional) policy-making. The promulgation of regional statements such as the Boe Declaration, the Blue Pacific Ocean of Peace Declaration and the steady rollout of national security strategies and bilateral agreements that reflect Pacific Island states' priorities provide evidence that Pacific Island governments are actively considering their security priorities. Early reviews of the Samoa and Vanuatu national security strategies, for example, have emphasised prioritised resource allocation and multi-stakeholder engagement (GoV 2022), with a preference for comprehensive, flexible and responsive partnerships.

When tracing the evolution of PIF policy regarding regional security arrangements, reference should also be made to the 2022 leaders' communiqué, which 'reaffirmed the concept of regionalism and a **family first approach** [emphasis added] to peace and security'. This language was picked up in the 2025 communiqué, which 'emphasised the centrality of Pacific regionalism and the Forum family in navigating the emerging challenges and opportunities'. It remains an open question how meaningful the concept of 'family first' is, who the family are, and whether it is, in fact, shaping the behaviour and the thinking of Forum members.

Security cooperation in the Pacific is occurring in the context of 'a dynamic geopolitical environment leading to an increasingly crowded and complex region' (PIF 2018). The PIFS is working to understand how Pacific regionalism can respond through the Review of the Regional Architecture. The outcomes of that review could have further implications for the regional security architecture.

Through the Review of the Regional Architecture and other initiatives, Pacific Island states are exercising their agency to attempt to reinterpret dominant institutional constructs to better suit their regional context. To that end, the Blue Pacific Ocean of Peace Declaration underscores the centrality of the PIF in regionalism and emphasises the important role that historic instruments have played in peace-making, such as the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (the Treaty of Rarotonga). However, while a sense of regional solidarity remains strong, differing national priorities and interests may at times be in tension with regional approaches and regionalism may not always be sufficiently robust to contain such differences. Moreover, regional security cooperation prioritises engagement with state or military entities, with limited space for civil society to engage.

This is notwithstanding the various peacebuilding, conflict resolution and other roles that civil society plays within national peace and security. This raises further questions: **Is there value in seeking to foster a more coherent and comprehensive regional security architecture in the region? Which actors should be included? Whose interests might this serve?**

Our mapping highlights that partners (and Pacific Island governments themselves) often favour bilateral initiatives. Pacific Island states have not yet created a multilateral mechanism akin to the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) to engage great powers' regional interests and manage relationships with major powers. While this is explicable by the diversity of states and entities in the Pacific, broader geopolitical tensions suggest that there is still merit in asking: **Is there value in Pacific Island states collectively managing their geopolitical interests through coordinated regional security cooperation?**

Notably, Pacific Island states are developing contextualised regional security initiatives aligned to the Boe Declaration that attempt to neutralise polarising strategic competition. For example, the PRF is open to all partners to support the Pacific's climate security, with Australia, the US, Japan, Germany, Saudi Arabia, China and Taiwan amongst those pledging contributions.

Finally, as we mentioned in our introduction, it is beyond the scope of this paper to analyse the many intrastate local and community initiatives that address security challenges. The importance of these initiatives to the lives of many Pacific Island people raises our final question: How can security cooperation be meaningfully facilitated between local, national and regional levels?

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Endnotes

1. The independent states of the Pacific are Fiji, FSM, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, PNG, RMI, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Territories are shown with their key partners in the map in Figure 1 and include American Samoa, Guam, CNMI, Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau, French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Wallis and Fatuna, Pitcairn Island and Rapa Nui.
2. The initial research for the 2021 iteration of this paper was undertaken thanks to Department of Defence Strategic Policy Grant 2020106-040, awarded to Chief Investigator Professor Joanne

Wallis at Adelaide University. Subsequent revisions have been undertaken under the Pacific Research Program II funded by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). The views expressed herein are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of the Australian Government, the Australian Department of Defence, or DFAT. An earlier version of this paper was published as a DPA Research Report in 2021 (Wallis et al. 2021), and some text from the initial report has been incorporated into the revised version.

