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THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE DEFENCE WHITE PAPER

by

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ACRONYMS

ATS	Air Transport Squadron
BCL	Bougainville Copper Limited
BRA	Bougainville Revolutionary Army
CEP	Capital Equipment Program
CRC	Constitutional Review Committee
CSP	Commercial Support Program
DCP	Defence Cooperation Program
DFRBB	Defence Force Retirement Benefit Board
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
FSM	Federated States of Micronesia
IMEP	International Military Education Program
LOC	Lines of Communication
MAP	Mutual Assistance Program
NEC	National Executive Council
NIO	National Intelligence Organisation
NRI	National Research Institute
NSO	National Surveillance Organisation
OPM	Organisasi Papua Merdeka
OSS	Operation Support Ship
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PNGDF	Papua New Guinea Defence Force
RPNGC	Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary
USA	United States of America

Introduction

Consistent with planning initiatives by other line departments, the Department of Defence has produced a corporate plan — the 1999 Defence White Paper — was submitted to the National Parliament for endorsement. Such a plan, especially one which incorporates national security concerns, requires proper scrutiny.

As with many other departmental plans and policies that have not been fully implemented, the Defence White Paper could be deemed ambitious, and an overarching drain on national resources. This paper offers an analysis of the implications of the 1999 Defence White Paper, in areas such as strategic and military considerations, defence management aspects, resource implications, and restructure. However, as a prelude, it is necessary to discuss the military's relationships with political heads and the civil bureaucracy.

The Military's Political and Bureaucratic Relationships

Military forces form the basic component of any national security policy that is aimed at protecting the national interests of an independent sovereign State. This national security policy has three forms — *military security*, *internal security*, and *situational security*:

- *military security* focuses on minimising or neutralising any attempt to destroy a country through armed invasion;
- *internal security* deals with subversive elements that are intent on destroying the statehood within the sovereign framework of the State; and
- *situational security* deals with the long-term threats to a state's social, economical, demographic, and political status, which may reduce its ability to independently coexist in the world.

Evolving with these policies are the essential *operational procedures* to meet any security threat. These are followed by the *institutional policies* concerning the manner in which operational policies are formulated and executed. Institutional policies are reflected in the 1999 Defence White Paper, as part of the PNG Defence Force's corporate plan. From this Defence White Paper, operational considerations are formulated, covering quantitative issues such as the size, recruitment, and supply of the military forces. It also includes the fundamental question concerning the allocation of state resources devoted to military needs (Huntington 1957:1).

A second operational consideration is that dealing with the quality of the force. It covers organisation, composition, equipment, and the deployment of the military forces, and includes the types of armaments and weapons, and the locations of

2 *Implications of the Defence White Paper*

bases, as well as strategic considerations that impact on neighbours and allies (*ibid.*).

A third operational consideration deals with the dynamic issue of the utilisation of the military forces (*ibid.*), such matters as how, when, and under what circumstances a military force is engaged, and the determination of the rules of engagement. The institutional framework in Papua New Guinea is quite clear, as the National Parliament makes the decision in this regard and remains the fundamental instrument that orders civil-military relations. Good civil-military relations are essential for military security, because it is that relationship which determines the operational capability of the military, at the cost of other social needs.

Functions of the PNG Defence Force

It is through a well-considered security concern, which is created from an institutionalised civil-military relationship, that the roles and responsibilities of the military forces are defined. If this does not happen, it is highly likely that the military will be ill-equipped and underfunded. In such situation, its civil-military relations, including the institutional framework, will deteriorate, and perhaps head into conflict. Therefore, it is necessary to re-examine the functions of the PNG Defence Force, and determine whether the Defence White Paper is backed by political will, or becomes just another agenda item that has to be put on hold.

External Armed Invasion

The first considerations are those functions of the Defence Force that enable it to exist as an institution. Undoubtedly, the foremost aspect is to defend the country from external armed invasion (National Constitution, s. 202). This seems very unlikely as the world heads towards global governance and good neighbourly relations at the end of an era of political polarisation, and the Cold War. However, there are spillover effects, as many countries have common land borders and internal conflicts, as has been experienced in Africa and far North Asia.

Although some tensions may be expected along the land border with Indonesia, no other external threat is perceived by the Defence White Paper. Papua New Guinea has always regarded the border with great sensitivity, and as such, its stance on the West Papua issue has been regarded by many as a double standard. For example, in referring to the 11 000 refugees that crossed in 1984 because of Indonesian military operations, an Australian historian, Thompson (1999) wrote:

Though the Papua New Guinean Government insisted that most were local people who traditionally wandered back and forth across the arbitrary boundary line drawn up in colonial days, many of them were genuine political refugees. ...The government's policy had been influenced by the diplomatic

necessity of a country with a small population, and facing a populous neighbour with an aggressive reputation (Thompson 1999:266).

