

Chapter 6

Lead-Up to Operation *Lagoon*

After Operation *Morris Dance*, Australia's next force projection into the near region occurred in October 1994. Sir Julius Chan, the newly-elected Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea (PNG), was taking the initiative on the Bougainville Crisis, a war with secessionists in Bougainville that had begun in the late 1980s.¹ He had started negotiations with Australia in May 1994 when, as Foreign Minister, he had consulted his Australian counterpart, Senator Gareth Evans.² Chan's plan depended on Australia providing diplomatic, logistic and other specialist military support for the deployment of a South Pacific peacekeeping force to Bougainville to provide a secure environment for a peace conference.

The agreed trigger for convening a peace conference was the submission of a report from an Australian delegation that had visited Bougainville in response to reports of human rights abuses by the PNG Defence Force (PNGDF). Senator Stephen Loosely, head of the delegation, presented his report in Parliament on 8 June 1994.³ It contained a timetable for a peace process that would begin with community consultations and culminate with a peace conference later in the year. The report recommended that a South Pacific peacekeeping force provide security for the conference venue and delegates. In his formal reply to Loosely's report in Parliament, Evans signalled:

Australia could play a role in supporting a small regional peace keeping force, established to facilitate a peace process: this has not been put to us as a detailed proposal, and we await further elaboration of the concept. We would certainly consider any such proposal very sympathetically.⁴

On the same day that Loosely tabled his report, Defence Minister Robert Ray approved a plan for Operation *Lagoon*. The plan envisaged a Fijian-led South Pacific Peace Keeping Force (SPPKF) assembling and training in Fiji and deploying from there to Bougainville via Honiara, the capital of the Solomon Islands.⁵ In the covering minute to the plan, the Chief of the Defence Force (CDF), Admiral Alan Beaumont, wrote to Ray:

I am confident we could mount the operation successfully given the appropriate political climate, but because of the ADF's supporting role, the RFMF [Republic of Fiji Military Forces] would be key players; without them we would be on shaky ground militarily. ... You might note it would require approx [imately] three weeks from receiving your approval

to proceed until all arrangements were in place to commence the conference.⁶

Beaumont had set an ambitious timetable, presumably on advice from his Assistant Chief of the Defence—Operations (ACOPS), Major General Jim Connolly. For the time being, the only persons officially aware of this plan were six officers at Headquarters Australian Defence Force (HQ ADF), Beaumont, Ray, and probably Evans. It remained as a contingency plan, untested by wider analysis from staff at HQ ADF or subordinate headquarters. The need to keep the Operation *Lagoon* plan a secret from staff at HQ ADF as well as the environmental commanders and their senior staff was puzzling. Evans had talked freely to the media and in Parliament in June 1994 about Australia supporting a small-scale, short-time deployment of a SPPKF to Bougainville. Chan was reported later to have undertaken some personal lobbying during a tour of South Pacific island countries, canvassing participation in a SPPKF.⁷ These indicators that a force projection was in the offing did not prompt HQ ADF to begin contingency planning with subordinate headquarters, who would have to plan and execute Operation *Lagoon*. For their part, subordinate headquarters, such as Land Headquarters, HQ 1st Division and HQ 3rd Brigade, did not take their cue from Evans' statements to conduct any contingency planning either. Lieutenant General John Baker, who was Vice Chief of the Defence Force (VCDF) at the time, commented later that Ray was not as keen as Evans about supporting Chan's initiative in Bougainville. Accordingly, he gave no encouragement to Beaumont to begin more comprehensive planning with lower levels of command.⁸

On 27 August 1994, PNG foreign affairs officials, following Chan's direction, met Bougainvillean secessionist leaders at Tamba in the Solomon Islands and signed the Tamba Accords. The PNG Government and the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) agreed to pursue a peace process that would involve deployment of a SPPKF into Bougainville. This was a clear signal to Australia that more detailed planning was now urgently required. Australian diplomats met in Canberra during the following days to decide on the way ahead. Chan gave further impetus to the Bougainville peace process on 30 August, soon after being appointed Prime Minister. He used his inaugural speech to state that he would lead negotiations for peace in Bougainville with secessionist leaders. Five days after the Tamba Accords were signed, and two days after Chan's announcement of his intentions, Beaumont had still not issued a warning order to subordinate levels of command. He advised Ray on 2 September that he would continue planning in secret.⁹ Ray may have directed Beaumont to wait for formal agreements between the PNG Government and the Bougainvillean secessionists on the conduct and location of the peace conference before issuing a warning order. In any event, time shortened for subordinate headquarters to plan, check and organise, and for logisticians to anticipate and pre-position supplies.

Chan met with the secessionist military commander, General Sam Kauona, at Honiara on 2 September 1994. They signed *Commitment for Peace on Bougainville* the next day. The document contained arrangements for a ceasefire, nomination of Arawa as the peace conference site, a schedule for the peace process and the tasks that would be required of the SPPKF (including the creation of a secure environment in three neutral zones and collection of arms at those zones prior to transporting delegates to Arawa). There would be a ceasefire from midnight on 12 September and the peace conference was planned to begin on 10 October. They scheduled discussions for raising the SPPKF on 9 September in Nadi, Fiji.

Chan's insistence that the peace conference would begin on 10 October caught his own and the Australian Government by surprise. When he first proposed this timetable late in August, his advisers and departmental officials, as well as the Australian High Commission in Port Moresby, had advised him that it was unworkable.¹⁰ However, Chan maintained his position: the conference would begin no later than 10 October. The Australian Defence Force (ADF) now had less than six weeks to prepare and deploy a SPPKF comprised of contingents from Fiji, Tonga and Vanuatu to Bougainville.

