

# Reconsidering Small Arms in the Solomon Islands - Findings

Findings excerpted from a policy briefing commissioned from the Small Arms Survey, Geneva, for internal circulation by stakeholders, agencies and diplomatic missions, Honiara, 1 August 2003

By Robert Muggah, Senior Researcher, Small Arms Survey, Geneva, and  
Philip Alpers, Senior Fellow, Harvard Injury Control Research Centre, Boston

## Executive Summary

In order to encourage a climate of transparency and a coordinated process, this policy briefing revisits the dynamics of small arms possession, distribution and impacts in the Solomon Islands and the possible contours of a short and long-term weapon reduction process.

## **Findings**

*As of July 2003, there are between 2,640-3,520 small arms in the Solomon Islands. Among these are an estimated 1,010-1,270 illegal “high powered” and “commercial” firearms – considerably more than the 500-700 commonly reported. “High powered” weapon types include, but are not limited to, Singaporean SR88 5.56mm assault rifles, FN-FAL 7.62mm assault rifles, GPMG M-60 7.62mm machine guns and older Webley revolvers. “Commercial” weapons are also common, including .22 calibre rifles and 12-gauge shotguns. Crude, single-shot “homemade” weapons made from water pipes and other materials use mainly .30 and .50 calibre ammunition, some of it of WWII vintage. There is little evidence of grenades. Unexploded WWII ordnance continues to pose a problem, as do looted commercial explosives.*

*There is little evidence of substantial illegal small arms-transfers into the Solomon Islands since 2000. There appears to be a minor “ant-trade” between Bougainville and West Solomons, but price differentials strongly suggest that small arms trafficking in the southern direction is not profitable. There are also unverified reports of supplies to the Malaita Eagle Force (MEF) in previous years, but little evidence to back the claim. To date, no quantity of mass-manufactured small arms has been traced to external (smuggled) sources, though ammunition must be smuggled in. Instead, serial number traces almost invariably lead to known Solomon Island stockpiles, either civilian or state-owned. The illegal trade is clearly an area requiring further investigation.*

*A range of direct and indirect impacts of small arms misuse persist some three years after the signing of the Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA). At least 50-60 people have been fatally injured in 2003. In one hospital count, 70 per cent of gun injuries involved high velocity projectiles typical of those used in police and military weapons. Many non-fatal firearm injuries remain uncounted, but epidemiological estimates suggest a ratio as high as three non-fatal shootings for each lethal gun injury, or as many as 150-180 wounded. Armed crime – particularly extortion, kidnapping and intimidation – is widely recorded, though appears to be easing with the arrival of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI).*

*Firearm legislation in the Solomon Islands needs to be enforced and penalties increased. The Firearms Act (1969, Amended 1989 and 2000) includes a broad definition of firearms and extensive penalties, and forms a solid basis for regulating unlawful ownership, marking and tracing, controls on transfers, including imports and exports. Storage practices have recently been improved, but require continuing attention. Nevertheless, current penalties are outdated and should be increased.*

## Introduction

1. This independently commissioned policy briefing is directed to assisting donor countries and government stakeholders. With the arrival of RAMSI, Solomon Islands is likely to emerge from a protracted state of political and economic collapse. A critical obstacle to the objectives of RAMSI, Solomon Island Government (SIG), UN agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is the continued availability of illegal firearms. The proposed amnesty from 1 to 21 August 2003 is a welcome, albeit a first step, to the removal of illegal firearms. This brief, divided into *seven sections*, considers aspects of the issue.

## **Section I. The current situation**

2. Under the auspices of the Pacific Island Forum's *Biketawa Declaration* and following its authorisation by the Solomon Islands parliament under the *Facilitation of International Assistance Bill 2003*, members of the 2,250-member RAMSI intervention force arrived in Honiara during the last week of July 2003.<sup>1</sup> Though *Operation Helpem Fren* is expected to have at least an 18-month mandate, RAMSI is first and foremost a policing operation.<sup>2</sup> Its principal objective is to establish security in Honiara in a bid to enable government, business and community to operate free of armed intimidation. Improved security is to be later extended beyond Honiara.<sup>3</sup> The collection of illegal weapons is to be a priority objective in the early stages of the campaign<sup>4</sup> and one strongly shared by SIG.<sup>5</sup> The disarmament of militia groups presents one of the clearest challenges for RAMSI.

3. The primary mechanism for collecting weapons in the Solomon Islands since the Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) has been a series of amnesties. The record of these efforts has been mixed. Concerns persist over amnesty-related legislation and associated compensation, their effectiveness in gathering "high powered weapons" (as opposed to less desirable, craft-manufactured or "homemade" firearms) and the symbolic dividends of amnesties as perceived by the population. Indeed, an effort to encourage the surrender of weapons from militia groups prior to the arrival of RAMSI was more or less unsuccessful.<sup>6</sup>

4. RAMSI has announced a weapon surrender amnesty effective 1 August to 31 August 2003. Authority will be derived from the *Facilitation of International Assistance Act* and subsequent draft orders from the Attorney General. The Act empowers the Police Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner to declare a non-enforcement period regarding prosecution for theft and/or unlawful possession of a firearm. Other offences involving weapons will be investigated. Weapon receipts, not amnesty certificates, will be given to those who surrender their firearms. Draft orders from the Attorney General are not required before the commencement of the amnesty period.

5. The situation in the Solomon Islands is dynamic and changing rapidly. The overall security context appears to be improving quickly, though reports of weapons being smuggled in from mainland Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Bougainville have also been circulated.<sup>7</sup> There are also conflicting reports regarding the willingness of former Police officers and the remaining militia members to surrender their weapons, though on 29 July a crackdown did begin.<sup>8</sup> According to some reports, the remaining MEF militia have claimed that they are planning a "traditional" surrender of arms to tribal priests on 15 August and have invited RAMSI to attend.

Though the disarmament of remaining militia forces is a clear and urgent priority, weapon collection and disposal should nevertheless be seen as a long-term exercise. This briefing

observes that it is in the long-term interests of RAMSI to work closely with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the National Peace Council (NPC) and local stakeholders in order to maximise the reach, cost benefits and impact of the amnesty.

## Section II. Estimated distribution of small arms in the Solomon Islands

### Overview

6. The total number of firearms in the hands of civilians and security forces in the Solomon Islands in July 2003 is estimated to be between **2,640-3,520**. Among these are between **1,010 and 1,270 illegal “high powered” and “commercial” firearms** (see Figure 1). Reviewed below, these figures draw on a range of estimating techniques and are triangulated with International Peace Monitoring Team (IPMT) stores, UNDP documents, media reports, key informants and other documents. Such estimates cannot be entirely verifiable, and are subject to change depending on the veracity and accuracy of reports.

This briefing assumes that there are currently 1,045 Royal Solomon Islands Police (RSIP) officers. These include 326 Special Constables, 224 Police Field Force (PFF) and at most 130 Rapid Response Unit (RRU) and Special Prison Task Force (SPTF) personnel, 500-1,000 remaining Malaita Eagle Force (MEF) and some 100-150 “hard-core” Isatabu Freedom Movement fighters (IFM).