3. We understand security partners to be neighbouring and metropolitan states with a security interest in the Pacific region, as well as international organisations, such as United Nations agencies, who undertake joint activities with Pacific states to ensure regional security.
4. Member states of the PIF are Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, FSM, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, PNG, RMI, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. American Samoa, Guam, Tokelau and Wallis and Futuna are associate members. Observer states are CNMI and Timor-Leste. Palau, FSM, RMI, Nauru and Kiribati announced their intentions to withdraw from the PIF by 2022. Palau, FSM, RMI and Nauru agreed to remain in the PIF under the Suva Agreement (2022). Kiribati became the first to voluntarily withdraw in July 2022 but returned in 2023.
5. PNG published a national security strategy in 2013, the only Pacific Island country to have done so prior to the Boe Declaration. Since the Boe Declaration, Samoa (2018), Vanuatu (2019), Palau (2022), Cook Islands (2023), Solomon Islands (2025), Tonga (2025) and Niue (2025) have all developed a national security policy or strategy.
6. SPC members are American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, FSM, Fiji, France, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, RMI, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, CNMI, Palau, PNG, Pitcairn Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, the United States, Vanuatu and Wallis and Futuna.
7. The FLNKS is a pro-independence movement in New Caledonia.
8. *Vuvale* is a Fijian word meaning 'family'.
9. The week after the US announced its withdrawal from SPREP, amounting to 15 per cent of overall funding by member states, China – a donor to SPREP – stepped in to fill the funding gap.
10. The Oceania Summit was attended by Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, RMI, FSM, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, PNG, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.
11. The Chinese bilateral security agreements are with Solomon Islands (2021, 2022), Samoa (2022), Vanuatu (2023), Kiribati (2024), Cook Islands (2025),

- and entail a range of police cooperation and strategic partnership agreements. By comparison, in the same timeframe, Australia has signed or initialled 10 security agreements with Pacific Island countries (McNeill-Stowers and Kant 2025:1434–35).
12. Note the Lowy data — and this section of our paper — covers Official Development Assistance and does not include assistance delivered through defence cooperation programs or their equivalent.
 13. For a detailed mapping of maritime security cooperation in the region see [Pacific Maritime Security Cooperation Story Map](#) (Security in the Pacific Islands Program 2026).
 14. Members of the FFA are Australia, Cook Islands, FSM, Fiji, Kiribati, RMI, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.
 15. Members of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission are Australia, Japan, the Philippines, China, Kiribati, Samoa, Canada, South Korea, Solomon Islands, Cook Islands, RMI, Taiwan, the EU, Nauru, Tonga, FSM, New Zealand, Tuvalu, Fiji, Niue, the US, France, Palau, Vanuatu, Indonesia, PNG, American Samoa, Guam, Wallis and Futuna, CNMI, New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Tokelau.
 16. Members of the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation are Australia, China, Cuba, the EU, South Korea, Peru, Taiwan, Vanuatu, Chile, Cook Islands, Ecuador, Denmark (Faroe Islands), New Zealand, Russia and the US.
 17. The PNA are FSM, Kiribati, RMI, Palau, Nauru, PNG, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu. Tokelau participates in the Vessel Day Scheme through an MOU to join the FSM Arrangement, but is not an official signatory to the PNA.
 18. Members of the Te Vaka Moana Group are Samoa, Tonga, Niue, Tokelau, Cook Islands and New Zealand.
 19. Cook Islands, FSM, Fiji, Kiribati, RMI, Nauru, Palau, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu were all in attendance, as were partners UNESCAP (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific), Australia, New Zealand, Philippines and the US.
 20. States that have Shiprider Agreements with the US are Cook Islands, Fiji, FSM, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, RMI, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.
 21. Members of SPREP are American Samoa, Australia, CNMI, Cook Islands, FSM, Fiji, France, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, RMI, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, the UK, the US, Vanuatu and Wallis and Futuna.
 22. According to the Regional NDC Hub, 14 countries submitted intended NDCs to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2015, some of which have been updated (e.g. RMI, Fiji, PNG and Tonga have all submitted their NDCs to the UNFCCC), and others which remain as is.
 23. Pacific members of the Alliance of Small Island States are Cook Islands, Palau, Niue, Nauru, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Tuvalu, Kiribati, Tonga, PNG, FSM, RMI and Samoa.
 24. Pacific members of the Cartagena Dialogue are Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Kiribati and Tonga.
 25. Pacific members of the G77 (Group of 77) are Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and PNG.
 26. Pacific members of the Climate Vulnerable Forum are Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Kiribati.
 27. Pacific members of the REEEP are RMI and Samoa.
 28. Pacific members of the MRV International Partnership are RMI and PNG.
 29. Pacific members of the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty coalition are Vanuatu, Tuvalu, Tonga, Niue and Solomon Islands.
 30. Data compiled from a range of sources including Oxfam Australia (2024) and EM-DAT (2025), the global disaster database.
 31. Initially only 14 countries were members of the Joint Heads of Pacific Security; however, membership now consists of American Samoa, Australia, CNMI, Cook Islands, FSM, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Tonga, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, PNG, RMI, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tokelau, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna. In 2025, it also included Japan and the US as observers along with representatives from the OCO, PFC, PIDC, PICP, PSC, FFA and PIF.
 32. The Southwest Pacific Heads of Maritime Forces are Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, France, Niue, PNG, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and New Zealand.
 33. PICP networks are Cyber Safety Pasifika, Pacific Forensics Working Group, Pacific Island Prevention Policing, Pacific Training Advisory Group, Pacific Transnational Crime Network, Road Safe Pacific and the Women’s Advisory Network.
 34. Members of the PICP are Australia, Cook Islands, FSM, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, RMI, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Guam, American Samoa and CNMI.
 35. Members of the PIDC (formerly Pacific Immigration Directors’ Conference) are American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, FSM, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, RMI, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Wallis and Futuna.
 36. Members of the OCO (formerly the Customs Heads of Administration Regional Meeting (CHARM)) are American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, FSM, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, RMI, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, CNMI, Palau, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Wallis and Futuna.
 37. Members of PASO are Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Associate Members of PASO

