

# Chapter 7

## Conduct and Aftermath of Operation *Lagoon*

On Saturday 1 October 1994, after renewed pressure from inside the Government of Papua New Guinea (PNG) and from Australia for him to postpone the start date of the conference, PNG's Prime Minister, Sir Julius Chan, appealed directly to Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating to insist that the Australian Defence Force (ADF) deploy the South Pacific Peace Keeping Force (SPPKF) prior to the start date of 10 October. Chan pointed out that the deployment time could be reduced if troops were moved by air rather than by sea. He called for a substantial advance party to be deployed to Arawa by 8 October to establish a presence. Keating contacted the Australian Defence Minister, Senator Robert Ray, soon after a conversation with Chan and told him to instruct the ADF to have the SPPKF on Bougainville before the peace conference started on 10 October.<sup>1</sup>

Confirmation that the peace conference would start on 10 October had a significant impact. Pre-deployment training stopped.<sup>2</sup> HMAS *Tobruk* had to be loaded with personnel and stores in less than 24 hours. At around this time, HMAS *Tobruk's* ship's army detachment staff assessed that there was too much stock on the wharf. The ship would be overloaded and possibly 'bulk out'.<sup>3</sup> Captain Jim O'Hara's only option was to load HMAS *Success* with the stores that would not fit aboard *Tobruk*. Unfortunately, both ships bulked out before all stores could be loaded. HMAS *Tobruk* was also 200 tonnes over its authorised weight limit. Commander John Wells advised O'Hara of the final weight only five hours before the vessel was due to sail. He and Wells spent the next hours calculating the risk in allowing her to sail on schedule.<sup>4</sup> Any delay would result in the SPPKF not getting on the ground in Bougainville in time to set up the peace conference venue and protect delegates. O'Hara analysed the weather forecasts for the voyage to Bougainville. Fortunately the weather was on the side of Operation *Lagoon*—calm conditions. O'Hara and Wells accepted the increased risk and HMAS *Tobruk* sailed on schedule.

While HMAS *Tobruk* and HMAS *Success* were at sea, the main body of the combined force flew out on 6 October in Australian and New Zealand C-130 *Hercules* transport aircraft. To satisfy Chan's request, a 100-strong advance party flew directly to Buka Island airfield from Townsville to meet up with four *Black Hawk* helicopters and two *Caribou* transport aircraft that had been pre-positioned there to fly them to Arawa by 8 October. HMAS *Tobruk* arrived in Honiara, the capital of the Solomon Islands, on 7 October 1994. Brigadier Peter Abigail, his

staff, the main force of the SPPKF and the ADF logistic support force were aboard by 2.00 a.m and HMAS *Tobruk* sailed from Honiara at 5.00 a.m. on 8 October. The previous 24 hours had been a tiring period for all personnel. The cramped conditions and the general excitement at finally being inbound to Bougainville were not conducive to catching up on lost sleep.<sup>5</sup>

HMAS *Tobruk* anchored in Arawa Bay at 5.30 a.m. on 9 October. This arrival, less than 24 hours before the start of the conference, meant that neutral zones had not been secured, the conference site was not set up and administrative support for the conference was not in place. Planners had assessed that it would take seven days to achieve these objectives. The 100-strong advance party had been working without rest since arriving the day before to secure the conference site and set up facilities, but there was still much to do.<sup>6</sup> Troops on HMAS *Tobruk* now had 12 hours to do what they could during the daylight hours of 9 October.

Just to add to the challenges facing Abigail and his headquarters, when [HMAS] *Tobruk* berthed alongside Loloho Jetty, a combination of high hills surrounding the berth, the metal cranes, warehouses and ship ore loading facilities on and adjacent to the jetty resulted in the loss of both HF [High Frequency] and VHF [Very High Frequency] communications. Without SATCOM [satellite communications], HQ Combined Force would have had no strategic or tactical communications, other than UHF [Ultra High Frequency], for approximately 16 hours.<sup>7</sup>

The origins of these problems lay in disjointed planning. Like logistics, communications planning for Operation *Lagoon* had followed a divided approach; vertically between each level of command and horizontally between each Service. At the strategic level, the mechanism for joint planning, the Joint Communications Planning Group sponsored by the Director General of Joint Communications and Electronics, had not met. If it had, subsequent problems would have been reduced.<sup>8</sup> There would have been one point of contact for allocating and clearing frequencies with PNG authorities. As it was, the combined force depended on Inmarsat terminals to provide telephone, facsimile and data services back to Australia that were 'subject to congestion due to the uncontrolled access to the overall system'.<sup>9</sup>