**Figure 1. Estimated Small Arms Holdings: 2000 and 2003 (July)**

| Actor                     | Estimated Holdings<br>October 2000 | Weapon Reduction<br>November 2000 –<br>July 2003 | Total Estimated Holdings<br>July 2003 | Estimated Illegal High-Powered/<br>Commercial<br>July 2003 |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Civilians</b>          | 800                                | -84 [inc. 22 + 62]                               | 720                                   | 720  |
| <b>RSIP*</b>              | 360                                | -148 [inc. 122 + 25                              | 200                                   | NA   |
| <b>PFF</b>                | 270                                | + 1]   | 500                                   |  |
| <b>RRU</b>                | 60                                 |  | 170                                   |  |
| <b>SPTF</b>               | 40                                 |  |                                       |  |
| <b>Special Constables</b> | 170                                | NA   | 90                                    |  |
| <b>MEF</b>                | 1,600-3,200**                      | -2,021 [inc. 42]***                              | 800-160                               | 240-480****  |
| <b>IFM</b>                | 600-800                            |  | 160-240                               | 50-70****  |
| <b>Other Sources</b>      | NA                                 | NA   | NA                                    | NA   |
| <b>Total</b>              | 4,300-6,100                        | 2,255  | 2,640-3,520                           | 1010-1270  |

Unless otherwise listed, all figures rounded up/down to the nearest 10.

The table does not include explosives and ammunition: Some 2.86 tons of ammunition and explosives were destroyed, though more than 12,890 civilian detonators are believed at large. Figures in brackets (i.e.[22]) refer to weapons taken out of circulation in the past 12 months.

\*Includes PFF and RRU

\*\*Overlap with RSIP, PFF and RRU officer holdings and includes 1,034 weapons stolen from Auki and Honiara

\*\*\*The Melanesian Brothers also allegedly destroyed some 50 weapons though records were never kept.

\*\*\*\*Based on breakdown of previously surrendered weapons to the IPMT of which some 70 per cent homemade and 20 per cent “high powered” or “commercial”. The numbers are achieved by multiplying the total estimated holdings by 0.20.

7. In October 2000, at the time of the TPA, there were an estimated **4,300-6,100 small arms** in the Solomon Islands (see Figure 1). This includes the holdings of an estimated 800 (suspended) licensed civilian firearm owners and some 730 weapons of various calibres and types issued to the RSIP including the various paramilitary units (e.g. PFF, RRU, SPTF). An additional 170 weapons were believed to be at the disposal of Special Constables and between 2,200 and 4,000 in the hands of MEF and IFM militia factions (see Figure 1). This also includes the estimated 1,034 firearms stolen from police armouries in January and June 2000.<sup>9</sup> Roughly 20 per cent of these stocks are believed to have been “high powered” or commercial arms and 70 per cent “homemade”.<sup>10</sup>

8. As many as **2,255 firearms** – including “high powered”, “commercial” and “homemade” weapons – have been taken out of circulation as of 31 July 2003 (see Figure 1).<sup>11</sup> Some 2.86 tons of ammunition and explosives have also been destroyed. These include 2,064 weapons handed in the two years following the TPA (including 122 weapons handed by RSIP, 62 “commercial” weapons (likely handed in by civilians), 25 weapons handed in by the RSIP in late July 2003, 40 homemade weapons handed in on 30 July 2003 (and another 2 “high powered weapons” handed in on 31 July), one weapon handed in by the Special Constables Demobilisation project and 22 weapons handed in during the NPC “Weapons Free Village” campaign.

### **Estimated holdings and distribution of arms among actors**

9. *Civilians*: In 2000, there were approximately 800 licensed civilian gun owners in possession of an estimated 800 firearms (see Figure 2). Although an April 2000 government order called in all civilian-held weapons for safe storage in official armouries,<sup>12</sup> many were not collected and others have since gone missing.<sup>13</sup> It is estimated that some 84 “commercial” (e.g. mass manufactured) weapons were turned in between 2000 and 2003 to the IPMT and others. Given a population of approximately 480,000, this suggests a civilian-to-arms ratio of 0.17 weapons for every 100 people – substantially lower than New Zealand’s 22.5 weapons per 100 people, or even New Caledonia’s 8.5 per 100.<sup>14</sup> Prime Minister Sir Allan Kemakeza has publicly discussed their collection, though official plans have not been finalised. UNDP’s interlocutor in the RSIP is currently investigating the existing number of registered owners.

10. *Isatabu Freedom Movement/Guadalcanal Liberation Front*: The IFM emerged between March and October 1998 and was estimated to number between 500-2000 rural Guadalcanal from the south coast, northwest and northeast of Honiara.<sup>15</sup> They were a largely disorganised militia group. Though lacking central leadership, several commanders’ co-ordinated eastern and western factions in armed operations that successfully drove Malaitan settlers from rural Guadalcanal. In 1999, the IFM was also known as Guadalcanal Liberation Front (GLF), Guadalcanal Revolutionary Army (GRA), and Isatabu Freedom Fighters (IFF). There were estimated to be between 400 and 500 “hard core” IFM militants in 2000 at the time of the TPA (though some 2,000 received amnesties).<sup>16</sup> In 2003 there are an estimated 100-150 well-armed militia, primarily in the Weather Coast and under the leadership of Keke and Kaoni.<sup>17</sup> The IFM militia are estimated to have approximately 1.6 weapons per combatant – a conservative multiplier consistent with other similarly armed groups – and an estimated 160-240 weapons – of which 20 per cent are “high powered” or “commercial” (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Estimated size of armed actors and small arms multipliers**

| Actor              | Estimated Number 2000 | Multiplier* | Total Holdings Oct 2000 | Estimated Number 2003 (July) | Multiplier* | Total Holdings July 2003 |
|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|
| Civilians          | 480,000               | 0.0017      | 800                     | 480,000                      | NA          | 720                      |
| RSIP               | 1241                  | 0.29        | 360                     | 691                          | 0.29        | 200                      |
| PFF                | 121                   | 2.25        | 270                     | 224                          | 2.25        | 500                      |
| RRU                | 49                    | 1.3         | 60                      | 130 (max)                    | 1.3         | 170                      |
| SPTF               | 31                    | 1.3         | 40                      |                              |             |                          |
| Special Constables | 600                   | 0.29        | 170                     | 326                          | 0.29        | 90                       |
| MEF                | 1,000-2,000           | 1.6         | 1,600-3,200             | 500-1,000                    | 1.6         | 800-1,600                |
| IFM                | 400-500               | 1.6         | 600-800                 | 100-150                      | 1.6         | 160-240                  |
| <b>Total</b>       |                       |             | 4,300-6,100             |                              |             | 2,640-3,520              |

\*Regularly armed police in the Commonwealth are believed to have approximately 1.3 weapons per sworn officer. Routinely unarmed police are estimated to have approximately 0.29 weapons per sworn officer (as in New Zealand, for example). Commonwealth military (and paramilitary) multipliers are 2.25. These multipliers are consistent with previous work carried out by the Small Arms Survey in the Baltic States, OECD countries, the Pacific Islands, as well as special investigative reports in Kosovo, Macedonia, Congo-Brazzaville, Yemen and other regions. See [www.smallarmssurvey.org](http://www.smallarmssurvey.org)

11. *Malaita Eagle Forces*: The MEF arose in response to the IFM in early 1999 and included an estimated 150-300 Malaitans recruited principally from former and serving RSIP officers (including paramilitary units) and disgruntled, displaced Malaitans and settlers.<sup>18</sup> Members of the MEF were grouped into units (e.g. the "Tiger Unit") according to their tribal affiliation in central and northern Malaita. These "units" determined to some extent their command loyalties. At their height, some 3,000 MEF combatants were believed to be active – of whom 50-75 were militarily trained professionals – though some 1-2,000 were believed armed.<sup>19</sup> The MEF are also assumed to have 1.6 weapons per member – though the proportion of these weapons that are likely "high-powered" is also higher. Total estimated holdings of the MEF in 2003 are 800-1,600 of which some 240-480 are believed to be "high powered" or "commercial" (see Figure 2).