In this view, the Defence White Paper did not imply the likely threat situation. It could have been more explicit by stating that the threat from Indonesia was very likely, if relations with Indonesia deteriorate. The deterioration of relations over West Papua is based on two possible reasons:

- if Papua New Guinea assists West Papua in seeking political independence; and
- if Papua New Guinean soil is used by militant activists of the OPM.

There have been reported incidents of hot pursuit by Indonesian military forces across the border, but there has always been an element of restraint by Papua New Guinea. Fortunately, most of these incidents have been resolved in an amicable way, through diplomacy.

The other likely scenario that could threaten Papua New Guinea-Indonesia relations is if the OPM solicit outside military assistance to conduct guerrilla warfare against the Indonesian armed forces. Indonesia would then put pressure on Papua New Guinea to assist by way of joint operations to flush out such activities, or pressure Papua New Guinea to seek out and engage the OPM on this side of the border — a scenario that Papua New Guinea has avoided so far. To engage the OPM would arouse deeprooted Melanesian brotherhood feelings amongst Papua New Guineans, who have unofficially recognised West Papuans as part of their race.

Another scenario is the likely threat of armed conflicts, if (or when) there is a failure in existing regional forums. Spillover effects on close neighbours, similar to the recent events in the Solomon Islands, could possibly be a threat to orderly relations. The Solomon Islands has had its fair share of ethnic conflict on Guadalcanal, where the light-skinned Malaitans are not wanted. Scant support could be expected from the Bougainvilleans, as they are currently recouping following the Bougainvillean crisis. Furthermore, border skirmishes with the Solomon Islands, which resulted from the Bougainville conflict, have been resolved satisfactorily. These could not be seen as factors which could activate a major conflict. It does not warrant the presence of a large force, simply the regular patrolling and surveillance of the border with mutual assistance, which would encourage better understanding and cooperation between the two countries.

An additional factor that impacts on the roles and functions of the PNG Defence Force is sovereignty issues that could be argued in an international relations perspective. However, it is sufficient here to discuss the maintenance of political independence and protecting the national interest. Maintaining political independence is the fundamental necessity derived from good, honest, and

transparent governance. This transparency extends to the international community, of which the country is part.

International Obligations

Fulfilling international obligations is the next priority that the National Constitution sets out for the PNG Defence Force. It would appear that external policy issues which affect the region, and the world at large, exist in parallel with foreign relations policies. The analysis of security implications is jointly conducted by the Department of Foreign Affairs, and the Department of Defence. However, there has not been a great deal of participation in world peace enforcement or collective security aspects. Participation in such operations would give the PNG Defence Force invaluable international exposure and perhaps maintain its high esteem, as was experienced in Vanuatu.

The establishment and deployment of the Kumul Force to Vanuatu saw Papua New Guinea step into the international arena. Although the conflict was perhaps minor, the possibility of escalation was imminent when Jimmy Stevens led his rebel group against the new Government of Vanuatu. The Kumul Force was deployed with a specific mission, was successful, and returned unscathed. That was a military operation through which the Papua New Guinean Government made a real commitment to meet a particular objective, although, undeniably, Australia claims the credit for providing the logistical support.

The claims of logistical support by Australia are possibly best viewed from the 1987 Joint Declaration of Principles which encompasses a policy of engaging Australia in any international bilateral relations that the two countries have. A further endorsement of the policy is reflected in the New Defence Partnership, which was derived more so from the Australian perspective when they reassessed their strategic outlook. Under these arrangements, issues concerning supply and logistical assistance were also put in place, and further established the links for the Defence Cooperation Program (DCP). This program has been a controversial one at times, but nonetheless, it serves the purpose of consolidating international bilateral relations, by providing military training for Papua New Guineans, as well as some jungle training for Australians.

Similar bilateral relations are in place with New Zealand, under the Mutual Assistance Program (MAP), and with the United States of America, under the International Military Education Program (IMEP). Engaging these countries, in one way or another, indicates that a security concern exists. Modern attitudes to these concerns have been to prevent security crises by pursuing confidence-building measures and creating transparency between, and amongst, each other. Such relations also lead to cooperation in joint operations in military exercises, peace enforcement, and other preventive measures against

situational security problems. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the political community to prioritise and distribute resources to the PNG Defence Force, as against other pressing issues.

Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the Papua New Guinean Government to redirect its security concerns. Military security is now a benign environment, so why maintain a defence force that it cannot support and upkeep? What sort of foreign policy should a brigade-size force pursue? Perhaps the concept of mutual assistance with powerful neighbours seems ideal, and the experience invaluable. This type of relationship could provide the necessary deterrent against situational security threats that may have infiltrated this country already.

Examples of this are evident in the continuous mismanagement of funds, the constant change of heads of departments and semi-government organisations, which results in huge payouts for premature termination of contracts, and the discretionary use of the rural development fund (alias the 'slush fund'). The issue is whether this is an intentional plot against the country and its people. It appears that the economic status of Papua New Guinea has been undermined, and the quality of life of the people of Papua New Guinea has gone from bad to worse. The target area in addressing this situational threat is that of internal security, in order to determine whether we are being deprived of a better lifestyle, by elements within the country.

Internal Security

Although external relations and foreign policy remain important, constraint through lack of resources still leaves internal stability as the paramount issue. The real threat has been internal stability to which the Defence Force appears to have shifted its focus, after the unpleasant task of engaging in the guerrilla war on Bougainville. In reality, aid to civil police in quelling internal law and order problems is clearly stated in the National Constitution [s. 204(1)], and the Defence (Aid to Civil Power) Regulation 1974 [ss. 6 and 11]. Internal law and order and other associated issues seem to be recurring problems that consume a substantial portion of our resources.

The Papua New Guinean Government has used this provision to call out the PNG Defence Force on a number of occasions. These call-outs have ranged from a simple show-of-force, to conducting curfew operations. It is the same process that the Government used to call out the Defence Force when the Bougainville crisis arose. It seems that it may not be the last time that the Government will call out the Defence Force in light of the continuing law and order problems. The call-out aspect of Bougainville and the operational issues are discussed in more detail in a later section.

Performing effectively in such a non-primary role should be encouraged by the Defence Force management, as it will keep the personnel occupied, as well

as prevent them from lying idle and getting into the politics of higher Defence Force management. Experiences on Bougainville have made the servicemen battle-hardened, as most of them lived off means below expected standards. However, a small incentive was the expected operational allowance when the servicemen returned, but with a caution that, should one have met his unfortunate demise, he would not have enjoyed the fruits of that incentive.

As that allowance is no longer being paid, since the operations in Bougainville were curtailed, a substitute is necessary during the economic hardships facing the whole country. Perhaps an ideal strategy is to conduct joint 'bit patrols' with the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary (RPNGC), especially in the major cities where crime is a problem. This will help to address the crime rate and improve the negative image that the PNG Defence Force continues to portray. It will also appease those government bureaucrats who feel that the PNG Defence Force is not 'good value', in return for the funds that are expended.

Having placed an emphasis on internal stability, there will undoubtedly be many questions and counterarguments raised, because the Defence White Paper has also quoted the Constitutional Review Committee's Final Report of 1974. Amongst other constitutional issues, the committee was tasked with deciding on the future of the PNG Defence Force. While the report was inclined towards engaging an external defence force for the military, subsequent reports, such as that of the National Law and Order policy in 1993, recommended a reduction in the Defence Force's manpower, and broadly categorised defence in the law and order sector. The two reports in question are almost two decades apart, as are the social changes. The question is, 'What took so long for the policy initiatives to decide against the existing defence force, which was already engaged in a guerrilla war on Bougainville?'

Following the suggestion that the PNG Defence Force should combine with the RPNGC, annual funding has gone from bad to worse. Allocations fell, and the separately funded Bougainville operation was included as part of the Defence budget. Also, a manpower ceiling of 2 500 was proposed from an existing total of 5 075. The Government's administrative machinery is still uncertain as to what is best for the Defence Force, amongst conflicting advice from various sources, such as those Australian analysts who continually suggest that the country would disintegrate following a military coup. In analysing the PNGDF and politics, O'Connor (1994: 21) argues that:

Because ill-informed discussion frequently raises the spectre of some sort of coup d'état by the military against the elected government of Papua New Guinea, some comment is opposite. Frequently sourced from Australia by commentators who, knowing no better, automatically equate Papua New

Guinea with tribal Africa, the assertion of the imminence or likelihood of a military coup is something of a hardy annual.

If a military coup was to be a reality, this country would have experienced one on 17 March 1997 when the then Commander, Major General Jerry Singirok, defied the administrative procedure to cancel the Sandline contract. He then called on the Government to resign, particularly the three Ministers involved — the Prime Minister, Sir Julius Chan; the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Chris Haiveta; and the Minister for Defence, Matias Ijape.