At the operational level, 'there was poor information flow from all parties', according to one navy report.<sup>10</sup> A Land Headquarters report noted some army and navy coordination problems that resulted in late arrangements for the distribution of cryptographic equipment and an unnecessarily large number of communications and cryptographic plans.<sup>11</sup> At the tactical level, Abigail's senior communications officer, Major Bill Teece, was not appointed at the outset as the Chief Communications Officer to develop a joint communications plan and bid

for additional equipment. This left each Service to make separate communications arrangements for Operation *Lagoon*.<sup>12</sup> Also at the tactical level, HMAS *Tobruk* had not received a substantial update 'to its communications fit' for two years and its HF receivers and transmitters continually broke down and took some time to repair.<sup>13</sup> Army signallers rigged army RAVEN tactical radios on HMAS *Tobruk's* flag deck that enabled Abigail and his staff to communicate with Australian radio operators who were with SPPKF platoons, giving Abigail a good understanding of the progress of South Pacific contingents. There were persistent problems communicating between army RAVEN equipment and non-RAVEN equipment being operated by the navy and the air force.<sup>14</sup>

## Force Employment

The consequences of putting the tactical level of command under pressure were now beginning to show on the ground and offshore in Bougainville. Communications capabilities were limited from the beginning. There had been no time to test the satellite communications (SATCOM) equipment that had been fitted to HMAS *Tobruk*. Communications managers had not anticipated the impact of the infrastructure around Loloho on communications. The crash in communications was a great source of frustration for General Peter Arnison who was trying to command Operation *Lagoon* from Victoria Barracks in Sydney.<sup>15</sup> It was during this time that three Bougainvillean gunmen opened fire on a PNG Water Board party. The gunmen fled after firing a volley of shots, leaving the workers unharmed. This was a hasty 'hit and run' attack—an unsettling start for the SPPKF's first day in Arawa. The sound of shots, and then a noisy clearance operation by the PNG Defence Force (PNGDF), involving use of hand grenades and automatic fire, frightened several hundred Bougainvilleans in the vicinity, who had gathered for the conference, as well as the inhabitants of a nearby displaced persons camp. However, there appeared to be an immediate loss of confidence in the SPPKF. Word of the incident and PNGDF retaliation soon got around those who had already gathered for the conference, and over 600 Bougainvilleans in the camp who were normally protected by the PNGDF.<sup>16</sup>

The withdrawal of PNGDF troops from the outskirts of Arawa had also caused problems on the roads leading to the conference site at the Arawa High School. Locals began approaching members of the SPPKF with reports that groups of armed young men were intimidating and robbing people coming to the conference. Colonel Feto Tupou convened an emergency meeting of the Ceasefire Committee at the Arawa High School at 5.15 p.m. on 9 October to discuss these reports and the shooting incident. Mr Nick Peniai, a representative from the North Solomons Interim Authority, informed the meeting that the optimism present when delegates began arriving in Arawa had been replaced by fear. The robberies, intimidation, shooting incident and the ill-disciplined PNGDF response

had lowered the morale of those gathered for the conference and the inhabitants of the Arawa displaced persons camp.<sup>17</sup>

These incidents put Tupou, Colonel Sevenaca Draunidalo and the SPPKF in an awkward situation. Criminal gangs had become emboldened by the PNGDF withdrawal. The displaced persons and the hundreds of delegates gathering in the Arawa area were at risk, especially at night. Peniai called for a curfew and regular patrols to ensure security. The Rules of Engagement (ROE) for Operation *Lagoon* permitted the questioning (but not detention) of persons behaving suspiciously. The ROE were silent about the confiscation of weapons in the neutral zones. There was also no provision for curfews or interventions to protect the lives and property of Bougainvilleans if they were assaulted or robbed. The expectation of ordinary Bougainvilleans was that the SPPKF was there to protect them during the conference. In reality, the SPPKF was not authorised to enforce full control over neutral zones or anywhere else in Bougainville. Peacekeepers were there to maintain a deterrent presence during the conference. The ROE of 'presence' would be insufficient to deter criminals from going about their business. The SPPKF may have had the right mission, but it did not have robust ROE to achieve it. The difficulty in controlling armed groups on the ground was emphasised on the day the conference opened when one of the Australian *Sea King* helicopters returned from a routine reconnaissance mission with two bullet holes in its tail section. O'Hara reported stirringly that, 'this was the first occasion [that] the RAN [Royal Australian Navy] had incurred battle damage since the Vietnam War'.<sup>18</sup>