Beaumont nominated the Land Commander, Major General Peter Arnison, as his lead joint commander for Operation *Lagoon*. His staff sent a copy of the *Lagoon* contingency plan to Arnison's staff three days later on 5 September. By then, Arnison had sent his senior planning officer, Lieutenant Colonel Justin O'Connor, to the Gulf of Carpentaria to brief Brigadier Peter Abigail, Commander, 3rd Brigade, about Operation *Lagoon*, in anticipation of him becoming the combined force tactical commander. After the briefing on 5 September, O'Connor told Abigail and two of his senior staff that he would be convening a planning conference on 9 September to consider a planning directive that was being developed by staff at HQ ADF. Abigail insisted that his Brigade Major, Major David Morrison, attend. O'Connor later tried to dissuade Morrison from attending because it was not time for the tactical level of command to be involved.¹¹ Morrison insisted and went. He recalled:

I think it was very opportune that I was there. This was the first time all of the 'doers' met for Operation *Lagoon*. The navy, the air force and the movers [probably 11 Movement Control Group] were in the loop. There were about 12 officers there who represented organisations that would have to make things happen. The meeting opened with a briefing from the Land Commander, General Arnison, followed by some intelligence people and then [Lieutenant Colonel] Bob Shoebridge told us about what had been happening in Canberra. I had no idea that HQ ADF had known about this operation for months and that very little real planning had gone on, especially in the logistics and administrative areas.¹²

Beaumont's draft planning directive went well beyond providing strategic guidance. It specified tasks for Arnison and then went on to include operational and tactical details. After a day of deliberation, the members of O'Connor's planning group produced notes for a concept for operations and a draft directive to Abigail. In this draft, Arnison directed Abigail to present a concept for operations on 15 September to the staff at Land Headquarters so it could be refined before transmission to HQ ADF for approval. Arnison had given Abigail and his staff a significant challenge because they knew very little about the situation in Bougainville, Rules of Engagement (ROE) for a combined force, or the potential threat to the SPPKF. Morrison recalled later:

I left Sydney with a very loose draft directive [from Arnison] for the Commander [Abigail], my notes from the meeting and some other loose paperwork that I had managed to gather. At this stage everything about this operation was loose.¹³

Morrison flew back to Townsville to find that Abigail had returned from the field to meet him and find out what Operation *Lagoon* was all about. Even with the sketchy information they had, Abigail knew he had to begin developing concepts and anticipating what would be required to support the SPPKF.¹⁴ Offsetting the tight deadlines and gaps in information, Abigail, Morrison and Major Ian Hughes, Abigail's senior logistic staff officer, were used to producing plans and getting 3rd Brigade into action at short notice. The brigade was on an operational footing from Exercise *Swift Eagle* and had benefited from preparing and dispatching the Medical Support Force to Rwanda several weeks before.¹⁵

Abigail and his staff were well into tactical level planning by the time Colonel Gordon Hurford, Director Joint Operations and Plans, HQ ADF, and Colonel Phil McNamara, Colonel (Operations), Land Headquarters, were finalising a planning directive for Beaumont to sign.¹⁶ Hurford and McNamara were having difficulty keeping subordinate headquarters informed of latest developments. The outcomes of a meeting in Nadi, Fiji, on 9 September 1994, that specified arrangements for assembling and training the SPPKF, were communicated quickly to HQ ADF for incorporation into Beaumont's planning directive. However, planning had already begun at Sydney and Townsville, based on earlier advice. As quickly as tactical level staff planned some aspect of the operation, changes arrived from HQ ADF.

After several days of intensive work, Abigail and Morrison flew to Sydney on 15 September 1994 to brief Arnison's staff. Abigail argued for a substantial increase to the size of the combined force. He assessed that the SPPKF should comprise 390 South Pacific troops supported by 250 ADF personnel, not including the crews of support ships HMAS *Tobruk* and HMAS *Success*. After Abigail's briefing, planners began refining his concept to incorporate information from the most recent draft of Beaumont's planning directive and other sources.¹⁷

Morrison noticed that, like the planning meeting on 9 September, there were no logisticians or engineers attending to comment on whether operational concepts were logistically sound.¹⁸

Coincidentally, planning at Land Headquarters was going ahead as another round of diplomatic negotiations began in Suva, Fiji. This situation replicated the coincidence of the first planning meeting on 9 September being held on the same day as the meeting of participating nations in Nadi. Once again, decisions that were made at the strategic level in Suva did not inform Land Headquarters planning until later. As a consequence, changes had to be made to the plans. Defence legal officers and officials developed important documents, such as the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) and ROE, without information on the operational plan and vice versa.¹⁹

Planners at Land Headquarters decided to pre-position a reconnaissance group in Townsville and put its members on a short notice to move. Staff at HQ ADF would not authorise anyone to deploy offshore until the Australian Cabinet had approved Operation *Lagoon*. Colonel Sevenaca Draunidalo, the nominated Fijian tactical ground force commander, was the reconnaissance leader. Colonel Feto Tupou, a Tongan officer nominated to command a liaison headquarters, and a Ni Vanuatu representative, Colonel Sevla Takal, would accompany him. Representatives from 3rd Brigade, HMAS *Tobruk*, Land Headquarters and Air Headquarters, as well as a representative from the Australian High Commission in Port Moresby, Lieutenant Colonel Gary Young, and an interpreter, who would join the reconnaissance group in Port Moresby, were to comprise the remainder of the group.²⁰ In anticipation of the Australian Cabinet approving Operation *Lagoon* on 19 September, Arnison put Draunidalo and his team on 12 hours notice to move from 6.00 p.m. on 18 September. At this stage, no decision had been made in Canberra on whether Abigail should go on the reconnaissance.