are Australia, Fiji and New Zealand. Observers include Airways New Zealand, Asian Development Bank, Association of South Pacific Airlines (ASPA), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), PIFS, United States Federal Aviation Agency (US FAA) and the World Bank.

38. Pacific states that are members of the Bali Process are Australia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.
39. Pacific states that are engaged with Project Blue Pacific are Fiji, Kiribati, RMI, FSM, Nauru, Palau, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.
40. Pacific states with CERTs that are members of PaCSON are Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, RMI, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.
41. Since the first version of this paper was published (Wallis et al. 2021), the authors have examined the nature of Pacific security cooperation from a scholarly perspective (Wallis et al. 2023; 2025).

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Annex 1: Pacific disasters since 2009 (Bilateral assistance, does not include HADR via UN or multilateral avenues)

Year	2009	2012	2014	2015	2015
Disaster	Earthquake and tsunami	Cyclone Evan	Flooding	Cyclone Pam	El Nino-induced drought
Location	Samoa, American Samoa and Tonga	Samoa, Fiji, Wallis and Fatuna	Solomon Islands	Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu	Micronesia
Australia	AUS\$2 million of humanitarian aid and supplies, including tents, blankets and mosquito nets, as well as a C-17 aircraft and medical teams to assist with aeromedical evacuation and rescue equipment.	C-17A Globemaster aircraft with AUS\$1m of humanitarian supplies and four members of the Australian Rapid Response Team (an emergency response team).	C-130J Hercules aircraft carrying relief supplies and personnel, including two engineers and two rapid response teams.	C-17A aircraft transported humanitarian supplies and a C-130J Hercules aircraft and HMAS <i>Tobruk</i> (L50) transported 500 defence personnel, food supplies and equipment, including water pumps and hospital equipment.	
New Zealand	NZ\$6 million of humanitarian aid and supplies, including rescue dogs for body recovery, navy divers for underwater pipeline, power poles, chainsaws, one C-130, one Boeing 757-200, one P-3 Orion and two Iroquois helicopters with 100 defence personnel, 20 police, 30 medical personnel within an EMAT team and HMNZS <i>Canterbury</i> .	P-3 Orion aircraft to undertake aerial surveillance and environmental health assessment expertise. NZ\$600,000 to assist with the on-the-ground response.		Two C-130 aircrafts and the HMNZS <i>Canterbury</i> brought supplies for heavy engineering, electricity supply and repairing infrastructure, as well as personnel for disease control and humanitarian relief. NZ gave US\$1.8 million in contributions, in addition to medical supplies, to Tuvalu.	
US	American Samoa received 300 people from US government agencies along with supplies of meals, water, blankets, tents and medical supplies via the US Coast Guard and US Navy. The US donated airhorns and US\$1m through aid non-government organisations to Samoa.	US\$60,000 to Samoa Red Cross.		Military transport planes and Black Hawk helicopters were used to bring in US\$2.2 million of assistance, including food assistance, emergency relief commodities, water and shelter materials.	
Japan	Immediate mobilisation of Japan International Cooperation Agency relief items, including tents and water filters, worth US\$220,000.			US\$1.2 million in an emergency grant for tents, sleeping pads and sheets and a team of disaster specialists in Port Vila and Pentecost Island. There was a later US\$5 million for rebuilding schools.	
EU	Donated €150,000 via the International Red Cross Federation for primary emergency needs in Samoa. In addition, resources from ongoing Water Sector Support Programmes were used for provision of water tanks and sanitation facilities.	€1.8 million to fund humanitarian assistance.		€1 million to help in the emergency relief efforts towards shelter, clean water and medicine.	
China	Supply of bitumen for roads reconstruction worth US\$300,000.			\$US100,000 for emergency humanitarian assistance.	Provision of generators, water tanks and food rations to FSM.
France				French Armed Forces from New Caledonia and French Polynesia used Casa planes, a Puma and an Alouette III helicopter and 4WD vehicles, as well as the frigate <i>Vendémiaire</i> and patrol boat <i>La Glorieuse</i> , to transport 120 personnel and 300 soldiers.	
UK				C-17 plane carrying £2 million of supplies (shelter and solar lanterns).	
Other					