Later that day, one of Abigail's attached intelligence officers informed him that the PNGDF had set an ambush, supported by Australian-supplied *Claymore* anti-personnel mines, on the main route into Arawa. Local PNGDF forces appeared to be using the conference as an opportunity for payback. Abigail told the local commander to abandon the ambush site and move his troops out of the area.<sup>19</sup> As dangers increased, ADF communications capabilities decreased. Communications between Arnison and Abigail and their staffs were breaking down or overloaded. Lieutenant Colonel Steve Ayling, a communications staff officer with Headquarters Australian Defence Force (HQ ADF), reported that the Inmarsat satellite, through which most communications were being sent, was overloaded and there was also congestion elsewhere in the Defence network.<sup>20</sup>

## End of the Conference

Colonel David Hurley, who was attending the conference as an advisor to the PNG Government, assessed that it was Chan's intention to press on with the conference even if senior Bougainvillean secessionist leaders did not attend. Chan planned to garner sufficient signatures from attending delegates to make progress towards a settlement and to undermine support among Bougainvilleans

for hard-line Bougainvillean secessionist leaders.<sup>21</sup> A group of PNGDF soldiers assured non-attendance by firing at a secessionist liaison team, seriously wounding one member.<sup>22</sup> Chan still had several days to bring the PNGDF into line and to make further overtures to the secessionist leadership. He decided to end the peace conference the next day, blaming the non-attendance of senior secessionist leaders for his decision.<sup>23</sup> Subsequently, his representatives signed a document with moderate Bougainvillean delegates.<sup>24</sup>

The SPPKF redeployed by sea and air in 72 hours, continuing a tradition of well-executed Australian military withdrawals begun at Gallipoli in 1915. In the months after the peace conference was abandoned, the campaign by the PNGDF to find a military solution in Bougainville continued. The post-conference agreement signed between the PNG Government and a delegation of moderate Bougainvilleans did not result in the sustained renewal of a peace process. Indeed, the leader of the moderates, Theodore Miriung, was subsequently murdered.

## Observations

From the perspective of force projection, there are many observations to make about the seven weeks of intense diplomatic and military activity associated with Operation *Lagoon*. Though its duration was brief, *Lagoon* exercised all of the functions of force projection except force rotation.<sup>25</sup> For the first time Australia had responsibility for a multinational peace support operation. The ADF was in command and there were no major allies present to command, protect or sustain.<sup>26</sup> More complex than Operation *Morris Dance*, Operation *Lagoon* tested Australia's self-reliance and begged the comparative question: 'Had the ADF improved its capacity and capability for regional force projection in the seven intervening years between *Morris Dance* and *Lagoon*?'<sup>27</sup>

Operation *Lagoon* was always going to be a dangerous, politically sensitive operation with risks for Australia's standing in the South Pacific. The tactical level of command had been put under pressure from the day Admiral Alan Beaumont issued his warning order on 2 September 1994—there had been insufficient 'thinking time'. Neither Arnison nor Abigail had sufficient time to gather information, work through contingencies or develop tactical plans, supported by mature logistic, communications and intelligence plans that were also informed by reconnaissance. Repeating the circumstances of the battalion group deployment to Somalia the previous year, logistic planning, gathering supplies and loading of ships had been disordered and rushed.<sup>28</sup> Guiding documents from HQ ADF and Land Headquarters were either largely irrelevant by the time they were signed or had been produced in isolation of each other. There were contradictions and gaps. All higher-level documents had been produced without the benefit of reconnaissance.

Land Headquarters reported to HQ ADF that the operation had been

conducted without casualties or incidents, without wasting resources, and with all agencies informed of events in a secure and timely manner. ... The joint planning and execution of OP Lagoon was highly successful. ... The joint command arrangements worked well.<sup>29</sup>

Members of COSC proudly assessed that:

Overall, the planning and conduct of the Operation were most successful. All objectives were satisfied with no modification to the strategic Concept of Operations being required, although the ADF plan was amended to satisfy additional PNG Government and BRA [Bougainville Revolutionary Army] requirements. This Operation validated ADF doctrine as flexible and appropriate for mounting and conducting coalition operations of this type.<sup>30</sup>

From the perspective of proficiency in force projection, Operation *Lagoon*, like Operation *Morris Dance*, left room for improvement. The ADF in general, and the army in particular, had yet again increased risk for the tactical level of command. Beaumont and his staff did not deliver timely warning or particularly effective guidance. Their directions were late and contained some unworkable and logistically unsound tactical details, or left gaps in important areas. The army's logistic support system was again unable to meet tight deadlines and load ships efficiently. HMAS *Tobruk* was at risk during its voyage to Bougainville. Reforms within the Defence intelligence community begun by then Major General John Baker, inaugural Director of the Defence Intelligence Organisation (DIO) in the late 1980s, had still not resulted in unity of purpose, efficient communications and best tactical-level effect where it counted. The behaviour of members of the PNGDF in Bougainville could have resulted in not only the loss of Bougainvillean lives but also the lives of members of the SPPKF.