12. *Royal Solomon Island Police*: The RSIP had some 1,442 sworn police officers in 2000 – including paramilitary units – and some 730 firearms between them (see Figure 2).<sup>20</sup> A police multiplier of 0.28 weapons for irregularly armed RSIP officers is consistent with other Commonwealth countries. It is difficult, however, to discern those not "routinely" armed within the RSIP and the paramilitary units who were regularly armed. Within the RSIP are several small paramilitary units, including the Police Field Force (PFF), the Rapid Response Unit (RRU) and the Special Prison Task Force (SPTF) which acted as the *de facto* army and protected SIG interests such as timber extraction and mining concessions. It assumed the PFF were regularly armed, and are assigned a multiplier of 2.25 – consistent with other formal military actors in the Pacific region. The RRU was largely untrained and formed in 1997 of police units, the PFF and a number of officers of the SPTF.<sup>21</sup> The RRU and SPTF are assigned a multiplier of 1.3 per officer – consistent with "regularly" armed police forces in the Commonwealth. More than 100 PFF and RRU officers reportedly joined the MEF in 2000 to form what the MEF calls the "Joint Paramilitary Police-MEF Operation". Today, the RSIP is approximately 1,045 strong, and includes some 326 Special Constables (see below), 224 with the PFF or "Star Division" and up to 130 RRU and SPTF personnel.

13. *Special Constables/Police Reserves*: In 1989, the number of Special Constables serving with the RSIP stood at approximately 50. At the signing of the TPA, the number was

approximately 500. Under the provisions of the TPA, only 200 ex-combatants from the MEF and IFM were to be demobilised and to adopt the post of “Special Constable” or “Police Reserves”. In the absence of formal controls, they multiplied to more than 2,056 – primarily MEF ex-combatants – and constituted a tremendous drain on the budget.<sup>22</sup> In addition to those culled by the SIG between 2001 and 2002, the UNDP has registered some 1,178 Special Constables for formal demobilisation – of which more than 800 have been reintegrated.<sup>23</sup> Only 326 Special Constables are currently registered with the police force and, though “not regularly armed”, a multiplier of 0.29 is assumed – with a total of 94 firearms (see Figure 2). It should be noted, however, that a significant gender imbalance remains in the police force – which could potentially have consequences for the re-establishment of legitimate community policing in the stabilisation period.<sup>24</sup>

### **Legal and illegal Sources**

14. *Legal sources*: There is no industrial or commercial manufacturing of small arms in the Solomon Islands. Legal sources for military and commercial weapons were primarily the US and Australia: these were modest until all imports and exports were suspended in April 2000.<sup>25</sup> Total US arms and ammunition export licence approvals to the Solomon Islands were some USD 199,406 between 1998 and 2000 – though a breakdown of weapon types received is not available at this time.

15. *Illegal sources*: Most illegal weapons in the Solomon Islands were stolen from the formally legitimate stockpiles of the RSIP armouries. Though rumours abound, the illegal trade appears to be fairly limited: and statistics appear to be extremely unreliable. Whatever does persist appears to be concentrated between Bougainville and the Western Solomons. In the early 1990s, for example, Guadalcanal became a base for Bougainville’s combatants who allegedly brought with them and stored small arms. Along with movements of “armed criminals,” caches of BRA weapons are believed to be stored in parts of Gizo and Western Province of the Solomons. It is also alleged that BRA combatants exported their “know-how” with respect to the manufacture of homemade weapons. Police Commissioner Morell has noted that weapons were being smuggled from Bougainville southwards ahead of the arrival of the multinational peacekeeping force – though others reported that weapons were being stashed and shipped northwards to Bougainville instead.<sup>26</sup>

16. There were rumours of MEF re-supplying (small arms and ammunition) by transfers from privately owned international vessels and Chinese exports.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, in 1997, SIG was also implicated in brokering arms into Bougainville – including some 3,000 M79 grenade launchers, 3,000 rocket launchers and 10 machine guns – though little follow-up was ever taken. Nevertheless, despite a few isolated incidents<sup>28</sup>, there is little hard evidence to support claims of serious transfers into the Solomon Islands or north-south trafficking from Bougainville.

### **Arms types**

17. *Automatic weapons*: A large number of “high powered” weapons were seized during the unrest and raids on government armouries. By cross-checking weapons collected and surrendered, it appears that weapons in MEF hands consist of Singaporean SR88 5.56mm assault rifles, FN FAL 7.62mm assault rifles, GPMG M-60 7.62mm general purpose machine guns and older Webley revolvers (see Annex 1). The MEF were also able to make use of a .50mm Browning machine gun from a Government Motor Patrol Boat. The IFM used homemade weapons with both modern and WWII ammunition, civilian weapons of 12-gauge and .22 calibre and weapons captured from the MEF. There is little evidence of grenades.

18. *Homemade weapons*: There are a significant number of homemade weapons in the Solomon Islands. They made up almost 75 per cent of all weapons handed in during the first nine months of the TPA, yet accounted for fewer than 30 per cent of firearm injuries (see Figure 4). Craft production was facilitated by the ready availability of wartime ammunition – mostly .30 and .50 calibre. Local water pipes conform to similar measurements and can be machine-fitted. Other types of homemade weapons – using .22, .303, 5.56mm and 7.62mm, as well as an old Japanese 40mm “cannon” (a mounted anti-aircraft gun), have also been recorded.<sup>29</sup> The cannon has not been reported in action, nor is there evidence of usable ammunition being available for it.

19. *Explosives*: A concern since the early 1990s has been the large amount of WWII-type explosives leftover from US and Japanese inventories. These include .50 calibre machine gun rounds, as well as sizeable caches of unexploded ordnance.<sup>30</sup> Since 1999, however, a large number of civil emulsion type explosives (power gel) were also stolen, including primers such as Anzomex detonating cords and electric and non-electric detonators.<sup>31</sup> On 28 July 2003, a WWII “bomb” was also turned in.

### Geographic distribution of weapons

**Figure 3. Weapons Surrendered by Area: November 2000-July 2001**

| Weapon Types | Malaita    | Guadalcanal | Total        |
|--------------|------------|-------------|--------------|
| Homemade     | 63         | 768         | 831          |
| Commercial   | 13         | 49          | 62           |
| Military     | 119        | 22          | 141          |
| Other        | 9          | 88          | 97           |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>204</b> | <b>927</b>  | <b>1,131</b> |

IPMT July 2001

20. Most of the fighting was carried out in Guadalcanal and Malaita and the overwhelming majority of surrendered weapons were from these two regions. Weapons are not evenly distributed throughout the country, as the figure above makes clear (see Figure 3). One can assume that weapons surrendered from Malaita are primarily from MEF ex-combatants and former RSIP officers. Weapons turned in on Guadalcanal are derived from a combination of IFM, RSIP, MEF and civilian stocks. A few isolated reports of weapons being stolen and surrendered in other areas are also available. For example, five .303s and a number of .22s with ammunition were stolen from an armoury in Taro in Choiseul in June 2000. The National Peace Committee-directed Weapons Free Village programme (see below) has also returned some 22 weapons since August 2002, but their source is unclear.