However, the Defence Force has become a liability rather than insurance for Papua New Guinea. Continuous acts of indiscipline are in defiance of the Code of Military Conduct. These acts have been partly out of frustration, but mostly to get attention and attract arbitration for pay and conditions (*The National*, 1 March 2000), and do not leave much room for decision makers to decide on the fate of the PNGDF. There are already claims by defence critics that the conditions of service are far superior than those applied to the private sector. It makes the service personnel an elite, privileged and 'self-contained mechanism with the exclusiveness of a caste' (Woddis 1977: 41).

No increase in budget allocation can be expected, because other sectors compete for the same funding. The PNG Defence Force is expected to make savings within its allocation. Apart from the Bougainville defence situation, the PNGDF has to demonstrate to the Government that it is realistic in its approaches. If it means becoming engaged in more non-primary tasks because of the overall deficiency in the whole country, then it must assist. There are far too many people on the payroll, who are being paid for virtually doing nothing.

Civic Action Tasks

The next major role that the Defence Force could assume is nation building, in terms of minor roads and bridges, erecting community schools, and carrying out other minor works which would support the community. For example, the Engineer Battalion is equipped to carry out such tasks. Its dual role could reflect the best form of military structure. When the troops are not required for operational duties of a military nature, they could be engaged to carry out national development tasks. The traditional concept of military structure, with the infantry performing their tasks, and other groups carrying out their specific duties would have to be re-examined in a true Papua New Guinean context, given the experiences on Bougainville, and the lack of essential resources to run the PNG Defence Force.

The Defence White Paper has highlighted the concept, and has plans to extend to other regions — the first being at Banz, Western Highlands Province.

Units engaged in civic tasks would have to be rotated quickly, so that they could train and prepare for combat in their other roles. This would mean that projects would have to be reasonably small and possibly range from six to eight months duration. Any project that continued for more than eight months would deprive the troops of combat skills training. In fact, this would be the only standing force in existence, if other units were disbanded.

Pressures that arise from financial constraints, and the need to make the best use of scarce resources in a benign environment have seen many defence forces rationalise their operations to accommodate these challenges. The aim has been to have fewer personnel in uniform, but still carry out a multitude of tasks. Any shortfall in manpower can be taken up using part-time soldiers or reservists, who are already employed under a 'National Defence Plan'. Reservists would have primary loyalty to their major wage-earning jobs, as well as carrying out national defence tasks as part-time occupations. They would not necessarily be idle enough to question the management of the Defence Force, which would eliminate any strike-for-pay problems.

Military Considerations

When analysing the experiences on Bougainville, and assessing the constant barrage of criticism which the PNG Defence Force receives, as a result of problems of discipline, it is obvious that Papua New Guinea's realistic military needs have to be well-researched. Some pundits believe that a single paramilitary force for the country would be adequate. This would effectively mean that the PNGDF and the RPNGC would combine their roles for some tasks. This may be possible, particularly in relation to land-based troops. Bougainville has already experienced police mobile squads working in unison with military personnel.

However, there are many contentious issues that would need to be addressed in relation to such a combination. Some of these issues would relate to the *Internal Security Act*, and people would wonder whether Papua New Guinea was moving towards becoming a 'police state'. In this context, the Government could use force and other heavy-handed techniques to coerce the people to think and behave in a non-popular way. Who would then maintain a presence at our land border, let alone withstand any aggression?

A paramilitary force may not have the necessary resources, as it would require the services of a seagoing element, together with other factors associated with the function, roles, and responsibilities of defence. The Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) has become a resource that has attracted exploration, exploitation, fishing, and pearling. It is also used by ocean-going freighters and cruise ships that transit through to South-East Asia and North Asia, from Australia, New Zealand, and other South Pacific countries. It is also

increasingly becoming the passageway for illegal operations that range from fishing activities, to human, drug, and gun smuggling. What exists in the EEZ could be tapped for financial rewards for the country. Therefore, it is essential that a maritime element, equivalent to the navy, should be maintained.

Furthermore, a seagoing element may be limited in its operations, because, in real terms, it would not be capable of covering our large maritime area. Also, to mobilise an effective operation may take days, whereas an air response may only take hours. The use of aircraft to identify and photograph offending, illegal fishing vessels has been a successful strategy in apprehending them in the past. This use of aircraft has been well-supported by all other parties concerned. The compatibility of airborne and surface platforms has proven its worth, but has lacked the continuation and practice on a regular basis because of financial constraints.