There appear to be two explanations for not using warning time more efficiently. The first is that Beaumont, like his predecessor, General Peter Gratton, did not appear to be confident that contingency planning for a peace operation in Bougainville could be kept secret outside a small compartment of officers within HQ ADF. The second was that senior officers at lower levels of command would not pre-empt strategic guidance, even after media reports suggested that an operation was on the horizon. The ADF depended on a hierarchical process and sequential planning. For his part, Baker commented later that the Australian Government often prohibited military planning when it considered its options. He offered that Beaumont, like any Chief of the Defence Force (CDF), was often not authorised to take any action to prepare the ADF that might pre-empt diplomatic and political processes and considerations.<sup>31</sup>

There were three major penalties for keeping secrets at HQ ADF from June until September 1994. The first was that the strategic-level contingency plan for Operation *Lagoon* was developed without the benefit of inputs from a range of specialists. Nor was there any input from those in subordinate headquarters staffs who had access to relevant and up-to-date information. Consequently the HQ ADF *Lagoon* plan was logistically unsound and contained insufficient detail on a number of aspects, including arrangements for joint communications and intelligence, to be useful for subordinate headquarters. The second penalty was rushed planning. This led to a number of aspects of the operation being overlooked, some joint arrangements not being well defined, and individuals (especially at the tactical level in Townsville) being put under additional pressure.<sup>32</sup> The third penalty was that short notice put the army logistic and movements system off-balance and forced an expensive concentration of stocks in Townsville and impromptu ship loading.

Sequential hierarchical planning processes make sense when there is time to follow them. However, planning for Operation *Lagoon* showed that, when time was tight, these processes did not work satisfactorily for the tactical level of command. Parallel planning became a matter of necessity. Commanders and staff took action to assemble and prepare personnel and *matériel* based on draft documents, telephone discussions between headquarters staff and individual initiative rather than as a result of reacting to signed instructions that authorised action and allocated resources. For example, staff members at Land Headquarters were well into developing a concept of operations 48 hours before Baker signed a planning directive. Abigail was writing his concept for operations on the day the CDF issued his planning directive. Beaumont issued an operation instruction on the same day that Arnison issued his concept for operations. None of these documents were informed by reconnaissance, so all were redundant by the time Abigail returned from his visit to PNG on 20–22 September 1994.<sup>33</sup>

Further analysis of decision-making at HQ ADF revealed that there were inbuilt problems:

The ADFCC [Australian Defence Force Command Centre] can be viewed as a distributed decision making environment where parts of a problem are solved by different people. For the most part, decision-making occurs outside formal meetings, and so meetings become a means to inform of decisions, rather than a forum to make decisions. This phenomenon can lead to delays in conveying decisions and information to a wider audience. Many members of the Immediate Planning Group felt the majority of meetings fulfilled a briefing rather than a planning and decision-making role. A core group of senior ADFCC staff effectively formed an 'Executive Immediate Planning Group' which appeared to do

more of the planning and decision making than the larger Immediate Planning Group.

Several Inter-Departmental Committee [IDC] members were unable to make immediate decisions and often had to refer to their superiors. This was time consuming and disruptive to the IDC process. ... Rarely were liaison officers from the relevant departments present in the ADFCC.<sup>34</sup>

Brigadier Rod Earle, Director General Army Operations Support, criticised the HQ ADF planning process. On 3 November 1994, he wrote that planning guidance from HQ ADF lacked clear military objectives and a strategic 'end state'. He criticised Beaumont's planning directive as being a mixture of tasks and constraints that 'did not provide the essential strategic parameters for the operation to the Lead Joint Force Commander [Arnison] resulting in an inefficient planning cycle'. He went on to point out that the use of the phrase 'maintain a presence' required specific definition for it to constitute guidance for those tactical commanders who were to allocate troops to each task.<sup>35</sup> Higher headquarters putting pressure on 3rd Brigade to develop concepts for operations at short notice with little guidance was not new. The development of concepts and the hard work of mounting and dispatching force elements at short notice had fallen to 3rd Brigade in May 1987 for Operation *Morris Dance*, in December 1992 for Operation *Solace* in Somalia, and in July 1994 for Operation *Tamar* in Rwanda.

Once again HQ ADF staff did not facilitate sufficient tactical-level reconnaissance. The day after Cabinet approved Operation *Lagoon* on 19 September, a small group (that included Abigail) left for PNG and Solomon Islands. Combat and logistic commanders from the SPPKF were unable to see the Loloho wharf area or Arawa until they arrived the day before the conference began. They had no time to achieve situational awareness. Chan may have forced the combined force into rushed deployment for political reasons. It was the ADF, however, that ignored the old military adage that 'time spent in reconnaissance is seldom wasted'.