Donor/Partner

Year	2016	2018	2018	2018
Disaster	Cyclone Winston	Cyclone Gita	Ambae volcanic eruption	Earthquake
Location	Fiji	Vanuatu, Fiji, Wallis and Futuna, Samoa, American Samoa, Niue and Tonga	Vanuatu	Hela Province, PNG
Australia	Operation Fiji Assist included eight C-17A Globemaster and C-130J Hercules aircraft sorties delivering emergency relief and one AP-3C Orion aircraft undertaking aerial surveillance, while HMAS <i>Canberra</i> brought supplies, 880 personnel and three MRH-90 helicopters. Relief efforts cost AU\$15 million.	AU\$14 million, including a C-170 aircraft within 24 hours, and humanitarian supplies such as tarpaulins, generators, health and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) needs. Medical personnel, a disaster response team and electrical technicians were also deployed.	AU\$5.55 million for the evacuated population and host communities, including tents, kitchens, water storage, solar lights, shelters, emergency education and health, brought on the bay-class landing ship HMAS <i>Choules</i> .	AU\$5 million for the highlands, including AU\$200,000 of humanitarian supplies, an emergency response team, 60 flights by the C-130J aircraft and three heavy-lift helicopter Chinooks to deliver supplies to villages and undertake aerial surveillance of damage.
New Zealand	Six C-130 and P-3K2 Orion aircraft undertook aerial surveillance and brought 12 tonnes of aid supplies. In addition, two ships, including the HMNZS <i>Canterbury</i> , assisted with bringing 500 personnel. New Zealand spent NZ\$15 million on relief and recovery activities.	NZ\$3 million to help emergency response efforts, including a P-3K Orion aircraft and six C-130 flights to carry 38 tonnes of supplies and personnel from Fire and Emergency New Zealand disaster response teams.	P-3K2 Orion aircraft surveyed the mountain to predict eruption in 2017; then, NZ\$2.5 million in assistance for the evacuation, including two NZDF aircraft and HMAS <i>Canterbury</i> carrying 22 tonnes of relief supplies, such as mother and infant kits, family hygiene kits, jerry cans, shelter tool kits and tarpaulins and relief supplies such as water tanks, rainwater harvesting kits, food and water.	A C-130 aircraft carried eight tonnes of supplies, including water containers, family hygiene kits, shelter tool kits and tarpaulins.
Donor/Partner				
US		\$US23 million for housing and urban development in American Samoa.		
Japan	\$US2.75 million in supplies, including tents.	Tents, tarpaulin plastic sheets and generators to Tonga.	US\$900,000 for humanitarian relief.	US\$880,000 cash for humanitarian supplies.
EU	€1 million to direct humanitarian aid and US\$4.6 million through the SPC for a short-term response.	€100,000 via the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.	€120,000 emergency assistance for tarpaulins, shelter tool kits, sleeping mats, blankets, kitchen sets, solar lights, mosquito nets, and hygiene kits.	
China	US\$15 million of relief supplies, including tents, waterproof canvases, blankets, pillows, first aid kits, generators, torches and water purification.			