Experience has also shown that available aircraft could exceed their flight range limit, even before they reach their objective, because of the large area that has to be covered. The logical strategy would be to place many operating units in a widely dispersed pattern, so that they can effect a quick response. Placing many small units around the country would be costly, but with the cutting-edge technology that is available today, extensive surveillance of the coastline would be possible. Technology has become the superior factor that is assisting humankind, through automation and information systems.

Instead of establishing small units that are strategically placed, the use of equipment which could perform initial detection tasks should be encouraged. Project Slomo — the maritime surveillance project — which will subsequently incorporate other line departments with similar interests, seems to be the most appropriate system for the Government to adopt. It could support a ship capable of carrying a helicopter, as well as other smaller vessels, such as the present patrol boats, with supplies and provisions to last several weeks. These activities could be well-supported by the coastwatcher concept, which was abandoned because of logistical and support problems. This scheme was based on a network of high frequency radios that were provided to designated operators, whose task was to provide daily general situational reports, in his or her remote locality, and give information on any unusual activities or sightings to the National Surveillance Organisation (NSO).

Moreover, the concept of an Operation Support Ship (OSS), as proposed in the Defence Force's White Paper, seems ideal, but it must be task oriented. While transporting infantry and engineers seems a viable proposition during mobilisation, an OSS with a helicopter capability would effectively enhance the support concept of ships at sea. It would provide the surveillance platform for air-sea cooperation and compatibility in patrolling the sea lanes (Tom 1999:Ch. 16). The operational objective of such a vessel is to show one's presence on a

regular basis, either in the air with helicopters, or on the water. This ship could also be the support base for the remote coastwatchers, and hence revive the scheme so that any reported illegal activity could be responded to within hours. Furthermore, they could assist in maritime search and rescue operations.

The Defence White Paper identifies and verifies that Papua New Guinea is a maritime country, which has a range of approaches, using different modes of sea transport. Using small boats to cross to and from the Solomon Islands, Irian Jaya, and Australia is relatively common and easy. Other challenges are the increasing number of 'boat people' passing through Papua New Guinean waters. One such boatload was recently found in West New Britain Province (*Post-Courier*, 1 July 1999:1). These boat people are believed to be part of an international racket in human trafficking and other international crimes that are regularly reported.

Surveillance of our maritime regions and border in order to prevent illegal activities and crossings is a major drain on the country's resources. However, this initiative should be an essential element for future defence needs. The use of fixed wing aircraft to provide a means of transport for troop deployment, as well as incorporating a surveillance concept seems acceptable. However, the ongoing problem of facility maintenance has deemed this capability useless. If this current trend in illegal trafficking and other criminal activities continues for several years, the country's required resources, in terms of manpower, training, and associated overheads, will prove to be an insupportable burden to the PNGDF and the Government.

An appropriate proposal would be to demobilise the existing units and redeploy personnel to areas of concern. This procedure should apply to all units that are not performing as a result of financial constraints. If the commercial support concept is feasible, then that defence capability could be redeployed and engaged in a civil form until savings could be made to reinstitute the original unit, if and when the Government reassesses the nation's security needs. Some thoughts should be given to the proposal for a multifaceted Defence Force with the dual purpose of serving Papua New Guinean communities. A similar role may be feasible for the Engineer Battalion, whereby it has two or more tasks. However, the danger of mobilising such a vision and such initiatives is brought into perspective by the experiences in Bougainville, where two battalions, rotating every six months, became totally exhausted.

The Bougainville Experience

From the beginning of the crisis, Bougainville was never a military problem. It has been a very sensitive political issue that requires a political solution. Consequently, support for a military operation was reluctantly given, and the military, like any other security body, proposed what was operationally feasible. While the background to how the crisis started is now common knowledge, it is

imperative to note that the military involvement was essentially a call out, through a request made by the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary, under Section 204 of the National Constitution. This assistance to the police force quickly changed to one of 'seek out and destroy' the militant elements, when the situation worsened and lives were lost. The Government had not declared war, but the call out remained in force until 30 April 1998.

Having determined that a military situation had occurred, the Defence Force planned and instituted military operations and kept the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) on the run. At the same time, many innocent people were caught up in the operations, and there have been endless claims of atrocities and heavy handiness. Out of frustration, houses were set alight, and people fled from their homes. On assessment of the situation, the Government may have instructed the Defence Force Commander in Bougainville to cease operations, or even pull out of Bougainville (Dorney 1998: 44).