There was no separation of liaison and reconnaissance functions. From the point of view of liaison, the two-day visit to PNG by Abigail and his South Pacific contingent commanders enabled them to meet for the first time and to develop plans and mutual understandings. By the end of the visit, they had developed some rapport and a common approach. This high-level liaison resulted in Fiji confirming its commitment of forces to the SPPKF.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, the reconnaissance party also met stakeholders in Port Moresby, Arawa and Honiara. This gave them the opportunity to hear from key protagonists, and to make personal and professional assessments of the issues they raised. The visit also provided the first opportunity for Abigail, Draunidalo, Tupou and Colonel Sevele

Takal to assure PNG officials and Bougainvillean groups in person about their commitment to neutrality.

From the point of view of reconnaissance, the visit enabled Abigail and his three senior subordinate commanders to assess the security environment on Bougainville first hand. They found it to be more benign than their intelligence briefing in Australia had suggested.<sup>37</sup> This first-hand experience enabled them to understand the nature and extent of subsequent security operations. It also enabled them to assess security and control requirements for the four prospective neutral zones. However, because of a restriction on numbers, Abigail's commanders and operations and logistic staff were not able to conduct liaison and reconnaissance in each of the neutral zones, including at the site of the conference at Arawa, or to meet key locals and ascertain each area's particular security requirements. Thus, in strict military terms, this activity was more like a top-level liaison visit than a reconnaissance that would inform specific force preparation.

More thorough reconnaissance may have revealed the need for more troops on the ground. Even though Abigail was able to convince higher levels of command that he needed 390 combat troops rather than the original number of 120 specified in the Ceasefire Agreement, the force structure for Operation *Lagoon* was neither sufficient to accomplish its mission nor was it allowed enough time to coordinate security and movement of delegates, especially in light of apparent PNGDF intentions to ambush secessionist leaders. A security force of 390 personnel, comprising an *ad hoc*, under-trained headquarters and eight under-strength platoons proved inadequate. Furthermore, the combined force did not have time to employ force multipliers, such as liaison, human intelligence and technical surveillance, as well as high-level and low-level communications, to offset the lack of numbers to cover the main routes to the conference site.

There were several negative consequences of shortening the period of collective preparation, training and team-building before deployment and rushing movement to Bougainville. Abigail was not satisfied with the standards his regional troops had achieved for offshore deployment. There was a lack of cohesion and mutual confidence among the contingents. Deployment became more complex, expensive and tiring. Rushed deployment allowed insufficient time to verify with conference organisers those delegates who warranted protection from the SPPKF. PNGDF intelligence operatives in plain clothes infiltrated the conference site, and secessionist leaders had no confidence that the SPPKF would protect them.<sup>38</sup>

Operations began on Bougainville only 48 hours before Prime Minister Julius Chan opened the peace conference. Criminals intimidated conference delegates and accompanying family members and friends as well as curious locals, because SPPKF troops did not have time to establish themselves in designated neutral

zones or around Arawa. Though thwarted, rogue PNGDF elements were able to set up an ambush undetected after the arrival of the SPKKE, and subsequently to engage a BRA liaison group and wound one of its members. These incidents verified that the SPPKF was not in a position to guarantee security or properly support the conference for its brief duration. Sam Kauona, the secessionist military commander, described Operation *Lagoon* as the 'poorest example of "peacekeeping duties" ever undertaken in the history of peacekeeping in the world.'<sup>39</sup>

The logistic system once again proved, as it had for the battalion group in Somalia the year before, to be unresponsive to a deployed force.<sup>40</sup> This was disappointing when considering that the execution phase of the operation only lasted a little over a week and that all force elements were supposed to be self-sufficient in all classes of supply. O'Hara was particularly critical of the logistic system in general, and HQ Movement Control at HQ Logistic Command in particular. He reported that, shortly after arrival in the waters off Bougainville, the *Sea Hawk* helicopter embarked on HMAS *Success* was grounded due to a defective fuel pressure gauge. Despite several signals from HMAS *Success* and O'Hara's headquarters staff to Australia, no advice about (or expected delivery date for) the item was received. Maintenance personnel on HMAS *Success* subsequently made *ad hoc* repairs to ensure the aircraft's operational availability. O'Hara went on to point out that no mail system had been set up for Operation *Lagoon*. The navy ended up making its own single Service arrangements through Buka after 'over 15 bags weighing 300–400 kilos accumulat[ed] at [the] RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] [base at] Richmond until an unscheduled C-130 [*Hercules*] was finally organised to move this and other stores to Buka'.<sup>41</sup>