Planners at Land Headquarters also decided on 18 September to send liaison officers to Fiji, Tonga and Vanuatu to keep abreast of events as contingents were formed and their support requirements became known. Abigail telephoned Lieutenant Colonel Ray Martin, Commanding Officer (CO) of 1st Battalion, the Royal Australian regiment (1 RAR), that afternoon, directing him to have three officers ready to move the next day. Most of Martin's officers were on local leave or about to depart Townsville on leave after Exercise *Swift Eagle*. He went down to the 1 RAR Officers' Mess and nominated three of the officers he found there having a late afternoon beer. The next afternoon, Abigail briefed Major John Cronin and Captains Greg Ducie and Steve Grace. Cronin flew to Fiji, Ducie to Tonga and Grace to Vanuatu; none of them spoke the local language or had been to the South Pacific before.²¹ Arguably, the Defence Intelligence Organisation (DIO), the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) or HQ Special Forces

should have provided officers or officials with the relevant language and cultural skills. Higher levels of command left 3rd Brigade to 'make do'.

Meanwhile, the navy was preparing for participation in Operation *Lagoon*.²² Beaumont had ordered the Maritime Commander to provide sea transport, command and control afloat, and aviation and medical support. On 16 September, the Maritime Commander, Rear Admiral Don Chalmers, issued a warning order to HMAS *Success* and HMAS *Tobruk*, appointed the CO of HMAS *Success*, Captain Jim O'Hara, Royal Australian Navy (RAN), to command the group and designated HMAS *Tobruk* to be Abigail's headquarters afloat. Two lieutenant commanders assisted O'Hara to exercise command as well as to fulfil his duties as Abigail's maritime advisor. Arnison had operational control of navy vessels. This was the first time that navy vessels had been placed under control of a joint commander.²³

Land Headquarters staff sent the concept of operations for *Lagoon* to HQ ADF on 16 September 1994. Despite almost doubling the numbers of troops from early estimates, acting CDF, Lieutenant General John Baker, and Major General Connolly supported Abigail's concept of operations. Subsequently, Senator Robert Ray approved the concept on 18 September and Cabinet approved a joint Defence–DFAT submission the next day, allocating A\$5.2 million to Defence in supplementary funds. Though the political outcomes were problematic, the peace conference at Arawa represented the best chance of beginning a negotiated settlement of the Bougainville Crisis since the failure of the Endeavour Accords (brokered by New Zealand in 1990).

In the days before and after Cabinet approval, the ADF operations network worked well. Connolly's staff in Canberra and Arnison's staff in Sydney trusted each other to exchange drafts of documents, to question any aspect of planning and to offer advice. The smooth working relationships between HQ ADF and Land Headquarters were also reflected in the relationships further down the chain of command between McNamara's staff and Abigail's staff. Morrison recalled that he was in constant contact with O'Connor and his staff, and occasionally received useful and informative telephone calls from Lieutenant Colonel Robert Shoebridge at HQ ADF. The operations staffs at the strategic, operational and tactical levels of command were working harmoniously through a line of experienced army officers who knew each other well.

Intelligence, Communications and Logistic Support

While operational planning was running smoothly within tight deadlines, the equivalent processes for intelligence, communications and logistics were not synchronising well. Tactical level effects would be important. The Australian intelligence community in general, and intelligence assets and capabilities deployed to Bougainville in particular, had to anticipate any threats to members of the ADF personnel, SPPKF, or delegates to the conference. Urgent messages

had to be transmitted quickly for timely decision-making, especially in response to any threat. For example, DIO had to identify any armed groups on Bougainville intending to disrupt the peace process by harming peacekeepers or delegates. Intelligence had to be communicated efficiently up and down the chain of command so that commanders could monitor a threat, take evasive action or neutralise it. For their part, ADF logisticians had to deploy sufficient stocks and set up a supply chain to provide basic commodities (such as rations, water and ammunition) and other consumables (such as spare parts), as well as logistic services (such as catering, maritime and air transport, medical support and mail).

Secrecy at HQ ADF stymied operational level intelligence planning from June to September 1994. DIO and other agencies did not warn intelligence staff at Land Headquarters that the ADF might be going to support a regional peace support operation in Bougainville. Lieutenant Colonel Roger Hill, the senior intelligence analyst at Land Headquarters, took the initiative. He and his staff briefed Arnison and key operations, communications and logistic staff on the situation in Bougainville every week after Sir Julius Chan became PNG's Prime Minister. Hill felt that it was his duty to keep his commander informed about unstable areas of the near region. He was also aware that Senator Gareth Evans was talking about the ADF supporting a SPPKF in Bougainville.²⁴ Despite these briefings, Arnison did not authorise contingency planning.

