

# AFP makes Pacific peacekeeping history

**The AFP's peacekeeping activity in the Pacific is about to become part of Australia's official history with research on the fifth of a six-volume Australian War Memorial series well underway.**

Australian War Memorial historian Dr Bob Breen has been working to ensure that the AFP's peacekeeping efforts in the South Pacific are recorded for posterity to educate, commemorate and inspire.

Entitled *Good Neighbour Operations in the South Pacific, 1980-2006*, Dr Breen's volume comes under the overall series title of *The Official History of Australian Peacekeeping, Humanitarian and Post-Cold War Operations*.

The Cabinet-appointed official historian for this series is eminent Australian historian Professor David Horner from the Australian National University. While Australia's military role in peacekeeping is prominent, the peacekeeping role of the AFP is being covered by the project's researchers and authors. Dr Breen has been granted access to AFP files to ensure that the police role in South Pacific peacekeeping missions will be given its rightful recognition.

Dr Breen is also looking to interview a selection of AFP members who took part in missions between 1980 and 2006, an era which included operations in Bougainville from 1997 to 2003, International Peace Monitoring Team (IPMT) Solomon Islands 2000-01 and

the Regional Assistance Mission Solomon Islands (RAMSI) 2003-06, and Tonga in 2006.

"A concluding part of my task will be to locate further documents and photographs that relate to those missions," Dr Breen said.

The entire six volumes will cover the more than 50 peacekeeping operations undertaken by Australia's military, police and civilian agencies since 1947. Foreign Affairs and Trade Minister Kevin Rudd launched the inaugural volume, authored by Professor David Horner at the Australian War Memorial on 11 April.

More than 600 pages in length, *Australia and the New World Order: From Peacekeeping to Peace Enforcement: 1988-1991* covers vital missions including Namibia (1989-90), Iran (1988-90) and Pakistan-Afghanistan (1989-93), and focuses primarily on Australia's reaction to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, including its maritime interception operations and participation in the 1991 Gulf War.

At the launch, Minister Rudd acknowledged those involved in these missions.

"As Prime Minister and Foreign Minister I have been acutely aware

that every day Australian service people face extreme danger, particularly in Afghanistan.

"And yet we recognise the very significant and necessary contribution Australians in peacekeeping and other missions abroad make to the situation to which they are deployed," he said.

"That is why Australia has contributed more than 65,000 personnel to more than 50 UN and other multilateral peace and security operations worldwide since 1947. This therefore is a proud history, one of which we should be collectively proud."

Dr Breen said that the deployments described in his volume have a high level of involvement by the AFP and civilian government officials, including a description on how

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Australian policing was reorganised to deal with these challenges.

A large part of Dr Breen's volume is devoted to Australia's initial responses to the conflict in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea – the then unique, multi-national Peace Monitoring Group (PMG) that served on the island from 1998 to 2003 during Operation Bel Isi.

Before Operation Bel Isi had run its course, instability occurred elsewhere in the Pacific, particularly in the Solomon Islands, where Australia played a major role between 2000 and 2003.

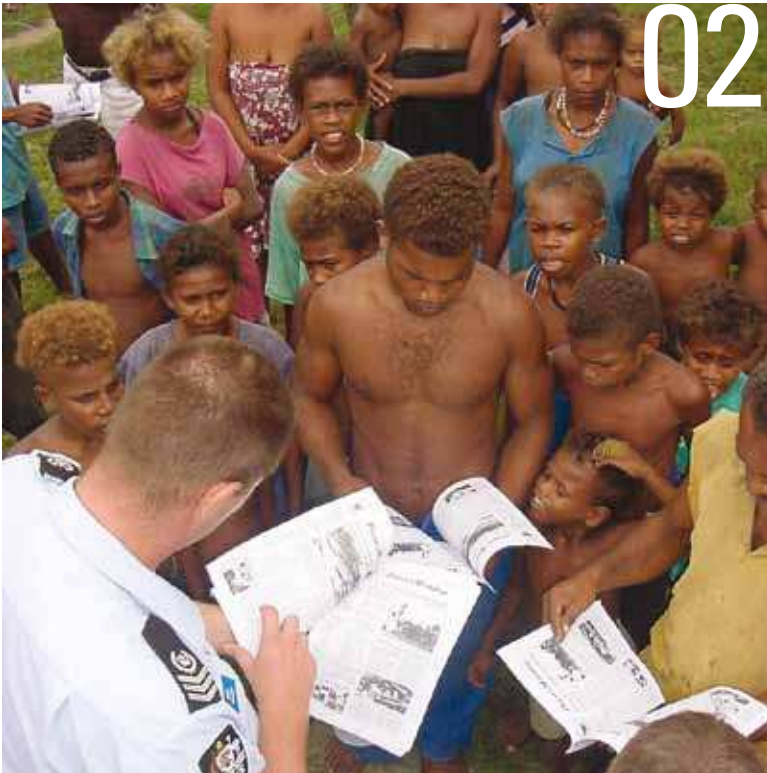
**01:** Official Australian historian Dr Bob Breen examines photographs in the AFP Museum collection.