The Land Headquarters post operation report pointed out that, 'the overall plan for strategic resupply was not well understood by respective joint logistic planners. ... The role of HQ MC [Movement Control] in strategic resupply was also not well defined.'<sup>42</sup>

Earle had also picked up on the ineffectual role of HQ MC at Logistic Command. He pointed out that 'HQ MC was by-passed occasionally. Strategic lift assets entering or leaving the AO [Area of Operations] should be advised to HQ MC to ensure efficient use of assets for cargo'.<sup>43</sup> The failure of the under-staffed, under-authorized and under-resourced HQ MC clearly demonstrated that the ADF had not applied lessons from the battalion group deployment the year before.<sup>44</sup> The inefficient use of 'assets for cargo' suggested that air resupply was, yet again, not being well managed, and that the navy and the army may not have known when air force aircraft were coming and going from Bougainville.

The failure of strategic level intelligence services to adequately support Operation *Lagoon* was disappointing. Colonel David Buchanan, who had led a

Bougainville Crisis Action Team (BCAT) at HQ ADF during the Operation, pointed out a number of gaps and difficulties in the passage of information.<sup>45</sup> He had formed the BCAT on 6 September 1994. From 7–21 September it operated during office hours, providing intelligence products to the planning process in Canberra, such as a Bougainville contingency planning package and military threat assessments.<sup>46</sup> On 22 September Buchanan and his staff began a regimen of briefing Major General Jim Connolly, Assistant Chief of the Defence Force–Operations (ACOPS), at 4.00 p.m. and Beaumont at 5.00 p.m. each day. According to Lieutenant Colonel Roger Hill, the content of these briefings was not shared with operational decision-makers at Land Headquarters or with Abigail’s headquarters on HMAS *Tobruk*.<sup>47</sup>

Operation *Lagoon* posed particular problems for the ADF intelligence community. There were no independent and secure communications between HQ ADF and Abigail’s headquarters offshore at Arawa. Consequently, documents containing strategic assessments would have to depend on the command communications system for transmission. Buchanan commented that information collected by the combined force, once it was deployed from Townsville,

was almost nonexistent outside the overloaded command chain communications link. In the worst case, information from Bougainville was 12 hrs old and filtered twice before it got to the BCAT. Significant information passed [by the BCAT] to CFC [Combined Force Command] on [HMAS] *Tobruk* but did not make its way to INTSUMs and SITREPs [Intelligence Summaries and Situation Reports].<sup>48</sup>

With hindsight, the SPPKF was deployed into a situation where the intentions of the PNG Government and PNGDF force elements in Bougainville were different. Australian diplomats and DIO should have known this and advised Abigail of the risks involved. In the end, it was not the intelligence system but two army intelligence personnel in Arawa who informed Abigail and his staff of the dangers posed by the PNGDF.<sup>49</sup>

In summary, ADF planning processes at the strategic and operational levels were too secret and too slow, and there were deficiencies in deployable logistic support as well as communications technology for force projection. Operation *Lagoon* could have been a strategic tipping-point for Australia in the South Pacific if the PNGDF ambush had succeeded or if Fijian troops protecting secessionist delegates had been involved in a fire-fight with PNGDF forces. Senior ADF commanders preferred to record Operation *Lagoon* as a success. This assessment seemed to obviate a closer examination of its lessons. A review of command, control and communications, intelligence gathering and evaluation and joint logistic support arrangements for ADF operations might have been the result of deeper analysis. Tactical-level reports had been frank. Higher-command reports were less so. Operation *Lagoon* also demonstrated that Australian Prime