France	Two Casa aircrafts from New Caledonia and the patrol boat <i>La Moqueuse</i> with two tonnes of supplies, including shelter and hygiene kits, and 14 engineers. The Government of New Caledonia pledged FJ\$300,000.	Supplies delivered via French Navy (logistics only).	Three tonnes of non-food items carried by a CASA plane from the French Air Force.	
UK				
Other				

Year	2018	2020	2020	2020	2020
Disaster	Typhoon Yutu	Cyclone Harold (under COVID-19 conditions)	Cyclone Yasa	Landslide	Flooding
Location	CNMI	Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji and Tonga	Fiji (main hit), Vanuatu, Tonga	PNG (Western Highlands)	PNG (Eastern Highlands)
Australia		Eight C-17 Globemaster flights (four each to Fiji and Vanuatu) with humanitarian relief supplies (blankets, lanterns, shelter kits and hygiene kits).	A\$4.5 million in humanitarian aid, including building materials, tents, medical supplies, solar lighting and hygiene kits, education supplies and support for organisations and the Fiji Red Cross to aid their work with affected communities. Support also provided via HMAS <i>Adelaide</i> , carrying 600 personnel from the Australian Army's 6th Engineering Support Regiment and 165 tonnes of stores, building materials, tents and medical supplies was sent to assist Fiji in its recovery efforts (Fiji, hardest hit); RAAF sent two C-17A Globemaster flights to conduct aerial assessments.		
New Zealand		NZ\$500,000 to Vanuatu to procure relief items and dispatch on the ground.	NZ provided NZ\$2.5 million in humanitarian assistance; \$750,000 to the Government of Fiji to meet urgent water and other priorities; \$150,000 to enable the New Zealand High Commission in Suva to support the provision of essential relief such as emergency shelter, water and sanitation, and trauma counselling; \$750,000 for New Zealand non-government organisations to respond through their local partners for relief and early recovery assistance, including activities focused on the most vulnerable; and \$100,000 to the International Federation of the Red Cross to support the Fiji Red Cross in its relief activities; \$250,000 worth of essential items to assist households, including hygiene kits, immediate survival items and materials to construct basic shelter.		
Donor/Partner					
US	A C-130 aircraft carrying 800 personnel food, water, emergency shelters and generators; two 10K adverse terrain forklifts, a K-loader and an R-11 fuel truck; bottled water, meals and emergency shelters		US\$300,000 for TC Yasa recovery delivered through IFRC and Fiji Red Cross		
Japan					
EU		€300,000 of water sanitation and hygiene to Vanuatu.	EU provided €800,000 to support victims of Yasa in Fiji.		
China		US\$100,000 to Fiji for cyclone relief.	China provided F\$1 million in humanitarian aid for TC Yasa (2020) and TC Ana (2021); 60% of the grant could be allotted to the Ministry of Education, 20% to the Ministry of Agriculture, and 20% to the Ministry of Fisheries, since these three sectors were most affected by TC Yasa and TC Ana.		
France					
UK		Humanitarian supplies.	UK government released initial emergency relief funds to provide urgent assistance including first aid, tarpaulins and shelter materials, safe water, household items and hygiene kits for 17,700 people.		
Other			Singapore provided US\$50,000 via the Singapore Red Cross; India provided over 6 tonnes of relief supplies.		