## About the Author

Dr Bob Breen's experience in first-hand research on international and regional peacekeeping operations began in Somalia in 1993 and continued in Rwanda, the Middle East, Mozambique, Bougainville and East Timor periodically until 2002 when he began a PhD program at ANU, graduating in 2006.

In 2007 he visited Iraq and Afghanistan. In 2008 he published *Struggling for Self Reliance: Four case studies of Australian Regional Force Projection in the late 1980s and the 1990s* and co-authored a monograph, *The world looking over their shoulders: Australian Strategic Corporals on Operations in Somalia and East Timor*. In 2009, he published two studies for the Australian Strategic Policy Institute on meeting security challenges in the South Pacific and strengthening civil-military collaboration for responding to overseas emergencies.





conflict and to provide information to the Bougainvillians on the truce process.

In all, there were eight Australian civilian officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, five from the Department of Defence, four from the Australian Federal Police and two from AusAID. Their role was to observe, monitor and facilitate the peace process, as well as discourage, investigate and report any potential breach of the truce.

The confidence-building measures set by the Burnham Declaration and Burnham Truce were further built upon through the Cairns Commitment in November 1997 and the Lincoln Agreement in January 1998. Another significant step towards a lasting peace was made on 30 April 1998, with the signing of a permanent ceasefire agreement by representatives of all parties involved in the crisis.

The Peace Monitoring Group — which served for five years from 1998 — completed its mission and withdrew from Bougainville in mid 2003.



## The AFP's role in Bougainville

The AFP began its commitment to South Pacific peacekeeping in 1997 when it provided officers to take part in the Truce Monitoring Group (TMG) in Bougainville.

Bougainville had experienced a long period of civil unrest but, following peace talks in New Zealand in October 1997, a team of 85 monitors was drawn from officials in Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and Vanuatu. Their main function was to observe and report on the truce agreed between the parties to the Bougainville

**02:** AFP officers involved in the International Police Monitoring Team distributed a wide range of information to villagers. *Photo courtesy of the AFP Museum.* **03:** On Bougainville, reconciliation between conflicting sides was facilitated during a 'shaking of hands' ceremony. *Photo courtesy of Andrew Brown.*



### The Solomon Islands erupt

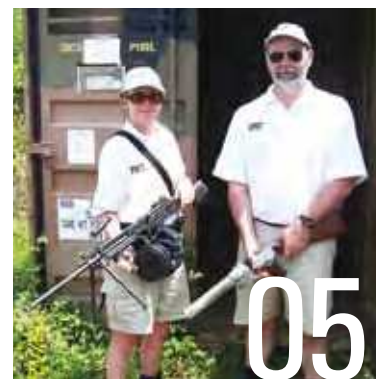
Violent conflict in the Solomon Islands, locally referred to as ‘the ethnic tensions’, began in 1998 between two warring factions known as the Isatabu Freedom Movement of Guadalcanal and the Malaita Eagle Force, and resulted in more than 100 deaths. It escalated in 2000 when the Malaitan militants and elements of the police force broke into the police armouries and took over the capital Honiara, deposing the government and ousting then Prime Minister Bart Ulafa’alu.

The AFP answered the call for help in the Solomon Islands in 2000 as part of the International Peace Monitoring Team (IPMT) in support of the Townsville Peace Agreement. While it did help reduce internal conflict, the Peace Agreement

stalled, disarmament did not occur and lawlessness increased. Many illegal weapons were destroyed, but thousands of high-powered guns remained in the hands of former militants.

In June 2002, then Australian Foreign Affairs Minister Alexander Downer praised the work of the IPMT to the Solomon Islands when it completed its 20-month deployment.

“We congratulate all those men and women who served with the IPMT for a job well done in successfully supporting home-grown efforts to end ethnic conflict in Solomon Islands especially through the collection and containment of illegally held weapons.”