After Beaumont issued his warning order for Operation *Lagoon* on 2 September 1994, Hill and his staff developed an intelligence collection plan targeting all armed antagonists in Bougainville and submitted it to intelligence agencies in Canberra and elsewhere. Intelligence support for Operation *Lagoon* could not follow the doctrine of conventional warfare. There was no specified enemy, but there were several ill-defined threats. This meant that ADF intelligence personnel and assets should gather information on the PNG defence and police forces, and their intelligence services, as well as Bougainvillean secessionist groups and their political and military allies and opponents. Hill based his assessment on the premise that, despite none of these groups declaring publicly that it was their intention to disrupt the peace process by attacking peacekeepers or delegates, there were rogue elements from each group capable of taking violent or destructive action without authorisation from their superiors.²⁵ During this time, Hill received no intelligence guidance from higher headquarters or agencies in Canberra. Neither Arnison nor members of his operations, communications or logistic staff requested specific intelligence. This ambivalence, accompanied by an inference that intelligence was an irrelevant contributor to a peacekeeping operation, did not augur well for force protection for Operation *Lagoon*.

Representatives from intelligence agencies at the strategic, operational and tactical levels did not meet during the initial planning phase for Operation *Lagoon* in early September. Consequently, there were no intelligence arrangements or

procedures worked out for the operation.²⁶ This meant that there was no shared assessment of what intelligence elements should be deployed to support either Arnison as the lead joint commander or Abigail as the combined force commander. If a threat arose quickly and unexpectedly, there was no shared understanding of how information would be passed in a timely way to these two key decision-makers. In effect, the ADF intelligence community decided that, aside from convening a Bougainville Crisis Action Team on 6 September within the ADF Intelligence Centre (ADFIC) in Canberra to advise Connolly, it would be 'business as usual'.

'Business as usual' meant that intelligence agencies would continue to operate independently, in compartments and in great secrecy. Hill and his staff were unable to influence the provision of intelligence to their commander or direct agencies to do so. For example, he knew from ADF peace support operations in Somalia and Rwanda that human intelligence constituted the most effective way to anticipate threats to ADF personnel. DIO staff ignored his requests for them to recruit a human intelligence network in Bougainville while there was time to do so. Lieutenant General John Baker commented later that it would have taken several years, not a few weeks, to set up a human intelligence network in Bougainville, adding that Defence had no authority to do so: PNG was a sovereign nation and one of Australia's important neighbours.²⁷ There also appeared to be no coordination between Defence intelligence agencies and other government departments with intelligence-gathering capabilities. This lack of coordination and mutual trust was not unusual at the time.²⁸

Undaunted, Hill reminded his superiors and agencies in Canberra that interpreters as well as liaison officers would be required to go ashore in support of South Pacific commanders and ADF support personnel. He recommended that they be directed to gather intelligence to protect Bougainvillean delegates. Frustrated with the lack of response, he and his staff established their own small Bougainvillean human intelligence network through informal contacts.²⁹

For Operation *Lagoon* HQ ADF staff directed Hill to deal only with ADFIC, which was under Connolly's command. This one-off arrangement ensured that staff who reported to Connolly would decide what information Arnison's intelligence staff would receive. As a consequence, Hill was unable to access certain types of data and information directly, losing the capability to interpret and advise Arnison independently. Hill also lost authorisation to task intelligence agencies. Arnison would have to depend on Connolly and his staff. Unfortunately, these *ad hoc* arrangements did not result in either agreed procedures for reacting to a crisis or an independent secure communications link from ADFIC directly to Abigail and his staff.

In summary, DIO and other intelligence agency support for Operation *Lagoon* was plugged in at the strategic level for Connolly and his staff through ADFIC.

However, Arnison and Abigail, the operational level and tactical level customers, were not connected. Their intelligence staffs were making their own arrangements. All intelligence would be passed using the same frequencies as operational and logistic information. Thus, intelligence gathered at the tactical level in Bougainville would compete with other communications traffic to be received further up the chain by Arnison's staff, and then by ADFIC. Similarly, intelligence gathered at the strategic level and coordinated through ADFIC would compete with other traffic being filtered down to Abigail and his staff in Bougainville.

Logistic Preparations

While the ADF intelligence community made tenuous arrangements for Operation *Lagoon*, ADF logisticians entered the planning cycle. Secrecy at HQ ADF had not only left logisticians in subordinate headquarters and at Logistic Command in Melbourne in the dark until early September, but also logisticians within HQ ADF itself. This resulted in some internal friction. Colonel Hurford, Director, Joint Operations and Plans at HQ ADF, gave Captain Russ Sharp, RAN, Director Joint Logistic Operations and Plans at HQ ADF, a copy of the contingency plan for Operation *Lagoon* in the first week of September 1994. Sharp commented later:

It took us precisely 60 minutes to work out that it [the plan] was unachievable. We made representations that it had to change but initially they fell on stony ground. It was not until the operators at the operational level [at Land Headquarters] made the self-same observations to the strategic level [HQ ADF] that our views became legitimate and the force structure changed.³⁰

By 9 September, when the South Pacific Forum delegations who had expressed an interest in participating in Operation *Lagoon*, met in Nadi, logistic support planning at HQ ADF had been underway for several days.³¹ There were many more questions than answers. There was no strategic concept for operations to guide logisticians. Beaumont's planning directive was still in draft form and its approval was a week away. Issues like the structure of the force, duration of the operation, modes of transport to be used and the locations of forward mounting and operating bases were critical prerequisites for any meaningful logistic preparation.

It was not until 13 September 1994 that Connolly submitted the final draft of Beaumont's planning directive to the acting CDF, Lieutenant General John Baker, for signature. By this time, Abigail and his staff in Townsville had already begun to develop a concept for delivery to Land Headquarters on 15 September. In effect, Abigail was working without logistic guidance from above and Sharp was working without operational and tactical guidance from below.