Year	2021	2022–23	2022
Disaster	Riots	Drought	Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcanic eruption and tsunami
Location	Solomon Islands	Tuvalu, Kiribati	Tonga
Australia	73 Australian Federal Police and 43 Australian Defence Force personnel were dispatched.	A\$1m Kiribati drought assistance for access to safe drinking water; A\$51,000 in SRH kits and GBV supplies, delivered via UNFPA in Tuvalu; A\$500k Tuvalu drought assistance for water security supplies. To Kiribati, the ADF delivered water security by air, a Royal Australian Airforce plane, carrying vital solar distillation equipment and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Kits, and by sea, Australia's new Pacific Support Vessel "Reliant" brought 5 containers of vital humanitarian supplies to assist with drought relief and long-term water needs.	HMAS <i>Adelaide</i> deployed, HMAS <i>Canberra</i> deployed with 40 tonnes of emergency relief supplies, including shelter materials, water and sanitation supplies, equipment to restore communications and personal protective equipment for people clearing ash. Royal Australian Airforce C-17A aircraft (19 flights) for delivery of shelter and hygiene supplies. A\$3 million committed in humanitarian assistance.
New Zealand	ADB provided an A\$4 million grant to Tuvalu for drought relief; A\$8 million to Kiribati for drought relief; 11 tonnes of critical relief supplies sent to Kiribati via WFP.	Material and financial support to Kiribati, including repair of critical water infrastructure (no value provided, ReliefWeb).	An initial NZ\$500,000 for response and relief, HMNZS <i>Wellington</i> deployed with hydrography capability, HMNZS <i>Canterbury</i> and <i>Aoteroa</i> also deployed with relief supplies, including potable water and desalination units
US		Material and financial support of US\$500,000 to Kiribati, including US\$100,000 via UNICEF. Under Operation Blue Pacific, the US Coast Guard Cutter <i>Oliver Berry</i> crew supplied safe drinking water to Kiribati after the Republic of Kiribati declared a national state of emergency (supplying over 4,000 gallons of safe drinking water, 200 buckets with lids, 600 10-litre water containers, and two 10,000-litre water bladders).	US\$2.6 million in relief efforts, including deployment of Destroyer USS <i>Sampson</i> to provide lifesaving actions and support the ADF. Through USAID this includes providing safe drinking water, hygiene kits and other assistance to address food security, shelter, agriculture and livestock needs among the most affected communities. Through USGS volcano monitoring equipment and experts were deployed to assist Tongan officials.
Japan			Four JASDF flights delivering essential supplies in the immediate aftermath, and MSDF <i>Obsumi</i> provided waste clearance equipment, drinking water and relief supplies. In 2024, still dealing with recover, US\$6 million for building resilient infrastructures, through assets that include cargo trucks, cargo crane trucks, excavators, loaders, dump trucks, and water pumps.
EU			See France.
China	Provision of anti-riot police capacity.		Two naval vessels and two military aircraft deployed with relief supplies.
France			Two patrol boats carrying 40 tonnes of emergency cargo; Tahiti Nui ship supplied 300 tonnes of supplies; a Falcon Guardian 200 conducted several reconnaissance flights in January 2022, two flights carrying cargo on 25 January 2022. Implemented with the support of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.
UK			HMS <i>Spey</i> deployed to restore communications networks, working with ADF and NZDF.
Other	PNG and Fiji also provided bilateral support through contributing to the combined 200 uniformed personnel from Australia, PNG and Fiji.	ADB provided a A\$4 million grant to Tuvalu for drought relief; A\$8 million to Kiribati for drought relief; 11 tonnes of critical relief supplies sent to Kiribati via WFP.	Fiji's <i>Lomaiviti Princess</i> delivered 11 containers of more than 200 tonnes of humanitarian supplies.