Ministers and members of Cabinet will override professional military judgement and take risks to achieve political outcomes—and they will expect the ADF to do likewise.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Classified sources, 94 26303, Defence Archives, Queanbeyan.
- <sup>2</sup> Major Chidgey concluded that, 'The Force has had insufficient time to assimilate the training and other aspects of the concentration'. He went on to assess that the SPPKF was ill-prepared for its role and lacked the internal cohesion for contingents to work together effectively. Major Colin Chidgey, 'RHC Post Activity Report—Op Lagoon', RHC 611-1-23. Included in Land Headquarters, 'Post Operation Support for Operation *Lagoon*'. Copy held by author.
- <sup>3</sup> The term 'bulk out' is used to describe a situation when the volume of cargo cannot fit into the available storage space.
- <sup>4</sup> Commodore Jim S. O'Hara, RAN in interview with author, 13 November 1996
- <sup>5</sup> Major David L. Morrison in interview with author, 24 October 1997; and Lieutenant Colonel Ian K. Hughes in interview with author, 23 October 1997.
- <sup>6</sup> Colonel Sevenaca Draunidalo established his Fijian Ground Force headquarters at Arawa with the Ni Vanuatu contingent providing close protection and a quick reaction force. The Fijians established seven checkpoints around the conference site, with two checkpoints on the main road into town.
- <sup>7</sup> N.P. Middleton, 'Post Operation Report—Operation Lagoon', CM 4594, 2 December 1994, p. 3, 94-26834, Defence Archives, Queanbeyan.
- <sup>8</sup> Major David Belham, 'Operation Lagoon—Post Operation Report—Communications Aspects', May 1995, p. 2, 94 26303, NAA, Sydney. Belham was Acting Deputy Director Communication Office, Joint Communications and Electronics Branch, HQ ADF.
- <sup>9</sup> Belham, 'Operation Lagoon—Post Operation Report—Communications Aspects', May 1995, p. 2, 94 26303, NAA, Sydney.
- <sup>10</sup> Warrant Officer RS K.J. Slavin, Op Lagoon—Quickrep, Minute to Chief of Staff, 24 October 1994. Copy held by author.
- <sup>11</sup> Land Headquarters, 'OP Lagoon—Post Operation Initial Report', LHQ SIC E3J/I4S, OPS/PLANS 30618/94, 270609Z OCT94, p. 6, K98 18173, NAA, Sydney.
- <sup>12</sup> Major William G. Teece, 'Operation Lagoon—Communications Post Operation Report (POR)', 28 October 1994, p. 3, 103 Signal Squadron, 94 26303, Defence Archives, Queanbeyan.
- <sup>13</sup> Teece, 'Operation Lagoon—Communications Post Operation Report (POR)', 28 October 1994, p. 2. See also Land Headquarters, 'OP Lagoon—Post Operation Initial Report', p. 6.
- <sup>14</sup> Teece, 'Operation Lagoon—Communications Post Operation Report (POR)', 28 October 1994, p. 3.
- <sup>15</sup> The communication difficulties during Operation *Lagoon* prompted Arnison to commission a Joint Operations Room at Land Headquarters that was capable of worldwide communications and supported by secure automated command, control and intelligence systems. Staff at Land Headquarters told the author that Operation *Lagoon* exposed several shortfalls in the capabilities of Land Headquarters to command offshore operations. These were overcome under Arnison's personal direction.
- <sup>16</sup> Classified sources, 94 26303, Defence Archives, Queanbeyan.
- <sup>17</sup> Colonel Feto Tupou, 'BPC [Bougainville Peace Conference] Minutes of meeting held on 9 October 1994'. Copy held by author.
- <sup>18</sup> O'Hara, 'POR—Maritime Aspects', p. 6.
- <sup>19</sup> Brigadier Peter J. Abigail in interview with author, 18 March 1997. Also classified sources.
- <sup>20</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Steve H. Ayling, 'Brief to CDF', HQ ADF Joint Communications and Electronics Branch, 10 October 1994, 94 26303, Defence Archives, Queanbeyan.
- <sup>21</sup> Lieutenant Colonel David J. Hurley in interview with author, 3 March 1998.
- <sup>22</sup> Bob Breen, *Giving Peace a Chance, Operation Lagoon, Bougainville 1994: A Case Study of Military Action and Diplomacy*, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence, no. 412, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, The Australian National University, Canberra, 2001, pp. 73–76.
- <sup>23</sup> Papua New Guinea Government, 'BRA has let Bougainvilleans down says PM', 14 October 1994, 94 26303, Defence Archives, Queanbeyan.

