



THE NATIONAL  
RESEARCH INSTITUTE  
PAPUA NEW GUINEA

# SPOTLIGHT

## STRATEGIC INITIATIVES FOR IMPROVING SECURITY IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA: THE SECURITY AND CIVIL DEFENCE CORPS

Olugbenga Ige

Volume 17, Issue 3

[www.pngnri.org](http://www.pngnri.org)

### Key Points

- Several initiatives have been devised to address the emerging security threats in Papua New Guinea PNG, however, insecurity remains a current social issue in the country.
- Kidnapping citizens for ransom has emerged as one of the most common security threat in PNG, which has adverse effects on the Government of Papua New Guinea's (GoPNG) efforts at attracting foreign investors into the country.
- PNG Civil Defence Corps (PNG-CDC) should be established to protect and assist the citizenry, safeguard property, and the environment in PNG in line with the mandate of the International Civil Defence Organisation (ICDO).
- The PNG-CDC will be a vehicle to carry out school-based civil defence clubs to develop informal civil defence skills of school children and university students in PNG.

inquire  
inform  
influence

March 2024



## STRATEGIC INITIATIVES FOR IMPROVING SECURITY IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA: THE SECURITY AND CIVIL DEFENCE CORPS

By Olugbenga Ige

The development of community-based initiatives to address emerging security threats to citizen's well-being in Papua New Guinea (PNG) has become a top priority. The kidnapping at gunpoint of a professor of anthropology and three PNG women on fieldwork at Fogoma'iu village near Mount Bosavi in Bosavi Local Level Government, Southern Highlands Province, by 15 gang members that later rose to 21 (Nangoi, 21 February 2023), demands that the Government of Papua New Guinea (GoPNG) re-evaluate the country's security system and re-equip it to ensure the safety and security of the nation.

The citizens had barely recovered from the occurrence at Fogoma'iu village when 40 armed men kidnapped 17 female students of Walaku Primary School in Bosavi, Hela Province (Yanei & Kuku, 9 June 2023). The female students were kidnapped, raped and held captive, with the 40 armed men demanding K40,000 and 10 pigs as ransom (Yanei & Kuku, 9 June 2023), reinforcing the need to initiate a PNG-specific security plan to safeguard residents in remote geographical locations in PNG.

This paper presents the need to develop a proactive structure to combat human kidnapping, extortion, and other unexpected criminal occurrences that have changed the security direction in PNG. To address the trends of human kidnapping in remote geographical locations, the establishment of Papua New Guinea Security and Civil Defence Corps (PNG-CDC), a security model, could assist PNG in overcoming these security threats.

### The International Civil Defence Organisation

The International Civil Defence Organisation (ICDO) transformed from an association, the 'Lieux de Geneve' which was founded in Paris by Georges Saint-Paul, a French Surgeon-General (The United Nations, 2013). In 1931, when the ICDO started, the organisation created neutralised zones or open towns where certain groups of the civilian population such as women, children, people not physically or mentally strong, especially through age or illness, and the elderly, could seek refuge during wartime (The United Nations, 2013).

As of May 2013, the ICDO comprised 52 member states, 15 observers and 21 affiliated members (The United Nations, 2013). However, at present, PNG is not a member.

### Establishing the PNG Civil Defence Corps

The PNG-CDC will be designed to protect and assist people who are residents in PNG, safeguard property, and the environment in the face of natural and man-made disasters in PNG in line with the mandate of the ICDO (The United Nations, 2013). The PNG-CDC will further assist in maintaining peace and order and protect and rescue civilians on PNG soil during periods of emergency.

The first step in establishing the PNG-CDC will be to provide a statutory backing drafted 'Act' to create the PNG-CDC. The document providing the details of the 'Act' will then be submitted to the PNG National Parliament for enactment. The functions of the PNG-CDC, membership of the corps, staff of the corps, Districts and District commands of the corps, financial provisions of the corps, discipline of corps members, and legal proceedings will be established in the PNG-CDC Act.

### Functions of the PNG Civil Defence Corps

The PNG-CDC will support and maintain peace and order, and ensure the protection and rescue of people within PNG during periods of emergency.

The PNG-CDC will be vested with the power to arrest, investigate and hand over to the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary (RPNGC) for supplementary or additional investigation and prosecution of any person within PNG who is connected to any activity of a criminal nature, activity aimed at frustrating any public or government programme or policy and riot, civil unrest, religious unrest, and ethnic clash. In addition, the PNG-CDC will maintain an awareness of and report any planned criminal activity to deprive citizens of their lives or belongings and syndicated activity aimed at double-crossing the GoPNG. It will also assist in rescuing people kidnapped for ransom within PNG, and provide intelligence information to the GoPNG on any matter relating to:

- riot, civil unrest, religious unrest, ethnic clash, mutiny;
- crime control;
- insurgency by members of the public directed at derailing any government programme and policy;
- industrial action and strike directed at frustrating government activities;
- any other matter or emerging incidences as may be delegated by GoPNG;
- allot and manage shelters for the civil population during any period of emergency;
- move out the civil population from dangerous areas; issue the necessary alerts to the civil population during any period of emergencies;
- assist in the provision and distribution of emergency medical services especially first aid during any period of emergency;
- assist to maintain order in distressed geographical locations during periods of emergencies;
- assist in repairing critical public utilities during any period of emergency;
- monitor the activities of private security companies and keep a register that will be accessible to the Registrar of Security Industries Authority;
- check over the premises of private security companies and their faculties; and,
- assist the PNG Fire Services in fire-fighting operations during emergencies.