### Section III. Impacts of weapon availability and misuse in the Solomon Islands: 1999-2003

21. The direct and indirect costs of the conflict have been severe and include fatal and non-fatal injuries, displacement, extortion and kidnapping and economic collapse. Between January 1999 and October 2000 several hundred people were believed to have been fatally wounded by both IFM and MEF militia as well as the police and its security apparatus.<sup>32</sup> The Red Cross does not have injury figures from 1999 to 2003, but these are estimated to be in the hundreds. Many more were believed to have died due to limited access to basic health services. Remote clinics were especially vulnerable as supply routes were disrupted by the conflict.<sup>33</sup>

22. Armed violence continues to be a problem in the aftermath of the conflict – both in terms of reprisal killings and criminal violence. In common with international experience, the post-conflict rate of gun death remains similar to – and in recent months has been higher than – the average firearm fatality rate during the years of organised hostilities. From January to July 2003, more than 30 people are registered as having been fatally wounded by small arms. This has included high profile incidents<sup>34</sup> as well as unsubstantiated reports in areas such as the Weather Coast. Though such figures are difficult to verify, armed supporters of the IFM are believed to have killed between 15 and 50 people since May 2003 alone. There are also eyewitness reports that at least two villages were burned down in the remote Marasa district on the main island of Guadalcanal.<sup>35</sup>

**Figure 4. National Referral Hospital: reported injuries by weapon type – 1994-2002**

|      | High Velocity* | Low Velocity** | RPG and Mortar | Knife or Blunt Inst. |
|------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------------|
| 1994 | 9              | 0              | 2              | 2                    |
| 1995 | 0              | 0              | 0              | 0                    |
| 1996 | 12             | 1              | 9              | 0                    |
| 1997 | 5              | 1              | 0              | 1                    |
| 1998 | 4              | 0              | 1              | 0                    |
| 1999 | 24             | 31             | 0              | 16                   |
| 2000 | 55             | 18             | 3              | 16                   |
| 2001 | 12             | 8              | 0              | 13                   |
| 2002 | 18             | 0              | 0              | 2                    |

\* In this dataset, High Velocity includes M16s, police-issue SLRs, SR88s and handguns (70 per cent of reported gun injury)

\*\* In this dataset, Low Velocity includes shotguns, .22 rifles and home-made weapons (30 per cent of reported gun injury)  
Dr. Jon Andri Lutz. Traumaform database, National Reporting Hospital. Honiara, August 2003

23. Between 1999 and 2000, 20-30,000 people were internally displaced.<sup>36</sup> In 2001, total internal displacement had risen to some 35,309 – primarily in Guadalcanal, Malaita and Honiara itself (see Figure 5). In 2003, internal displacement recently flared. Though the Red Cross does not maintain IDP figures for the entire country, an estimated 1,200-1,400 internally displaced people are presently in camps in Honiara.<sup>37</sup> The ICRC has recently provided the Solomon Islands Red Cross with tents, tarpaulins, bedding, and cooking utensils for distribution to over 1,000 displaced persons.

**Figure 5. Population displaced by province of displacement in 2001**

| Province                | Displaced     | Percentage of the Population |
|-------------------------|---------------|------------------------------|
| Guadalcanal             | 12,806        | 21.3                         |
| Honiara                 | 7,339         | 12.9                         |
| Malaita                 | 12,676        | 10.3                         |
| Western Province        | 1,140         | 1.8                          |
| Choiseul                | 316           | 1.6                          |
| Central Island Province | 486           | 2.3                          |
| Rennel and Bellona      | 32            | 1.4                          |
| Isabel                  | 331           | 1.6                          |
| Temotu                  | 599           | 3.2                          |
| Markira-Ulawa           | 584           | 1.9                          |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>35,309</b> | <b>8.6</b>                   |

Schoorl and Friesen December 2001

24. The country also appears to have experienced a qualitative shift from otherwise “politicised” acts of violence to widespread criminality<sup>38</sup> and human rights violations between 2001 and 2003.<sup>39</sup> Due to lingering, and otherwise unresolved structural factors of the conflict (e.g. land-rights, political autonomy, ethnic tension), crime appeared to be on the increase in early 2003. Crime here includes theft, intimidation, unsustainable resource use and

kidnapping. For example, the kidnapping of six Melanesian Brothers by Keke-militia on the weather coast on May 14 2003 has received considerable press.<sup>40</sup> Reports of increasing domestic violence have also been noted by women's associations. Human rights violations, including the extra-judicial use of force and disappearances have been widely recorded.<sup>41</sup> With the arrival of RAMSI, however, crime rates appear to be declining.

25. The rupture of traditional social structures has serious long-term implications for youth – who represent almost 50 per cent of the population. In addition to the estimated 100 child soldiers who fought in the conflict, many others witnessed atrocities and were forced to abandon their schooling. Indeed, a survey carried out in September 1999 indicated that over 40 per cent of school-aged children in Malaita were not in school. Meanwhile, primary and secondary enrolments in Guadalcanal and Honiara declined as students – subjected on a daily basis to harassment and intimidation – simply stopped attending. A December 2000 survey found that in central Guadalcanal alone, more than 6,000 students had fled and were unable to return. Other services, including hospitals, clinics, schools and water supplies have been disrupted. The impacts of this have been acutely felt by women, children and the elderly.<sup>42</sup>

26. Armed conflict has pushed a fragile primary commodity-based economy into ruin.<sup>43</sup> Most major industries ceased operations and in late 2002, were still closed. In mid-1999, civil unrest on Guadalcanal led to the closure of Solomon Islands Plantations – the only palm oil producer in the country and also a producer of cocoa. In mid-2000, the sole mining company – *Gold Ridge mine* – was ransacked and terminated operations – as did all timber and saw milling activities in Guadalcanal. The country's major industrial fishing industry – Solomon Taiyo Ltd – limped along, but ceased operations after armed rebels boarded fishing vessels. Also affected were manufacturing, service and tourist industries in Honiara.

## **Section IV. Past and current legislative framework for firearms**

27. The Solomon Islands do not have a single national coordination agency or institution for regulating small arms. There are, however, four actors that have responsibilities for managing aspects of small arms: the Ministry of Police, National Security and Justice, the Ministry of National Reconciliation and Peace, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>44</sup> The key legislation for small arms control is the 1968 Firearms Act (amended in 1989/2000). According to the AusAid Law and Justice Sector, a legislative review is currently underway with special attention to increasing the severity of penalties for weapon-related crimes. Increasing the costs of illegal possession and distribution will be a critical area for consideration in the coming months and years.