Guided by a draft of Beaumont's planning directive, but still without Abigail's input, Sharp convened an administrative planning group in Canberra on 13 September 1994 to set some parameters and identify all of the questions that would need to be answered in order to sustain Operation *Lagoon*.³² Sharp decided that, given the short duration of the operation, the combined force was to be self-sufficient. Lieutenant Colonel Tony Ayerbe, the acting Colonel (Operations) at HQ Logistic Command, who had attended Sharp's planning meeting on 13 September, signalled to Land Headquarters that there were significant problems concentrating stores in Townsville in time to meet the operational timetable. He suggested that HMAS *Tobruk* load in Sydney, closer to the issuing depots and the freight terminal at the newly-designated Defence National Supply Distribution Centre (DNSDC) at Moorebank.³³

Ayerbe's suggestions did not please Hughes at HQ 3rd Brigade.³⁴ Ultimately, he would be responsible to Abigail for the administration and supply arrangements for Operation *Lagoon*. He wanted stores to be concentrated in Townsville, checked by the people who would use them, accounted for by his staff and then loaded on HMAS *Tobruk* under his supervision. Since returning from Exercise *Swift Eagle*, Hughes and his staff had been confirming the brigade's stock levels to identify what items needed to be ordered in. One of the early challenges was concentrating stores for setting up and supporting the peace conference. Arnison supported Hughes's views over those of Ayerbe on where stocks should be concentrated and loaded. An expensive concentration of stocks in Townsville began—a rerun of the deployment of a battalion group to Somalia in January 1993.³⁵

Hughes directed his staff to raise requests for hundreds of beds, and other accommodation stores, as well as office furniture, tentage, office equipment and stationery. He recalled:

The concern I had was whether we could get sufficient stores in on time. We were told early in the piece that we would be responsible for setting up and supporting the entire conference. We did not have time to debate the issue or seek clarification of exact requirements. I had staff working long hours ordering all of these items. They did a great job and all the stuff came into 2 Field Log Battalion [located in Townsville].³⁶

On 16 September 1994 Sharp sent a copy of his strategic concept for logistics to Land Headquarters. However, guidance from the strategic level to the operational level did not have much impact on planning and preparations in Townsville. Hughes had closely monitored the development of Abigail's concept. By the time his proposals had been approved at Land Headquarters on 15 September and at HQ ADF on 17 September, Hughes had submitted all demands for stocks for Operation *Lagoon*, including his best guess at the requirements for the South Pacific contingents. Time would have run out for delivery if he

had waited for guidance from above.³⁷ It was too late to get information from Cronin, Ducie and Grace on the logistic status of South Pacific contingents. They would leave Townsville on 19 September.

In addition to meeting the logistic requirements of the operation in Bougainville, Hughes also had to organise support for the administration and training of the South Pacific contingents in Townsville. It had been difficult supporting the administration and training of troops for service in Rwanda while units were in Townsville preparing for Exercise *Swift Eagle* six weeks before in the Gulf of Carpentaria. Fortunately, South Pacific contingents and Australian personnel not based in Townsville would arrive while 3rd Brigade units were away on leave after Exercise *Swift Eagle*. Abigail and Hughes decided to use vacant facilities and the close training areas of 1 RAR and some of their administrative personnel to prepare the SPPKF. Fortunately, Major Colin Chidgey and his staff from a force preparation and support unit had arrived in Townsville already, to prepare a training program for the SPPKF in conjunction with a 10-man New Zealand Army training cadre. He and his staff had a very good feel for what was happening in Townsville because they had prepared the Medical Support Force for Rwanda and had worked with the brigade before hand.³⁸

In summary, by the third week of September all intelligence and logistic support planning had happened without detailed guidance, information or coordination. There had been no reconnaissance to inform anyone's deliberations. At the tactical level, the intelligence staff at 3rd Brigade, guided by Hill's staff at Land Headquarters, had made *ad hoc* arrangements to collect intelligence and had produced substantial quantities of information on Bougainville for their commanders and staffs. At the operational level, Hill's intelligence staff at Land Headquarters waited in vain for strategic guidance, orders and advice on intelligence gathering and reporting procedures from ADFIC.³⁹ Hughes's logistic staff at 3rd Brigade had taken the initiative to ensure that stores were ordered in time.

Reconnaissance and Planning

Operation *Lagoon* was now about to enter a reconnaissance phase that would precipitate another round of rushed planning, hasty gathering of resources, robust negotiations and last-minute organising. There was some debate among Australian officials in Canberra about whether Abigail should go on a reconnaissance scheduled for 21 September 1994.⁴⁰ There was a desire among Australian diplomats to keep public exposure of Australian involvement in Operation *Lagoon* to a minimum. The aim appeared to be to minimise Australia's profile in the peace process in general, and the command role of the ADF in Operation *Lagoon* in particular. However, DFAT officials did recognise that Abigail needed to have a first-hand understanding of the political situation in

Port Moresby and Bougainville, as well as the operational environment around Arawa (where the conference would be conducted) and the neutral zones.⁴¹ In the end, Abigail accompanied Tupou, Draunidalo and Takal on the condition that he adopted a low profile and did not answer questions or discuss any political issues during meetings.⁴²

The information gathered during the reconnaissance on 20–22 September proved to be crucial. Abigail, Draunidalo and Tupou worked out that they needed more troops and more UH-60 *Black Hawk* helicopters, and that the SPPKF should undergo a minimum of a 10-day training period to prepare for operations in Bougainville. In two days, Abigail came up with requirements that ADF planners had been unable to anticipate over the previous four months or during the three weeks after Chan and Kauona had signed the Honiara Agreement on 2 September 1994. The reconnaissance also allowed Abigail and his contingent commanders to make a collegial assessment of the challenges facing them and to establish mutual respect. Indeed, without Abigail's diplomacy and his ability to win the respect of Draunidalo and Tupou soon after meeting them, Fiji and Tonga may not have participated in Operation *Lagoon*.⁴³ Abigail and his Fijian, Tongan and Ni Vanuatu commanders had also met and established contact with PNG civil and military authorities as well as Bougainvillean antagonists.