Donor/Partner

Year	2022	2023	2023
Disaster	7.6M earthquake	Cyclones Judy and Kevin; 6.5M earthquake (all in the same three days in March 2023)	Cyclone Lola
Location	PNG (Markham Valley, Marobe, Madang, Eastern Highlands)	Vanuatu	Vanuatu
Australia		A\$12.775 million towards response and early recovery efforts, including a 12-person rapid assessment team (AUSMAT, DART, logistics and power restoration) and mobilised 139.4 tonnes of humanitarian relief supplies, including water, sanitation and hygiene items (such as hygiene kits, water filtration and storage), shelter (tents, tarpaulins, and kitchen kits), lighting for displaced people to reduce protection risks, health, and early recovery items.	'Australia immediately responded to Vanuatu's request for international assistance by supporting an aerial damage assessment with a C-127J Spartan aircraft and, on 30 October, delivering over 30 tonnes of critical humanitarian supplies in coordination with the National Disaster Management Office. A further A\$4 million was provided for or Vanuatu's most pressing roads and infrastructure, health, education, food security and telecommunications priorities.'
New Zealand		Supported initial package of NZ\$150,000, and the Royal New Zealand Air Force C-130 Hercules carrying relief supplies, including water containers, kits for temporary shelters, and family hygiene kits. Later also the deployment by Pasifika Medical Association (PMA) of a Medical Assistance Team (PACMAT) to provide primary care and mental health support to the local communities affected by the cyclones.	NZ\$450,000 in humanitarian assistance, of which NZ\$350,000 provided via the Adventist Development and Relief Agency.
US		US\$3.2 million to provide shelter assistance as communities start rebuilding homes; agriculture support to help restore livelihoods and improve food security; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) assistance including safe drinking water and supplies; and protection for the most vulnerable people affected by the storms.	US Coastguard deployment of C-130 (in support of the Forum Fisheries Agency — Operation Kuru Kuru) was diverted to perform post-storm assessments of the affected areas, contributing to response and recovery efforts. US\$1.25 million in humanitarian assistance also provided to affected areas.
Japan		Japan provided emergency relief goods (portable jerry cans, water purifiers and generators) through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).	
EU		EU provided €500,000 in humanitarian assistance.	EU provides €200,000 in humanitarian assistance.
China	US\$100,000 from the Red Cross Society of China	VT200 million in disaster relief supplies delivered by chartered aircraft and navy ship.	'China provides VT23 million in assistance, targeting northern Vanuatu and including iron sheets, rice, solar power lamps and other more supplies.'
France		Three reconnaissance flights over the disaster areas were conducted by the Armed Forces in New Caledonia (FANC), constituting the first international aid response. The FANC also deployed a French navy overseas support and assistance ship. It docked at Port Vila early on Sunday morning. It contains nearly 10 tonnes of humanitarian aid from stock at the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs' Crisis and Support Centre (CDCS) based in Nouméa, meeting the needs of 1,000 people (family tents, tarpaulins, adult and child health kits, cooking kits, jerry cans, solar lamps etc.), and response and rescue detachments from the Armed Forces in New Caledonia and New Caledonia's civil security and risk management department.	French armed forces in New Caledonia (FANC) used a Falcon 200 Guardian to conduct reconnaissance missions; Between 28 and 30 October, thanks to a FANC Puma helicopter deployed on the spot, a medical team visited the wounded in remote areas; the most serious cases were evacuated to Port-Vila hospital. The Puma also carried technicians and equipment to repair telecommunications networks damaged by the cyclone.
UK			Provided in-kind relief supplies — hygiene kits, tarpaulins and shelter kits for distribution to the worst impacted communities — delivered in partnership with the ADF.
Other			