- <sup>24</sup> Papua New Guinea Government 'Commitment for Peace Agreement', 18 October 1994, Copy on 94 26303, Defence Archives, Queanbeyan. This agreement was signed by a number of representatives from village councils, church groups, women's groups and local BRA commanders.
- <sup>25</sup> Land Headquarters began meaningful planning for Operation *Lagoon* in Sydney on 9 September 1994. Four weeks later, an *ad hoc* combined force, comprised of over 650 ADF personnel supporting nearly 400 South Pacific troops, were present at a peace conference in Bougainville during the period 10–14 October 1994. The combined force was clear of PNG territory by 22 October. The operation involved specific force preparation, deployment, command, sustainment, protection and redeployment of a combined force over long distance and employment in an uncertain threat environment.
- <sup>26</sup> Though New Zealand is a close and traditional ally, the New Zealand Defence Force does not bring significant assets or know-how.
- <sup>27</sup> The priorities were: command, control and communications; intelligence collection and evaluation; maritime surveillance; maritime patrol and response; air defence; protection of shipping, offshore territories and resources; and protection of important civil and military assets and infrastructure.
- <sup>28</sup> Bob Breen, *A Little Bit of Hope, Australian Force—Somalia*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1998, chapter 2.
- <sup>29</sup> Land Headquarters, 'OP Lagoon—Post Operation Initial Report', LHQ SIC E3J/I4S, OPS/PLANS 30618/94, 270609Z OCT94, 94-18173, Defence Archives, Queanbeyan.
- <sup>30</sup> COSC, 'Operation Lagoon—Post Operation Report', Agendum No 5/95, 4 April 1995, p. 1, Defence Archives, Queanbeyan.
- <sup>31</sup> General John S. Baker in interview with author, 30 August 2005.
- <sup>32</sup> Some overlooked aspects were ROE for navy vessels and their companies, and times to issue cryptographic equipment. O'Hara, 'POR Maritime Aspects', p. 7. Some examples were joint communications procedures, joint intelligence arrangements, mail and resupply. For communications, Land Headquarters did not nominate Officer Commanding 103 Signals Squadron as the combined force chief communications officer until 5 October 1994. As a consequence, no one synchronised instructions or the distribution of codes and equipment. With four weeks to plan, this aspect of the operation was cobbled together in four days. Major William G. Teece, 'Operation Lagoon Communications Post Operation Report (POR)', 103 Signals Squadron, Townsville, 28 October 1994, 94 26834, Defence Archives, Queanbeyan. For mail and resupply, the lessons of Operation *Solace* about HQ Movement Control were identified again. One navy report complained of 'significant time delays regarding supply of urgently required stores'. There was also confusion between navy and army about mail services. Commander Australian Navy Supply, 'OP Lagoon—Strategic Movement of Mail/Stores', COMAUSNAVSUPT, SIC E3J/I4S/QGK, 110420Z OCT94. Copy held by author. Most of the pressure was put on Commander 3rd Brigade and his staff who had to develop concepts and orders and organise the preparation of the combined force before deployment.
- <sup>33</sup> By the end of September 1994, HQ ADF had issued seven amplifications of the original operations instruction.
- <sup>34</sup> M. Chin, J. Clothier, R. Davis, B. Noakes and J. O'Neill, 'Operations Lagoon and Carmine: A Post Operations Report', Information Technology Division Electronics and Surveillance Research Laboratory, Defence Science and Technology Organisation, 1995, 94 26303, Defence Archives, Queanbeyan.
- <sup>35</sup> Earle, 'POR—Operation Lagoon—Quick Rep', p. 4.
- <sup>36</sup> Abigail in interview with author, 18 March 1997.
- <sup>37</sup> Abigail in interview with author, 18 March 1997.
- <sup>38</sup> Bougainville Interim Government, Statement General Sam Kauona, Bougainville Negotiation Team for peace on Bougainville and Papua New Guinea, media release, undated. Copy held by author.
- <sup>39</sup> Bougainville Interim Government, Statement General Sam Kauona, Bougainville Negotiation Team for peace on Bougainville and Papua New Guinea, media release, undated. Copy held by author.
- <sup>40</sup> Breen, *A Little Bit of Hope, Australian Force—Somalia*, Chapter 6: Commanding, Resupplying and Getting Back.
- <sup>41</sup> O'Hara, 'POR Maritime Aspects', p. 6.
- <sup>42</sup> Land Headquarters, 'Post Operation Report for Operation Lagoon', pp. 31-32.
- <sup>43</sup> Earle, 'POR—Operation Lagoon—Quick Rep', p. 2.
- <sup>44</sup> Breen, *A Little Bit of Hope, Australian Force—Somalia*, pp. 58, 226, 250, 266 and 363.
- <sup>45</sup> Colonel David J. Buchanan, 'Strat Int Spt to Op *Lagoon*—POR', 8 December 1994, 98 18173, Defence Archives, Queanbeyan.

## Struggling for Self Reliance

<sup>46</sup> See Defence Intelligence Organisation, 'Bougainville: Situation Update', 9 September 1994, K94-01400, NAA, Sydney; and Defence Intelligence Organisation, 'Military Threat Assessment—Bougainville (Threats to ADF personnel visiting), 14 September 1994, 98-18173, Defence Archives, Queanbeyan.

<sup>47</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Roger A. Hill in interview with author, 31 October 1997.

<sup>48</sup> Buchanan, 'Strat Int Spt to Op Lagoon', p. 3

<sup>49</sup> The author interviewed Australian intelligence personnel involved in discovering the PNGDF ambush, the presence of PNGDF intelligence personnel and the non-compliance of local PNGDF commanders to the Cease Fire Agreement.