28. *Definition of a firearm:* As a former colony, small arms legislation in the Solomons reflects British administrative practice. The Solomon Islands *Firearm and Ammunition Act*, established in 1968 and amended in 1989 and 2001, adopts a comprehensive *definition of a firearm*.<sup>45</sup>

29. *Civilian possession:* the Solomon Islands suspended firearm licensing to civilians in April 2000 “for at least 36 months”. This suspension is still in effect.<sup>46</sup> Specific prohibitions were placed on automatic and semi-automatic firearms, all pistols and revolvers, firearms and ammunition of .300, .303, .38 and .45 inch and 7.62mm and 9mm calibres.<sup>47</sup> Licensed owners have been required to surrender their arms and ammunition to central armouries.<sup>48</sup> It has not been established that these surrenders actually occurred, and an inventory of seized weapons has yet to surface. Though firearm ownership and use is tightly restricted *de jure*, there are occasionally exemptions in practice for hunting and fishing. Nevertheless, according to the

Firearms Act, unlawful possession results in a maximum fine of \$3,000 (USD 400) or up to five years in jail. This rises to \$10,000 (USD 1,340) or ten years if the offence occurred in a prohibited area.

30. *Firearm marking and registration:* Firearms are legally required to have a serial number or identifying mark.<sup>49</sup> Prior to April 2000, no licences were issued for unmarked arms though licensing officers were permitted to mark them directly.<sup>50</sup> The RSIP stockpiles are allocated a control number. A firearm register detailing weapon issue is kept in the Solomon Islands despite no express legal requirement. The presence of this register has enabled authorities to call in privately held weapons, as in May 2000. But because of the severely under-resourced nature of the police, their capacity to update local registers and to file regular reports to the central armoury has been limited. Nevertheless, the NPC continues to mark and register firearms in its on-going activities (see below).

31. *Manufacturing and Retail:* There is no modern production of small arms in the Solomon Islands. The Minister or Commissioner of Police must approve the establishment of an arms arsenal, effectively prohibiting the manufacture of small arms. There is, however, the production of homemade weapons – and fines for illegal manufacture are \$5000 (USD 670) and/or 10 years incarceration. Commercial sales are currently prohibited, but prior to May 2000, there were clear provisions for dealer licensing, with the requirement of maintaining detailed sales records and regular reporting cycles. Those found illegally dealing in firearms can be levied with a fine of 1,000 (USD134) and/or 2 years incarceration. Applications for “private transfers” (e.g. private sales, exchanges, gifts, etc) must be made through the Minister or Commissioner for police.

32. *Import and Export Controls:* Though no exportation or importation of small arms is currently sanctioned by the Solomon Island government, it nevertheless has a relatively well-developed import control system for legal small arms transfers. For small arms to be imported, an import licence is required. Particulars of the imports must be sent to the Principal Licensing Officer and a customs declaration must be made on importation. Arms and ammunition sent through the post were not to be delivered until import licence was produced. The Minister also had discretion to define which ports/places could be designated for importation and exportation and could also prohibit import and exportation.<sup>51</sup> Illegal firearm importation or exportation can result in a fine of some \$500 (USD 67) and/or incarceration for a year.

33. *Weapon Disposal.* The Solomon Islands have a provision for the responsible Minister to declare a prohibited area and to order the surrender of any or all arms and ammunition within its boundaries. Weapons surrendered in this way are to be returned to licensed owners after the prohibition is no longer in force, with destruction being an option if owners cannot be located. The country has also legislated for amnesties after 2000 – the last in April and May 2002.

34. *Storage practices:* RSIP officers were not routinely armed in 2000 – and storage practices were reasonably developed at the time. All firearms held by RSIP were allocated a “control number” in addition to the existing marking.<sup>52</sup> Keys for the armoury were controlled according to standard practice, and the armouries were constructed and locked in accordance with recognised standards. Regulations required that weapon stores were checked and the contents counted at specified intervals, though these were regularly flouted. Weapons issued were to be signed for, and controls existed (in theory) as to who could draw them and under what circumstances. Disciplinary action was to be taken against individuals found to be in

breach of any instructions on the security of weapons, though such action was rarely taken. Records of weapons – including their issue and storage – were relatively well maintained.

35. RSIP armoury security has been a subject of concern since their looting in 2000. An IPMT audit of the central police armoury in 2001 found that there were no proper accounting procedures for the storage of ammunition and explosives. The offer of training and technical assistance by Australia and New Zealand at a meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) led to the establishment of an AusAID-funded Law and Justice Programme in 2000. This continuing collaboration with RSIP has led to “significant progress” in the areas of small arms accounting procedures, physical security and disposal of weapons and munitions – though many challenges clearly remain. An RSIP Firearms Policy proposal on 30 October 2002 outlines improved procedures for managing police firearms and was approved at the end of 2002.<sup>53</sup>

## **Section V. Past and current mechanisms for weapon disposal**

36. There have been a number of weapon reduction efforts undertaken in the Solomon Islands since the signing of the TPA in October 2000. These include amnesties and surrenders under the provision of the TPA, weapon free villages and targeted demobilisation programmes.

### **Post-TPA: November 2000 – November 2002: 2,065 small arms collected**

37. The TPA included a two-pronged amnesty. An initial *weapons amnesty* required all arms and ammunition used during the conflict to be handed over to the respective MEF and IFM commanders within 30 days. In return, ex-combatants and police would be granted immunity from prosecution with respect to theft or illegal possession of firearms (which carried stiff penalties as noted above). For those who fully complied with the weapon amnesty, they could also potentially be granted a *general amnesty* regarding unlawful acts committed during the conflict. In the first 30 days of the TPA, some 43 weapons were turned in by 29 November 2000.

38. A 50-member International Peace Monitoring Team (IPMT) was established in order to build confidence and monitor breaches of the TPA, receive and monitor weapon surrenders and maintain an arms inventory. The Peace Monitoring Council (PMC) was also intended to promote indigenous leadership, liaise with communities in Guadalcanal and Malaita, and to oversee a campaign to encourage ex-combatants to comply with the TPA. Their relationship with the Melanesian Brothers and Sisters proved especially crucial in negotiating weapon surrenders. Neither the IPMT nor the PMC had enforcement authority. Between November 2000 and June 2001, some 1,034 firearms and 3,600 rounds of ammunition had been surrendered.<sup>54</sup> MEF-affiliated ex-combatants returned police-issued firearms while IFM handed in primarily homemade weapons. Weapon amnesties were allegedly granted to some 2,000 IFM and approximately 3,000 MEF. Though not originally included in the TPA, the IPMT assisted the RSIP in disposing of some WWII and civil explosives – including seven per cent of the 13,862 detonators stolen from the Gold Ridge mine.

39. Backed by fresh impetus from civil society groups, and following a “Wokabaot for Pis” and renewed radio and media campaigns, the PMC and the SIG launched a renewed effort to recover arms, explosives and stolen property in April 2002.<sup>55</sup> By May, the number of collected weapons had risen to 1,857. A major hand-over occurred before the expiry of the TPA with the RSIP providing a total of 122 weapons – of which 80 per cent were high powered.<sup>56</sup> Two weeks after the expiry of the amnesty, some 2,043 weapons and 2.86 tons of explosives were

held in IPMT containers. Of these, 815 (40 per cent) had been returned to IPMT, the PMC and the Melanesian Brothers since the beginning of the April 2002 campaign.<sup>57</sup> Two public destruction ceremonies were carried out in May (24<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>) 2002 with the expiration of the most recent weapon amnesty.<sup>58</sup> Public exposure was increased through a parade and media campaigns. More than 2,000 of the collected and surrendered weapons were rapidly destroyed and disposed of by oxyacetylene torch or thrown into the sea.