Donor/Partner

Year	2023-24	2024	2024
Disaster	Drought	Enga landslide	Civil uprising
Location	Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Palau, Guam	PNG	New Caledonia
Australia	Australian vessel <i>Reliant</i> delivered 116,000 litres of fresh water to Pohnpei.	A\$2.5 million in humanitarian assistance, including an initial deployment of a 16 person Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) to provide incident management assistance and technical advice to inform early recovery efforts and an RFS Linescan aircraft to collect imagery over the disaster site. Relief supplies included supplies include hygiene kits, water filtration, dignity items, shelter kits, tents, handheld solar lights, community lighting towers, tarps, blankets, and bed mats.	Two military evacuation flights provided for 300 stranded Australians. In August 2024, GoNC requested Australian assistance for post-riot infrastructure rebuild.
New Zealand		NZ\$1.5 million in humanitarian assistance provided. Deployed a New Zealand Defence Force C-130 aircraft to deliver relief supplies and dispatch emergency management experts.	Coordinated evacuation flights with Australia for 50 NZ citizens.
US	US Coastguard delivery of relief supplies to most affected areas.	US\$500,000 funded via USAID through IOM, funded the dispatch of 200 shelter kits and 400 non-food item (NFI) kits to affected locations in the Eastern and Western Highlands.	
Japan			
EU	EU provides €100,000 in humanitarian assistance through the Micronesia Red Cross Society.		
China	US\$600,000 in Humanitarian assistance for drought in FSM.		
France			
UK			
Other		Singapore Red Cross, which committed nearly \$40,000 for food, shelters, trauma care, and water, sanitation and hygiene supplies, and also launched a public fundraising appeal for recovery efforts	Pacific Islands Forum High-Level Troika Plus (political mission) visit in October 2024 to assess the situation.

Donor/Partner

Year	2024	
Disaster	7.3M earthquake	
Location	Vanuatu	
Australia	A\$7 million in humanitarian assistance, including immediate deployment of a 64 member Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) to undertake search and rescue operations and a six member Australian Medical Assistance Team (AUSMAT); further deployment of a 17 member AUSMAT, funding support for NGOs through the Australian Humanitarian Partnership and support to the Australian Red Cross who are working in partnership with the Vanuatu Red Cross. relief supplies were provided for over 500 families and included sanitation and hygiene kits, water filtration and shelter and early recovery items. Australian Defence Force flights also delivered 9.5 tonnes of emergency relief supplies on behalf of partner humanitarian organisations such as the Red Cross, UN World Food Programme, CARE, Save the Children and World Vision. ADF support included ten flights by C-17 and C-130 aircraft to provide transport for the deployed teams and other specialist personnel and materials, including structural engineers to assess key infrastructure including the airport and the Vila Central Hospital; engineers to assess fuel pipelines at the wharf and specialist technical support to repair the landing station cable and restore internet connectivity.	
Donor/Partner	New Zealand	
	US	US Coastguard delivery of relief supplies to most affected areas.
	Japan	Y400 million for the provision of emergency relief supplies, the dispatch of disaster medical teams, and the dispatch of survey teams on the disaster situation, in response to the earthquake which affected Vanuatu on 17 December 2024. This included providing equipment essential for the disaster recovery from the earthquake (power shovels, dump trucks, water supply vehicles, etc.) to address remaining issues in the affected areas, such as debris removal and water supply.
	EU	
	China	US\$1 million in emergency assistance; including the assistance of in-country experts from Chinese companies, emergency treatment from a Chinese medical team on rotation in Vanuatu, and an additional \$100,000 donation from the Red Cross Society of China. On 30 December, four Chinese earthquake engineering experts arrived in Port Vila, the first post-disaster assessment team China has sent to a Pacific Island country.
	France	
	UK	
	Other	

Source: Information has been compiled by the authors from official sources of both affected and HADR partner countries.



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