On 20 September, the day that Abigail departed with the SPPKF reconnaissance team, HQ ADF issued an instruction and Land Headquarters issued an order. This was the day after Cabinet approval for Operation *Lagoon*.⁴⁴ Reconnaissance had not informed any of these documents. However, they constituted Abigail's higher level guidance. He convened his first planning meeting for the combined force on 24 September, after returning from his visit to PNG. The problem faced by Abigail and his staff was how to integrate guidance that was contained in several disparate documents. The Ceasefire Agreement provided neither legal coverage nor guidance on important issues. The PNG Government and the Bougainvillean secessionists had signed it, but neither the Australian Government nor the governments of the South Pacific contingents had endorsed it. The governments of Australian and PNG had signed the SOFA that gave legal cover, but was silent on many of the important issues related to creating a secure environment. The ROE contained protocols for search and detention of persons and use of force, but these rules had not been agreed to in the SOFA or the Ceasefire Agreement. Consequently, it was left to Abigail to decide what powers of search, arrest, detention and application of force the SPPKF would have in the neutral zones—a potentially career-shortening position to be in if anything went wrong.⁴⁵ Abigail's mission was 'to provide a secure environment for the conduct of a Bougainville Peace Conference, and to provide security and movement for selected delegates'.⁴⁶

There was no explanation of what constituted a delegate or the criteria that would be used to identify delegates requiring security that would most likely include transport, emergency medical support, accommodation and meals. Estimates of the numbers of delegates who might attend the peace conference varied from 500 to 1500. The rush to achieve a starting date of 10 October obviated orderly conference registration. Flexibility became a key concept because it was very difficult to predict the way the peace conference would unfold. Threats to security could emerge in many different ways. Abigail and his staff decided that the SPPKF should not operate at less than platoon strength so as to maintain national identity and also to deter ambush. The planning staff anticipated as many contingencies as they thought might occur and how the combined force would respond.⁴⁷ There was also concern that the combined force might have to provide last-minute logistic support to set up conference facilities if PNG Government preparations for the conference did not go according to plan. The major outcome from Abigail's planning was a tactical concept for operations founded on guidance from higher headquarters, information gathered during his reconnaissance and his detailed mission analysis that identified many enabling tasks. The concept focused on creating a secure environment by maintaining strict neutrality, a deterrent presence and reducing any tension between participants during the conference.

Meanwhile, Captain Jim O'Hara handed command of HMAS *Success* over to his Executive Officer, and moved to Townsville at Abigail's invitation on 23 September 1994. O'Hara reported simultaneously to two senior officers—Chalmers, who maintained technical and administrative control, and Abigail, who had operational control. Abigail decided to exercise operational control of navy vessels through O'Hara, not directly to the officers commanding ships. There was some controversy about these command and control arrangements at the time.⁴⁸ O'Hara reported later that, 'this indirect method of command, utilising the component method, worked well'.⁴⁹

Specific Force Preparation

On 25 September 1994, the first warning signs that preparations were not going according to plan emerged. The Fijians were going to be late.⁵⁰ Abigail would not be able to promise that the SPPKF would be ready for movement from Townsville to Arawa until at least 7 October. This would leave insufficient time to deploy and secure neutral zones if the conference began on 10 October. Chan had to be persuaded to postpone the start of the peace conference until at least 15 October. This would allow for 10 days' pre-deployment training and sufficient time to secure neutral zones and set up the conference site.

Beaumont briefed Ray on 26 September.⁵¹ He pointed out that there were critical safety and legal issues at stake that could cause major problems later if

the SPPKF was deployed without sufficient training. The ADF had a duty of care to ensure that all troops could handle their weapons safely, had complied with the medical countermeasures against malaria and other tropical diseases, and were thoroughly briefed and rehearsed in the use of ROE and Orders for Opening Fire. There was also a legal requirement to brief troops on the principles of peacekeeping, the Geneva Conventions and the Laws of Armed Conflict. The South Pacific contingents needed thorough training in helicopter operations, including night deployment. Not to do so would risk the lives of South Pacific soldiers as well as Australian aircrew. There was also a requirement to conduct command-post exercises and other training, to ensure that all components of the combined force could work together cohesively and thoroughly understood the mission. Not to do so might risk the lives of those in the field and the lives of Bougainvilleans, as well as those needing urgent medical evacuation. Finally, Beaumont wrote that, unless there was training in how to use the night vision equipment, radios and other technical equipment, expensive breakage or malfunctions could occur. While issues of safety, legal obligations and expensive breakages were significant, less tangible justifications for the 10-day training period, such as the cohesion and morale of the force, were also crucial and made sense. Beaumont emphasised to Ray that a minimum of seven days was required to prepare the site at Arawa, and to deploy and secure neutral zones. Time was needed to coordinate the withdrawal of PNGDF forces and to assure local Bougainvilleans of the SPPKF's neutrality and goodwill. Things could go wrong if the PNGDF withdrawal was rushed and SPPKF forces were not settled in before the peace conference began.