### **Weapon Free Villages: 22 small arms**

40. In recognition of the critical role of the IPMT and the PMC, the SIG established the National Peace Council (NPC) in October 2002 to continue implementing peace oriented activities and initiate new interventions to advance the peace process. It is composed of the SIG, former MEF and IFM militia and the provincial governments of Guadalcanal and Malaita.<sup>59</sup> The NPC is established through SIG dictate and reports to the Government through the responsible Minister. The NPC operates in a similar fashion as the PMC – as a neutral body – and its initial mandate is for three years subject to annual budgetary processes and appropriations.

41. Its primary activities have been the Weapons Free Village campaign that encourages communities to achieve “weapon-free status” with the assistance of NPC monitors. It provides substantial kits of sporting equipment to those villages (wards) that declare weapon free status. NPC monitors are used to assess weapon availability in a given area, and strive to ensure that no guns are left in a village before it is certified. Since its inception in August 2002, more than 720 villages – more than half the goal of approximately 1,200 villages by February 2005 – have been declared weapon free in public ceremonies. Some 22 weapons have been returned to the NPC in all. During these ceremonies chiefs and village leaders sign a weapon free declaration – a task for which the NPC requires sanctioning from the government.

### **Demobilisation of Special Constables Project**

42. The UNDP has supported the SIG since July 2002 with the Demobilisation of Special Constables Project.<sup>60</sup> The project created a steering committee comprised of the RSIP, the Ministry of Police, National Security and Justice, the Ministry of National Reconciliation and Peace and the UNDP. It aimed to reduce the number of Special Constables – or “Police Reserve” from its height of 2,056 in 2001 – and has successfully demobilised some 872 since the programme’s inception (with a goal of some 900). Though Special Constables were instructed to surrender weapons to the RSIP, and were required to sign a weapon declaration stating they no longer possessed one, only one small arm was handed over during the process. Special attention was given to female Special Constables – some 63 out of a possible 79 candidates. The project initially identified Special Constables, and is currently focusing on demobilising and reintegrating those who do not meet eligibility requirements. At present 326 registered Special Constables remain. According to the Police Commissioner, outstanding issues include: the collection and disposal of “declared” Special Constable weapons, the administration of sensitisation workshops, the dissemination of information through the NPC regarding SC roles, the training of RSIP officers and the design of a database to keep stock of weapons.

### **NPC and the Interim Weapon Collection Policy: 67 weapons collected**

43. On 22 July 2003, the NPC drafted an interim weapon collection policy that would last until such a time as established procedures are provided for the collection of weapons by RAMSI and the SIG.<sup>61</sup> In the month of July 2003, some 67 weapons had been returned to the NPC –

including at least five “high powered” weapons. The NPC monitors, however, have no secure storage facilities at monitoring posts. The policy therefore recommends that weapons be transported to Honiara. Transportation is kept secret, and weapons are accompanied at all times by an NPC team/staff and a Melanesian Brother or respected community leader. Weapons are to be stored at a secure, undisclosed location and then handed over to the Intervention weapon collection and disposal experts. Confidentiality of those returning weapons is also requested. According to the policy, a verifying receipt is issued to the recipient, but these do not constitute an amnesty. All weapons are to be registered in a “national database” maintained by the NPC and details of destruction noted. The policy recommends that the NPC, the RSIP, an “Intervention task force” and the media destroy weapons as soon as practical in ceremonies that are verified.

## **Section VI. Opportunities for weapon collection and disposal**

## **Section VII. Challenges for Weapon Collection and Disposal**

**Note:** At the request of stakeholders, the authors' analysis of policy opportunities, barriers to weapon collection and policy recommendations have been removed to permit circulation of this unrestricted version.

Rob Muggah & Philip Alpers  
August 2003

---

## **The Small Arms Survey**

An independent research project based at the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva, Switzerland and funded by 12 governments including those of New Zealand and Australia, the Small Arms Survey is the principal international source of public information on all aspects of small arms. The Small Arms Survey Yearbook, the annual global analysis of small arms issues, is published by Oxford University Press.

This policy briefing relies extensively on *Small Arms in the Pacific*, by Philip Alpers and Conor Twyford (Small Arms Survey, Geneva. Occasional Paper No.8, March 2003). Hard copies are free, and the full report is at: <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/OPapers/OPaper8Pacifcs.pdf>

Small Arms Survey  
Graduate Institute of International Studies  
47 Avenue Blanc  
1202 Geneva  
SWITZERLAND

Ph: +41 22 908-5777  
Fax: +41 22 732-2738  
E-mail: [smallarms@hei.unige.ch](mailto:smallarms@hei.unige.ch)  
Web: [www.smallarmssurvey.org](http://www.smallarmssurvey.org)

**Annex 1. Honiara Armoury Inventory:** Of the 1,000 weapons stolen from Rove in June 2000 499 remain at large. This table compares pre- and post-audit figures.

| Model                                   | Baseline<br>(high count of<br>combined pre-coup<br>armoury audits) | IPMT Police<br>armoury audit,<br>Dec 2000 | IPMT Police<br>armoury audit,<br>June 2002 | Surrendered to<br>IPMT in May<br>and June 2002 | Number still<br>outstanding<br>June 2002 |
|---|--|---|--|--|--|
| <b>Rifles</b>                           |  |   |  |  |  |
| SLR L1A1, 7.62mm                        | 320  | 161                                       | 132  | 64   | 124                                      |
| SR 88, 5.56mm                           | 300  | 103                                       | 113  | 34   | 153                                      |
| Lee Enfield No. 4<br>Mk1, .303 inch     | 115  | 38  | 32   | 21   | 62                                       |
| Lee Enfield No. 4 Mk<br>3, .303 inch    | 3  | 0   | 0  | 0  | 3  |
| Armalite AR15<br>5.56mm                 | 3  | 0   | 2  | 1  | 0  |
| Sterling 9mm                            | 5  | 0   | 0  | 1  | 4  |
| <b>Machine Guns</b>                     |  |   |  |  |  |
| SLR L2A1, heavy<br>barrel               | 2  | 0   | 0  |  | 2  |
| Browning 0.5 inch                       | 6  | 4   | 4  |  | 2  |
| GPMG 7.62mm, CIS<br>Version of MAG 58   | 20   | 7   | 7  | 3  | 10                                       |
| Ultimax 100, 5.56mm                     | 50   | 19  | 21   | 6  | 23                                       |
| <b>Handguns</b>                         |  |   |  |  |  |
| Berretta 9mm semi-<br>auto 92F          | 13   |   | 5  | 1  | 7  |
| Browning 9mm semi-<br>auto L9A1         | 10   |   | 0  |  | 10                                       |
| Webley .38 revolver                     | 36   |   | 3  | 2  | 31                                       |
| Smith & Wesson .38<br>Special, revolver | 1  |   | 0  |  | 1  |
| Ruger .357 Magnum<br>revolver (5)       | 1  | 1   | 1  |  | 0  |
| Colt .45                                | 3  |   | 0  |  | 3  |
| <b>Shotguns</b>                         |  |   |  |  |  |
| Greener Police Gun<br>Mk 2, 12ga        | 4  | 4   | 0  | 3  | 1  |
| Greener Police Gun<br>Mk 3, 12ga (4)    | 34   | 26  | 19   | 8  | 7  |
| Remington model 870<br>Police Magnum    | 70   | 3   | 4  | 14   | 52                                       |
| Mountaineer pump<br>action shotgun      | 4  | 4   | 0  | 0  | 4  |
| <b>TOTALS</b>                           | <b>1000</b>  | <b>370</b>                                | <b>343</b>                                 | <b>158</b>                                     | <b>499</b>                               |

Note: Number outstanding June 2002 = original baseline audit figure minus (total firearms surrendered to IPMT + June 2002 IPMT Rove audit).