An abrupt pull-out and sea blockade by the Defence Force in 1990 led to some of the darkest days in Bougainville, as the BRA ran riot, killing those people who they believed were supporters of the national government (*ibid.*: 46-47; Ahai 1998: 2-3). At the same time, Francis Ona did not trust many of the former national and provincial government officials, and had them killed. The BRA regrouped and coerced the majority of the ordinary people with threats of atrocities. Out of fear, those youths who were undecided took up arms against the security forces. Despite the sea blockade, the BRA was able to smuggle significant quantities of arms and ammunition into Bougainville, through the Solomon Islands.

Several lessons can be drawn from the blockade. First, it was ill-conceived and the Government was misled into believing that a blockade would be effective. On the other hand, the military expected the financial and resource support, by way of logistics and equipment, to be free-flowing to support the blockade. The national government was blamed for abandoning the people, mostly from North-West and South Bougainville, and to this day, these people do not trust the national government. In the meantime, the national government faced real economic hardships, which were brought about by the closure of the Bougainville Copper Limited (BCL) mine. Budget estimates of income for that year were expected to be K1.2 billion, but fell well short of that target. Consequently, the Government could not effectively finance or support the military operations in Bougainville.

The military endeavoured to use its initiative, and was able to regain control of some 80 percent of the island by 1993. These initiatives eventually took their toll on the military, but kept the Government confident that, despite the very limited support, the military maintained control. The lines of communications (LOC) were extended against all the odds, and against any principles of war. At present, the military foolishly continues to overstretch that thin line.

That thin line could hold out, if a resolution of the conflict, through peace negotiations, is finalised, and the future of the island determined through some consensus agreement. However, if armed violence returns to Bougainville, it would be strategic for the military to withdraw all security forces from the island, as the existing force could well be massacred by the BRA, or starved to death because of lack of supplies. The troops that are currently on Bougainville are there by virtue of the Lincoln Agreement. However, if there is any threat to soldiers and constant breaches of the ceasefire agreement, then plans should already be in place for the evacuation of the troops.

The important question is, 'What type of Defence Force do we need for Papua New Guinea, if the military is not part of the solution for Bougainville?' A military presence is required predominantly along the land border with Indonesia, and the maritime border with the Solomon Islands. The other areas that require constant surveillance are the Torres Strait, and the northern sea border with the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM).

So what proportions of land and maritime elements are required? And what about support elements such as the Air Transport Squadron (ATS)? An air campaign against Papua New Guinea is highly unlikely, but as there is no counter air defence capacity in the ATS, it could only play a support role. What portion of support and by what preferred means should the ATS be involved? Similarly, other support elements could be determined by assessing necessity and objectivity, and considering resource implications and availability.

A system devised outside the Papua New Guinean context, with reference to the Western concept of military systems, could be created. It would also involve those personnel who are already employed elsewhere, under a possible National Defence System. Aspects of foreign relations such as bilateral relations and other analytical work in regional or world affairs could be handled by the Department of Foreign Affairs. This would ease the burden on the Department of Defence, whose current financial management has come into question. Furthermore, resources for personnel, administration, and logistics for the 'new look defence force' could be better streamlined.

Defence Management

With the establishment of a Defence Force within a Papua New Guinean context, the functions of the Department of Defence could be scaled down to the management of financial services only. Strategic and military considerations do not justify the existence of a separate entity that covers legal and corporate affairs. The financial resources that are spent on the salaries, perks, and privileges of senior bureaucrats and commissioned officers is no longer justified, when soldiers want a pay increase, and the Defence Force's operating budget has come to a staggering halt. Also, there is evidence of gross misuse and/or transfer of funds by

departmental officers to projects or purchases that are other than the original ones that were nominated (O'Connor 1994: 15).

The time for hard decisions is dawning. It appears that no external advisers or any amount of consulting with organisational experts will be able to resolve the problems of lack of funding, or devolving responsibilities to unit level. It is time the Government accepted that there are no external security concerns, as implied from the lack of funding for the Defence Force's needs. The process of collapsing the multi-layered structure, to support those urgently required functions, should begin. The process of restructuring should be an ongoing one. Therefore, if given the extra resources when a shortfall is identified, then a similar unit could be structured and created. This process is quite evident, as several departments in the public service have changed shape, sometimes for the good, while at other times for political purposes. Nevertheless, when changes take place, people are tasked with managing the change. The issue of rewarding a soldier for being a servant to the nation could also be addressed. This reward could either be in monetary terms, or as a settlement with long-term financial security.