**04:** Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands contingent members arrive in Honiara. *Photo courtesy of the AFP Museum.* **05:** International Peace

Monitoring Team Solomon Islands members display the type of serious weaponry that was being surrendered during the mission. *Photo courtesy of Leanne Raiser.*

## Were you a South Pacific Peacekeeper?

An essential part of any historical research is to interview those who took part. Dr Bob Breen is keen to speak to as many AFP peacekeepers as possible in order to get the real story on Australia's peacekeeping role. He is particularly keen to interview anyone who kept a diary while on any of the missions mentioned in the accompanying article.

Dr Breen can be contacted in the first instance through Steve Holgate in the International Deployment Group at the AFP. Phone (02) 6131 3000.

**06:** Public displays of weapon destruction confirmed the impact of RAMSI in bringing greater stability to day-to-day life in the Solomon Islands. *Photo courtesy of the AFP Museum.*

**07:** To mark the first anniversary of the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands a monument was constructed in Honiara over the broken remains of thousands of weapons that were surrendered during that year. *Photo courtesy of the AFP Museum.*

**08:** Riots in Honiara in April 2006 led to the destruction of property, but no lives were lost due in part to the earlier police campaign that removed firearms from the community. *Photo courtesy of the AFP Museum.*



### Call for assistance

In April 2003 then Solomon Islands Prime Minister Sir Allan Kemakeza made a personal request to Australian Prime Minister John Howard to supply forces to help return order to the country.\* This led to the establishment of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), also known as Operation Helpem Fren, Solomon Islands Pijin for 'help a friend'.

The AFP led a contingent of 2,200 personnel from the AFP, Australian Defence Force, New Zealand, and later, six other Pacific nations. This became the Participating Police Force (PPF).

The AFP's mission leader Assistant Commissioner Ben McDevitt reported that the intervention was "welcomed by the majority of the 400,000 people living in the Pacific archipelago to the north-east of Australia, which has been plagued by civil unrest and systemic corruption for five years".\*

RAMSI enjoyed early success, with the PPF removing thousands



of weapons, arresting more than 7,000 people and restoring law and order and confidence in the role of police among the general population. It established 16 new provincial policing posts and invested much in rebuilding the Royal Solomon Islands Police (RSIP), developing a police training academy and improving recruitment and training procedures.

A continuing period of relative peace was shattered in December 2004 with the death of AFP Protective Service Officer Adam Dunning. He was fatally shot while on a routine vehicle patrol with another officer in Honiara. In early January 2005, a joint operation between the RSIPF and PPF resulted in the arrest of James Tatau and John Hen Ome. However, in May 2007 both were acquitted after standing trial for the killing of Adam Dunning.

## The 2006 riots in Honiara

The appointment of Snyder Rini as Solomon Islands Prime Minister after the 2006 general election sparked rioting in Honiara amid allegations that the election and subsequent appointment of Rini were 'fixed'. As tensions escalated, parts of Honiara were razed and looted, with Chinese-owned property targeted. In the wake of the riot, the impact of the RAMSI mission was under scrutiny.

Paul Jevtovic, then AFP National Manager of the International Deployment Group, welcomed the debate as an important development in the history of the mission.

"Never before has a nation-building exercise like this been attempted in this part of the world, and the AFP as a lead agency in the mission has always said it was going to be a monumental challenge," he said.

"But, it is a challenge to which we are strongly committed and one in which we are keen to work with the broader community to ensure our approach remains strategic and clearly on track."\*

## Trouble in Tonga

At the request of the Tongan Government, the AFP provided an operational policing capability to support the Tonga Police Force in the stabilisation and restoration of law and order in Nuku'alofa, following civil unrest on 16 November 2006. The unrest included the destruction of numerous government buildings and private businesses within the central business district.

Thirty-four AFP members were sent to Tonga on 18 November 2006 as part of Operation Tokoni and 64 members progressively rotated through Tonga, providing investigative and community-policing support

to the Tonga Police Force in forensics, criminal intelligence and information technology.

## History continues

While Dr Breen's volume covers good neighbour operations in the South Pacific up to the end of 2006, the AFP's involvement in the Pacific region continues to the present day. July 2011 marks the 9th anniversary of RAMSI, and nine years of improved regional stability.

Thousands of Australians have played a peacekeeping role in the Pacific in the time span covered in Dr Breen's work. In contributing to this volume, the AFP and its members will ensure that the role of police in bringing stability to the region will be recorded for posterity.

*\*References available on request.*