Source: Solomon Islands IPMT, July 2002 and Philip Alpers & Conor Twyford, *Small Arms in the Pacific*. Small Arms Survey, March 2003: <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/OPapers/OPaper8Pacifics.pdf>

## Endnotes

---

<sup>1</sup> The Australian contribution comprises approximately 1,500 Australian Defence Force personnel, 155 Australian Federal Police and 90 personnel from the Australian Protective Services. New Zealand has contributed 105 soldiers, 35 police as well as logistics officers (up to 250 in total) and four helicopters to join the deployment, Fiji agreed to send 123 troops with peacekeeping experience; Tonga, Cook Islands, Kiribati, Samoa, and PNG approximately 220. The entire force will rise to 2,500 including support staff and expatriates working in the banking/private sectors.

<sup>2</sup> The long term objectives are to stabilise government finances and balance the budget, for example by securing revenue collection, deploying expatriates, obtaining donor and IFI support, and to revive business confidence by pursuing economic reform policies, corruption control, downsizing and debt management.

<sup>3</sup> Current estimates of RAMSI's military contingent are "weeks and months," depending on weapon collection efforts and Weather Coast operations. An estimate of up to ten years is being used for support staff.

<sup>4</sup> Key elements are to (a) reform the RSIP by increasing resources and introducing expatriate police into line positions; (b) launch a new effort to locate and confiscate illegal weapons; (c) investigate and prosecute new criminal offences vigorously, (d) strengthen courts and prison system and (e) protect key institutions from intimidation.

<sup>5</sup> The June 2003 Police Statement on the Offer by the Government of Australia for Strengthened Assistance to Solomon Islands notes: "the express wish to destroy illegal weapons that are collected and confiscated" (2.1.3) and the "desire to allow time to surrender arms. Consideration of amnesty should be restricted to existing legislation. Practical arrangements should be discussed by the Attorney General's Office, UNDO, NPC, Australian Government and the Commissioner of Police" (2.3.2).

<sup>6</sup> The IFM agreed to surrender their weapons following efforts made by Police Commissioner William Morell in mid-July. Though some explosives were handed in by leader Stanley Kaoni, the agreement collapsed following internal disputes.

<sup>7</sup> As of 28 July 2003 Australia deployed four more Navy vessels to Solomon Islands with a second Iroquois helicopter from New Zealand also due later in the week. The patrol boats were to help pre-empt the movement of guns within and without the country, especially at the border with Bougainville.

<sup>8</sup> The Australian Federal Police Assistant Commissioner Ben McDevitt, sworn in as a Deputy Police Commissioner of the RSIP, noted that all police who did not have written permission of the Police Commissioner to be holding a firearm would be arrested (28 July 2003).

<sup>9</sup> According to informants in the Solomon Islands, RSIP stocks on 1 July 1999 totaled 784 weapons: 168 of these were allegedly destroyed, 106 are presently in Rove Armoury and 118 are presently issued in police operations. In this way, some 392 are still unaccounted for.

<sup>10</sup> This mirrors the ratio of surrendered weapons under the TPA, which was 73 per cent homemade to 17 per cent military or commercial. The remainder included spears and bows and arrows.

<sup>11</sup> Weapon reduction has been carried out via the TPA amnesty and surrenders (2,065), the NPC-led weapons free village campaign (22) and the demobilisation of special constables project (1), and recent surrenders to RAMSI (25). This does not include the 800 registered firearms held by civilians in 2000.

<sup>12</sup> Akao, Wilfred. Deputy Commissioner, Operations, RSIP. Statement to Philip Alpers, Tokyo, 22 January 2003.

<sup>13</sup> According to well-placed official sources interviewed for this briefing paper, of those weapons that were handed in, many have since gone missing. Following amnesties, and with approval from senior officers, police "re-armed" themselves with surrendered weapons at least four times, and armouries were successively stripped.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Philip Alpers and Conor Twyford (2003) *Small Arms in the Pacific*. Small Arms Survey. Geneva March 2003. Report at [www.smallarmssurvey.org](http://www.smallarmssurvey.org)

<sup>15</sup> This included mostly Guadalcanal-born rural agricultural laborers, including some 100 child soldiers, in loose community groups. Their primary source of employment had been the plantations before they were shut down as a result of violence.

<sup>16</sup> A UNDP donor report in 2000 noted that there were up to 5,000 irregular IFM militants and their families.

<sup>17</sup> This figure has been independently confirmed by five sources in the Solomon Islands.

<sup>18</sup> Indeed, the Multinational Police Peace Monitoring Group reported that it could not distinguish between the MEF and the paramilitary Police Field Force.

<sup>19</sup> An "active militia multiplier" is approximately 1.6 weapons per combatant. An irregular militia multiplier is 1 weapon per combatant (or less).

<sup>20</sup> This rises to 900 if Special Constable weapons are included. According to key informants with the RSIP, there were "officially" 784 weapons in police stocks in July 1999.

<sup>21</sup> The RRU was to be disbanded following complaints about their lack of professionalism in September 1999, but the police reform plans never took place

<sup>22</sup> Payments for the Special Constables ballooned to approximately USD 2.5 million in 2001.

<sup>23</sup> The demobilised Special Constables (SC) are primarily from Honiara (586 SCs); Guadalcanal - East, West and Goldridge - (202 SCs) and Malaita (71 SCs). It is planned to demobilise a further 25 SCs in the other provinces before the end of the project. Those SCs remaining in the police are maintained by the RSIP to fill in for regular police who are not attending work regularly.

---

<sup>24</sup> UNIFEM representatives have recommended that steps be taken to train and deploy women Special Constables and Police Reserves and to promote experienced women into positions of leadership within the police force.

<sup>25</sup> There was an incident in 1997 involving a controversial sale of USD 4 million worth of arms from the US arms supplier Century Arms Pty Ltd to the then Solomon Islands government. It was prompted by concerns over the Solomon Island border with Bougainville. Australia, worried about the impacts of the shipment on the Bougainville peace process refused requests for arms on two previous occasions. In early 1998, the shipment was diverted and at the request of the newly elected Ulufa'alu government, was impounded by Australia and New Zealand. Five years later in 2003, they were still impounded.

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, Courier Mail, Queensland 23 July 2003 (APP Newsfeed) and the Age, Melbourne 21 July 2003.

<sup>27</sup> There were unverified reports by the Sun Herald (Sydney, 11 June 2000) of MEF weapons imported from China, including automatic weapons, hand-guns and even shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles.

<sup>28</sup> In September 1996, for example, some 80 firearms – including SLRs, M-203s and M-16s were stolen during an incident at Kangu Beach on the Bougainville/Solomon Islands border.