There appears to be two systems of management in the Defence Force — one for the personnel in the Department of Defence, and the other for the uniformed servicemen. Because of this dichotomy, funds are expended in two different ways, at the interest and direction of certain management personnel. Documented evidence reveals that funds have been transferred to pay for unbudgeted activities, and were not expended on items identified by the Capital Equipment Program. Houses and cars have been bought and allocated against the maintenance vote, which further drains the hard-earned funding that is supposed to be channelled into a trust account for building and facilities maintenance. Public servants are also enjoying the benefits of conditions that are accorded to servicemen. What more service conditions are up for grabs?

It was also the national government's option to employ certain ranked officers on contract, so that they could enjoy negotiated conditions of service (NEC Decision No. 125 of 1993). The logic behind this contract employment was to retain their expertise against the prevailing human resources market, which is understandable in a public service organisation. However, in the Defence Force, it was in serious conflict with the existing system, and should be re-examined in light of the 'brain drain' that has occurred. Given the numerous discipline problems and calls for additional pay and allowance by servicemen, it is not a healthy situation, and should be discontinued. It is only logical that the other 'rank and file' members of Defence Force observe and talk about what happens in the hierarchy.

Resource Management

The two-pronged nature of the Defence Force's organisation obviously causes a duplication of the depletion, depreciation, and consumption of management resources. Divisional heads and senior civil servants require vehicles and other management tools, such as computers, to carry out their tasks. Similarly, the senior officers in Defence Force headquarters also require such resources and equipment. Further down the hierarchy, a serviceman's equipment is his weapon, his uniform, and his sense of identity in a group. This group of people should not be denied their basic tools of employment, at the expense of catering for the top hierarchy, as the first priority.

For example, civil servants may operate a credit facility with a private supplier to purchase fuel for their vehicles, while senior Defence Force officers rely on the fuel purchased through the Defence Force's established procurement procedures. Consequently, after a short time, senior officers cannot move around as there is no fuel for their vehicles because the Defence Force's distributive procedures have ensured that everyone is equally served. Similarly, the repair and maintenance of vehicles is carried out in different ways. The senior civil servants' vehicles are maintained through private business repair facilities, while the Defence Force vehicles are programmed under the repair and maintenance vote. However, this same repair and maintenance facility cannot accumulate enough funds to order aircraft parts, which require production and delivery lead time. So who is serving whom, and for what purpose?

Another extraordinary phenomenon concerns the replacement of vehicles. The usual procedure for the Defence Force when purchasing vehicles and capital equipment, is for the PNGDF Equipment Planning Committee to screen the purchases. This committee decides on the priority order for the equipment and vehicles which are to be purchased. In most cases, the purchases follow a set procedure.

In contrast, the Department of Defence simply purchases equipment at will, as long as there are funds in any vote that they can access. This unauthorised transfer of funds has occurred when the department has purchased houses as well as cars. The rapid turnover of departmental heads is indicative of the financial mismanagement which prevails in the defence organisation. Accordingly, the set procedures for the Defence Force have been tested when expending funds. It now appears that, by slightly bending the rules, one can easily purchase most items, and not necessarily go through the established procurement process.

Restructure of the PNG Defence Force

Despite the lack of government support, but in conformity with the Defence White Paper, the Defence Force, through its own initiative, is undergoing a

process of restructuring. However, this restructuring will have a lot of flaws because of the factors already described. The objective is to have a Strategic Defence Headquarters, with four functional commanders who are task oriented. In reality, this appears to be a realignment of the existing system so that the lines of responsibility are clearly visible.

The model is to have an *Operations Commander*, who will have greater freedom of action in command, control, and the ability to expend funds, without any bureaucratic interference. He would be known as *Chief of the Defence Force*; that is, the force commander. This position derives from what was formerly the Chief of Operations, who, in the past, had no financial delegation, and was at the mercy of the Chief of Logistics. The Chief of Logistics now becomes the new Support Commander. The *Support Commander* is expected to incorporate some of the functions of the personnel branch, dealing with recruiting, and aspects of service conditions associated with logistics, including the facilities component of the Engineering Unit. The other personnel aspects which are involved with human resources and training will become the responsibility of the *Training Commander*.

While this restructure falls into a familiar pattern, the most challenging aspect is the *Reserve Command* function. Undoubtedly, planning and implementation staff are already at work, but the difficult part may be the legal, economic, and social implications. An unemployed youth or person who is taken on for reservist duty in the Defence Force would have no qualms in accepting that position. However, what about those people who are employed elsewhere? Would the management of a private firm release someone who may be making lots of money for that organisation? In the case of accidental death while on reservist duty, should the original employer meet part of the repatriation costs for the deceased's body, as well as his family?