Unfortunately, pre-deployment training got off on the wrong foot after the Fijian contingent arrived on 28 September. The ADF had not paid enough attention to culture, ceremony and status. Several officers among the South Pacific contingents were members of prominent families or nobility in their home countries. There were no formal welcoming ceremonies for them as individuals or for their contingents as participants in a historic regional combined operation. The 'business-like, deadline-conscious' ADF staff appeared to ignore the importance of welcoming ceremonies, church services and after hours socialising among the South Pacific contingents.⁵² The Pacific Islanders found the assumption by Chidgey's staff that they would conform to Australian doctrine and adhere to a 'minute-by-minute' training timetable set up by Australians and New Zealanders without prior consultation quite patronising.⁵³

Deployment

Meanwhile, the maritime component of the combined force was coming on line. HMAS *Tobruk* berthed in Townsville on 28 September 1994. However, despite the efforts of the CO, Commander John Wells, and staff at Maritime Headquarters to seek guidance and advice, there was no information available from the army

as to the logistic requirements. Logistic staff at both Land Headquarters and HQ Logistic Command did not appear to have briefed their naval counterparts at Maritime Headquarters on logistic requirements before HMAS *Tobruk* sailed from Sydney. In effect, the first orders Wells would receive, about the role his ship would play and its load, came from O'Hara in Townsville after Wells arrived. Loading now became a 'hand to mouth' activity reminiscent of the deployment of a battalion group to Somalia in 1993, some 10 months before.⁵⁴ Over the next few days, stores accumulated on the Townsville wharf as the ship's army staff developed a loading plan 'on the run' in conjunction with Hughes and his 3rd Brigade staff. In an early indication of the communications problems awaiting the operation, naval communications staff discovered that the portable Inmarsat telephone installed by Land Headquarters communications staff was not suited to being on a ship. The Inmarsat was normally ground-based and depended on a small dish (pointing up at the satellite in stationary orbit) being used to transmit the signal. The rolling of a ship and its movement through the water meant that the Inmarsat dish was not stable and able to keep its direction.⁵⁵

By the end of September there was still no news of whether Chan would postpone the start date of the conference. By this time, the South Pacific contingents had begun pre-deployment training and administration in Townsville.⁵⁶ Staff at HQ ADF issued final ROE for Operation *Lagoon* the night before training began.⁵⁷ Training in these ROE was going to be rushed even if the full 10-day period was allowed. Specific force preparation in Townsville was still predicated on the start date for the conference being postponed until 15 October. If Chan did not agree, there would be some difficulty completing sufficient training in time. There were also indications that the PNG Government had not allowed sufficient time to put basic infrastructure, such as accommodation, food preparation areas, sanitation services, electrical power and a clean water supply in place for the conference. Because there was no clear division of responsibility, the ADF might be left with the blame for providing insufficient logistic support and amenities to facilitate the conduct of the conference.

ENDNOTES

¹ See Anthony J. Regan, *The Bougainville Conflict: Origins and Development, Main Actors, and Strategies for Resolution*, Mimeo, Port Moresby, 1996.

² Classified source, 94 26303, Defence Archives, Queanbeyan.

³ Australian Parliament, *Bougainville: A Pacific Solution, Report of the Visit of the Australian Parliamentary Delegation to Bougainville 18–22 April 1994*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1994.

⁴ Australian Parliament, Government Response by Senator the Hon Gareth Evans QC, Minister for Foreign Affairs, to the *Report of the Parliamentary Delegation to Bougainville*, 8 June 1994, p. 4 (copy held by author). Evans went on to send further supportive signals through the media on 22 June when he told an interviewer on Radio Australia that there was a proposal for a peacekeeping operation in Bougainville on the table and that Australia was prepared to give transport and logistic support. A copy of the transcript of the Radio Australia interview with Senator Gareth Evans on 22 June 1994 is located in 94 26303, Defence Archives, Queanbeyan.