<sup>29</sup> In the post-conflict environment, such weapons are virtually worthless. Close relations with the police meant that MEF sourced many of its firearms directly from the police armoury. The IFM, an opposing ethnic group, had fewer claims on police support, and so augmented its arsenal by producing crude homemade weapons.

<sup>30</sup> A “massive” amount of ordnance was discovered at Hell’s Point, Guadalcanal in 1992 (Los Angeles Times, 9 July 2002).

<sup>31</sup> In May 2002, for example, some 1,333 tubes of power gel explosive were surrendered.

<sup>32</sup> Amnesty International has extensive evidence of allegations against police officers fatally shooting non-combatants, indiscriminately firing on villages and the ill-treatment of prisoners.

<sup>33</sup> At the time of the writing, power outages prevented Red Cross staff from accessing their figures on fatal and non fatal injuries and displacement.

<sup>34</sup> Including the shooting of Robert Goh, a senior advisor to the PM in November 2002, the assassination of a Cabinet Minister by Harold Keke's group in 2002 and the assassination of Sir Fredrick Soaki, who was gunned down in a Malaita motel in February just days after Morell took up his job. Soaki was involved in the demobilisation of Special Constables. An MEF militia member accused of the murder was arrested but he quickly escaped from jail with the connivance of prison guards.

<sup>35</sup> Augustine Manakako, a former senior government official, said every house in Marasa, a village of about 500 people south of the capital Honiara, was burned to the ground in June 2003. Following the arrival of RAMSI, Australian ABC television news footage showed the remains of another razed village.

<sup>36</sup> Up to 20,000 Malaitan settlers (many second-generation) fled into Honiara and were repatriated to Malaita by the Red Cross. Many later returned and were concentrated within Honiara.

<sup>37</sup> Phillip Walker, Australian Red Cross regional coordinator for the Pacific, said there were 991 internally displaced people, including 191 families, in camps set up outside Honiara.

<sup>38</sup> According to AusAid Law and Justice Sector staff, crime data does not specifically cover firearms. Insufficient RSIP capacity was cited as a reason that data is limited to identifying crimes perpetrated against persons and property.

<sup>39</sup> See, for example, [www.us.politinfo.com/Information/Human\\_Rights/country\\_report\\_074.html](http://www.us.politinfo.com/Information/Human_Rights/country_report_074.html)

<sup>40</sup> One of the brothers was released on 16 July 2003 and three more on 25 July.

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, UNICEF ([www.unicef.org/emerg/Country/SolomonIslands/011221.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/emerg/Country/SolomonIslands/011221.pdf)). See also Amnesty International reports.

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, Ruth Liloqula and Alice Aruje’Eta Pollard. 2000. “Understanding Conflict in Solomon Islands: A Practical Means to Peacemaking”. The Australian National University series on State, Society, Governance in Melanesia. Paper 87

<sup>43</sup> The shutdown in production resulted in a dramatic fall in export earnings. Estimated losses of USD 28 million in exports and USD 33 million in imports took place in the first three months of the conflict. Exports – valued at some USD 150 million in 1991, had fallen to USD 55 million in 2001. The GDP also fell in real terms by 14 per cent in 2000, and again by another five per cent in 2001. At the end of 2001, 30 per cent of government employees were still on unpaid leave.

<sup>44</sup> The Ministry of Police, National Security and Justice is responsible for co-coordinating law enforcement, implementing laws and regulations relating to the registration, record keeping and stockpile management of small arms in use with the RSIP as well as structuring and procurement practices related to small arms used by the RSIP. The Ministry of National Reconciliation and Peace, created as part of the TPA, has been active in supporting DDR. The Ministry of Finance is responsible for customs control of small arms imports. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for coordinating foreign policy aspects.

<sup>45</sup> It includes: “any lethal barreled weapon of any description from which any shot bullet, or other missile can be discharged, or which can be adapted for the discharge of any shot, bullet or other missile, and any weapon of whatever description designed or adapted for the discharge of any noxious liquid, gas, or other thing dangerous to persons, and includes any component part of any such weapon designed or adapted to diminish the noise or flash caused by firing the weapon, but does not include an air gun, air rifle, or air pistol except where otherwise expressly provided, nor articles designed or adapted solely to discharge spears for spearing fish”. The definitions for “ammunition” and “explosives” include “bullets, cartridges,

---

shells or anything else designed or adapted for or capable of use with any arm, or designed or adapted to contain any noxious liquid, gas or other thing”.

<sup>46</sup> See [www.commerce.gov.sb/other/peace%20agreement.htm](http://www.commerce.gov.sb/other/peace%20agreement.htm).

<sup>47</sup> Solomon Islands (1969, Legal Notice 54/1968, sections: 14 (1) and (2), 26 (1)).

<sup>48</sup> According to Sean Evans, Law Enforcement Liaison Officer, PIF Secretariat (April 2002) and Det. Chief Supt. Eddie Sikua, RSIP (May 2002).

<sup>49</sup> The licensing officer to whom an application for a licence is made is required to ensure that the firearm concerned is marked with the prescribed mark or number. Firearms and Ammunition Act, Section 9 (1)

<sup>50</sup> Solomon Islands (1968, sections: 8 (2), 9 (1)).

<sup>51</sup> Solomon Islands (1968, section: 17 (1), 18, 23). It should be mentioned, however, that the border control authorities nevertheless allow seafarers who declare their firearms to keep them under lock and key until departure, either on board or with local police.

<sup>52</sup> All firearms are numbered on the inside read of the butt-stock (right-handed use) with yellow numbers measuring 8 cm on a black background.

<sup>53</sup> See SIG 2003. National Report on the Implementation of the UN PoA.

<sup>54</sup> An estimated 97 “other weapons” were also collected, including spears, crossbows and bows and arrows.

<sup>55</sup> The government announced a final extension of the deadline to hand in illegally held weapons in late April 2002. The deadline was 31 May 2002, after which anyone holding a weapon was supposed to be prosecuted under Solomon Islands law.

<sup>56</sup> These weapons were handed in in two batches. The first included 22 weapons, among them one rocket launcher, one M6A, three shotguns, two .22 rifles, one homemade .303, four homemade pistols, two .303 rifles, five “homemade” weapons, one SR88A, one Barrel Bar (GPMG) and one SLR (7.62mm).

<sup>57</sup> According to a June 2002 PMC press release “since 26 April, the International Peace Monitoring Team has now collected 815 surrendered weapons and 2,860 kgs of surrendered explosives, and there will be more surrendered weapons handed in over the next few days. There are now 2,043 weapons in IPMT containers”.

<sup>58</sup> Only a few weeks before the IPMT departure, clearance from Cabinet was received to destroy the weapons. As of July 2002, at least one container on the Weather Coast of Guadalcanal was not emptied due to a dispute between the IPMT and local community leaders (Kingma 2002).

<sup>59</sup> The composition of the Council is intended to adequately represent the broader composition of Solomon Islands society – and at least one Councilor will ultimately be represented from each Province.

<sup>60</sup> See [www.peoplefirst.net.sb/SC/Default.htm](http://www.peoplefirst.net.sb/SC/Default.htm)

<sup>61</sup> The NPC’s mandate comes from the SIG, but the Council has the authority to collect weapons. Should no government action be required, the ten NPC Councillors would have to approve a new approach.