Conclusion

Many of these questions concern the important initial security issues, and the political will by the institutional framework of this country to have a credible, standing, military force, against other pressing socioeconomic issues. In the discussions, it is quite clear that a need exists for maritime surveillance and the requirement to assist in nation building. In the political sense, these aspects also have vote-buying potential. For example, when an engineering unit is engaged in a certain locality, through the persistence of a local Member of Parliament, those local people would see some development. Consequently, the local member is likely to be returned to the Parliament at the next elections. In the absence of government services, and with very little or no development in many areas, engineering units would be in high demand, if rural development funds were properly utilised.

The involvement of a Defence Force maritime element with the National Fisheries Authority, in apprehending illegal fishing vessels, is evidence of its potential role. It has undoubtedly earned its place in the economic development of Papua New Guinea. It also has the capability for maritime search and rescue operations that are quite frequently needed in Papua New Guinea. A maritime element has a wider scope, but is limited by the management of resources in achieving effective performance. For example, a patrol boat would not be allowed to operate, if it had only 30 percent of fuel on board, and no amount of persuasion would get the ship moving.

So what has the land element done for it not to be worthy of mention? Basically, its modified concept of overstretching its lines of communication could be its main downfall. What is the limit of this initiative? If the Government cannot provide the necessary support and does not have the security concerns at heart, then there is no point in having three infantry battalions. Having more personnel than are required also attracts social and economic hardship in the Defence Force. What does it take to train an infantryman? Could we downsize, and then upsize in a reasonable time? The paramilitary concept may be good, but a study into how best it could be done, by studying the Swedish experience, is a step forward. However, the fundamental issue is the required strength of the land-based troops, apart from the engineers. The support element is not an issue here, as they would just fall into place.

However, the 'white elephant' in the Department of Defence is 'what the force could do without'. If the structure of the Police Force is any indication of an organisation giving financial support to the RPNGC, then this is the yardstick from which to launch. As long as the Department of Defence exists in its current form, there is going to be misuse of funds. There are already hands going into the DFRB Board purse, and it is sad to see public money being manipulated without the endorsement of contributors. How long will the majority of contributors be kept in the dark? So much is preached about practising transparency, but let us see the real actions.

The Way Ahead

The proposed restructuring — to have four functional commands — seems to be the correct strategy. However, the first challenge is to remove the unproductive and corrupt personnel at all levels. The appropriate proposal would be to scale down the Defence Force, including the Department of Defence. Any lost capability or function could be picked up from the Commercial Support Program (CSP), and the proposed nationwide Reserve Command that would take on board youths, as well as those already in employment. As far as the Department of Defence is concerned, areas of reorganisation could be absorbed into the Department of Foreign Affairs, the National Intelligence Organisation (NIO), and the Prime Minister's Department. The Department of Defence could be more

focused in providing financial management and control. In the meantime, Papua New Guinea should pursue legislative changes to accommodate the new national defence concept.

Furthermore, the role of infantry forces could be reviewed, to downsize to a battalion group, together with a support mechanism such as the air deployment capability. The presence of an infantry battalion is undeniable, but because of lack of government support, and the need to effectively utilise scarce resources, one battalion could only effectively patrol the border area. Lost supply and logistics, such as field rations could be fairly distributed to this battalion group. However, in the interim, to keep the troops occupied, the Defence Force could seek an understanding with the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary to involve the land troops, on a continuous basis, in assisting police on 'bit patrols'. Further investigations could be made to determine the effectiveness of a paramilitary role or a dual role for the land troops. This research could be better approached from a group comprising the National Research Institute (NRI), the PNG Defence Force, the Australian Defence Force, and one other security institute from another overseas country.

The need to have a balanced military force should not be understated, and maritime requirements should not be passed over. Even if it means making economic sacrifices elsewhere, an Operational Support Ship concept is an absolute necessity for Papua New Guinea. Far too often, Papua New Guinea has been discouraged by external advisers from acquiring such a capability, even though we have a vast maritime area to cover. There should not be any question as to the necessity for a maritime military force to be present in the EEZ or the coastal waters, for the reasons already discussed.

The final issue is to review the contract employment package that has been accorded to senior ranked officers, while at the same time, examining realistic options for ex-servicemen to resettle into the civilian community. Servicemen, in their calling to serve the nation, would have served an institution, and have had no time to re-establish themselves in the community. In contrast, other public servants in the Government are well-established in the community, in every sense. For example, they have home ownership schemes and are usually content with their lifestyle. Servicemen must first remove themselves from service accommodation and make a fresh start, at quite an old age. Those servicemen have actually missed out on a good number of years and far too often they and their families will end up in squatter settlements near the cities so that they can access government services, which are unavailable in the rural areas.

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