Struggling for Self Reliance

- ⁵ HQ ADF, 'Outline Plan for OP Lagoon', CDF 160/1994, 8 June 1994, 94 26303, Defence Archives, Queanbeyan.
- ⁶ Admiral Alan L. Beaumont, Cover note on 'Outline Plan for OP Lagoon', CDF 160/1994, 8 June 1994, 94 26303, Defence Archives, Queanbeyan.
- ⁷ Papua New Guinea Government, Gabriel Dusava, Secretary PNG Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Circular: *Outcome of Bougainville Peace Conference*, 16 October 1994, 94 26303, Defence Archives, Queanbeyan.
- ⁸ General John S. Baker in interview with author, 30 August 2005.
- ⁹ Admiral Alan L. Beaumont, 'Op Lagoon Planning', CDF 258/1994, 2 September 1994, 94 26303, Defence Archives, Queanbeyan.
- ¹⁰ Classified source, 94 26303, Defence Archives, Queanbeyan.
- ¹¹ Major David L. Morrison in interview with author, 24 October 1997.
- ¹² Morrison, Interview. Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Shoebridge, SO1 Land Operations, HQ ADF.
- ¹³ Morrison, Interview. Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Shoebridge, SO1 Land Operations, HQ ADF.
- ¹⁴ Brigadier Peter J. Abigail in interview with author, 18 March 1997.
- ¹⁵ Lieutenant Colonel Ian K. Hughes in interview with author, 23 October 1997.
- ¹⁶ Colonel Phil J. McNamara in interview with author, 31 October 1997.
- ¹⁷ The other information incorporated into the concept came from documents produced by the Assistant Defence Attaché, Lieutenant Colonel Gary Young, and his planning team in Port Moresby, reports from Colonel David J. Hurley, who had been sent to assist the PNG Government with its planning and intelligence reports on the Bougainville Crisis. (Morrison in interview with author, 24 October 1997.).
- ¹⁸ Morrison in interview with author, 24 October 1997.
- ¹⁹ Lieutenant Colonel Garth J. Cartledge, 'Op Lagoon—Legal Post Operation Report', 16 November 1994, p. 2, 94/26461, Defence Archives, Queanbeyan.
- ²⁰ Land Headquarters, 'Members of the Recon Gp': LHQ OPS SIG E3L/I4S, 160557ZSEP94, K94 01325, NAA, Sydney.
- ²¹ Major John O. Cronin in telephone discussion with author, 31 December 1997.
- ²² Captain Jim S. O'Hara, RAN, 'Op Lagoon POR Maritime Aspects', 24 October 1994, 98 18173, Defence Archives, Queanbeyan.
- ²³ Commodore (formerly Captain) Jim S. O'Hara, RAN, in interview with author, 13 November 1996.
- ²⁴ Lieutenant Colonel Roger A. Hill in interview with author, 31 October 1997.
- ²⁵ Hill in interview with author, 31 October 1997.
- ²⁶ Hill in interview with author, 31 October 1997.
- ²⁷ Baker in interview with author, 30 August 2005.
- ²⁸ Baker in interview with author, 30 August 2005.
- ²⁹ Hill in interview with author, 31 October 1997.
- ³⁰ Captain Russ W. Sharp in interview with author, 19 March 1997.
- ³¹ Planning documents are filed on 94-27354, 'Operation *Lagoon* —ADF Support to Bougainville Peace talks—Joint Log Ops and Plans Aspects', Defence Archives, Queanbeyan.
- ³² HQ ADF, 'Notes from JAPG held on 13 September 1994', 15 September 1994, 94 27354, Defence Archives, Queanbeyan.
- ³³ Hughes in interview with author, 23 October 1997.
- ³⁴ Hughes in interview with author, 23 October 1997.
- ³⁵ See Bob Breen, *A Little Bit of Hope, Australian Force—Somalia*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1998, Chapter 2: Ramping Up and Getting There.
- ³⁶ Hughes in interview with author, 23 October 1997.
- ³⁷ Hughes in interview with author, 23 October 1997.
- ³⁸ Hughes in interview with author, 23 October 1997.
- ³⁹ Hill in interview with author, 31 October 1997.
- ⁴⁰ Abigail in interview with author, 18 March 1997.
- ⁴¹ Classified source, 94 26303, Defence Archives, Queanbeyan.

- ⁴² Abigail in interview with author, 18 March 1997.
- ⁴³ Abigail in interview with author, 18 March 1997.
- ⁴⁴ HQ ADF, OPS OPSINST 34/94, 20 September 1994, 94 26303, Defence Archives, Queanbeyan. LHQ, OPOD 53/94, DTG 200546ZSEP94, K01357, NAA, Sydney.
- ⁴⁵ Abigail in interview with author, 18 March 1997.
- ⁴⁶ Major General Peter M. Arnison, 'Directive to 47054 Brigadier P.J. Abigail, Combined Force Commander—Op Lagoon', LCAUST Directive 27/1994, 22 September 1994, 94 26303, Defence Archives, Queanbeyan.
- ⁴⁷ Eventually they were to be tabulated for use at Combined Headquarters and in the field to guide commanders on the responses expected of them. Copy held by the author.
- ⁴⁸ Abigail in interview with author, 18 March 1997; and O'Hara, RAN in interview with author, 13 November 1996.
- ⁴⁹ O'Hara, 'POR—Maritime Aspects', p. 3.
- ⁵⁰ Major General J.M. Connolly, 'Brief to Minister by ACOPS Situation at 1600 hrs 25 September 1994', 94 26303, Defence Archives, Queanbeyan.
- ⁵¹ Beaumont. 'Brief to Defence Minister Robert Ray—Preparation of the SPPKF', 26 September 1994, 94-26303, Defence Archives, Queanbeyan.
- ⁵² Major L. K. Qusiadranturagu, 'A Report on the Bougainville Assignment', 25 October 1994. Copy held by author.
- ⁵³ Qusiadranturagu, 'A Report on the Bougainville Assignment', 25 October 1994. Copy held by author.
- ⁵⁴ Breen, *A Little Bit of Hope, Australian Force—Somalia*, chapter 2.
- ⁵⁵ Lieutenant Colonel Gary J. Allan, Post Operation Report (POR) LHQ CIS—OP Lagoon, CIS OPS 2/66/95, 30 January 1995, Annex N, p. 3, K94-01440, NAA, Sydney.
- ⁵⁶ Numbers in contingents: Fiji (232); Tonga (107 including crew of patrol boat); and Vanuatu (47). There were therefore a total of 386 South Pacific personnel.
- ⁵⁷ An extract from the ROE reads: 'The policy of the Combined Force is Reduce Tension ... avoid the use of force and provocation. Force may not be applied except in self-defence. ... Unit self-defence is an inherent right of Combined Force [element] to spontaneously defend themselves or designated entities against actual armed attack (hostile acts) or immediate threats of armed at[tac]k (hostile intent). No mines/graduated response. End contacts ASAP'. Included in Land Headquarters, 'Post Operation Support for Operation *Lagoon*—Combined Force Peace Support Operations on Bougainville, PNG', October 1994', LCAUST 137/94, 28 November 1994, K94-01325. Copy held by author.