### The Governing Board of PNG Civil Defence Corps

The PNG Correctional Services (PNGCS) supported by the Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF) will be the governing board of the PNG-CDC and have general control of the corps in the first five years. The 'Board' will be responsible for:

1. the coast-to-coast management and nationwide command of the corps;
2. calling up volunteers and regular members of the corps;
3. providing refresher programs and organising basic development courses;
4. preparing the general guidelines and policies on primary programs for building up or developing the corps; and,
5. determining the Key Results Area (KRA), Targets and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to make certain the satisfactory performance of the core functions of the corps. The representatives of the PNGDF on the board of PNG-CDC will oversee the paramilitary

drills and training of the first recruits of PNG-CDC.

The governing board will have the power to carry out other matters that are relevant to the optimal performance of the functions of PNG-CDC.

### Lessons that PNG can learn from selected International Civil Defence Organisation member states

If the GoPNG wishes to become one of the safest countries in Oceania, it should create and use the structure of PNG-CDC in line with other civil defence-operating countries.

In *Singapore*, the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) is responsible for providing 24-hour firefighting, rescue, mitigation of hazardous incidents and emergency medical services tagged 'Emergency Response'; the formulation and enforcement of regulations on fire safety and civil defence shelter matters called 'Fire Safety and Public Protection'; and, building up the resilience and emergency vigilance of civilians and promoting first response (The Government of Singapore Ministry of Home Affairs, 2023).

In *Nigeria*, the civil defence force, known as 'The Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps', was introduced during the civil war in Lagos in May 1967, then the Federal Capital Territory of Lagos. At present, the civil defence force in Nigeria is a para-military organisation owned by the Government of Nigeria and is entrusted with the protection of the civil population and Nigeria against threats, any form of attack and disaster (Government of Nigeria, 2003). Nigeria's civil defence force bears firearms and other related combat equipment to discharge its constitutional roles.

In *Malaysia*, the Malaysian Civil Defence Force Act came into effect in 1951. The 'Force' in Malaysia comprises regular members, volunteer members and auxiliary members (The Government of Malaysia, 2016). According to the Malaysian Civil Defence Force Act (1951), some of the duties performed by this corps are management of disasters, performance of humanitarian services, instruction of the civil population for civil defence and training, and equipping the civilian population to cope and assist with any civil defence related purposes (The Government of Malaysia, 2016). Other important duties of the Malaysian Civil Defence Force involve rescuing and transferring endangered civilians, undertaking measures to dispose of the dead in situations of emergency, assisting relevant public authorities to provide accommodation for the homeless, and conserving and making available food, fuel, clothing, first-aid supplies, medical supplies and other necessities (The Government of Malaysia, 2016).

In the *United Arab Emirates* (UAE), the mission of Civil Defence is to enhance the quality of life in the community

using smart delivery of safety and security services in an innovative environment to save lives, honours, and properties (The Spanish Association for the Promotion of Research and Fire Safety Technology [AFITI], 2023). Civil defence is organised differently from the structures in Nigeria and Malaysia. According to Telecommunications and Digital Government Regulatory Authority (2020), each emirate in the United Arab Emirates has its own civil defence department that is supervised by the Ministry of Interior (MoI). In the UAE, civil defence engages in rescue missions, restoring life in disaster-struck locations and creating volunteer teams and emergency units to support civil defence forces (The Telecommunications and Digital Government Authority [TDRA] UAE, 2023).

In the UAE, the entities responsible for security and safety are like the security entities in PNG. The UAE has a supreme council for the National Security comprising Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Interior, Local Police Authorities, Civil Defence, Ports, Borders and Free Zones, Crisis and Emergency Management, and the National Early Warning System (a project started to provide safety and protection of citizens, residents, and visitors in UAE). A critical look at the entities responsible for security and safety in the UAE shows the civil defence that went into operation on 16 May 1999 and the National Early Warning System (NEWS) that started in 2017 are the missing links in PNG security entities. At present in the UAE, Civil Defence-Dubai, Civil Defence-Ras Al Khaimah and Civil Defence Abu Dhabi are in place.

Practical ways to enhance Security in PNG, particularly, in the Highlands Region

1. The GoPNG should commission the National Research Institute (NRI) in collaboration with the PNGCS, and Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG) to write the draft of the Act to establish the PNG-CDC.
2. The GoPNG should establish the PNG-CDC in the seven provinces that constitute the 'Highlands Region namely: Eastern Highlands, Enga, Hela, Jiwaka, Simbu, Southern Highlands and Western Highlands.
3. The draft of the PNG-CDC Act written by NRI, PNGCS, and DJAG should be presented via workshops to relevant government departments such as the Department of Justice and Attorney-General for feedback. The Act would then be finalised and submitted to the Office of Legislative Counsel (OLC) for legal advice, and introduction into PNG parliament.
4. The PNG-CDC Headquarters should be located within the boundaries shared by Hela and Jiwaka Provinces to evaluate the practical capacity to succeed

of the PNG-CDC before extending it to other regions. However, there should be a Liaison Office (LO) in Port Moresby, National Capital District (NCD) for administrative efficiency.

5. The PNG-CDC should be empowered by the PNG parliament to bear firearms and other modern combat equipment to effectively safeguard lives, property, and the environment in PNG. The training on bearing of fire-arms should be led by the PNGDF.
6. The PNG-CDC academy should be established in Mount Hagen in Western Highlands Province to train and re-train the regular, volunteer and auxiliary members from time to time.
7. The PNG Department of Education, and the Department of Higher Education and Research, Science and Technology (DHERST) should incorporate civil defence skills and other related concepts into formal or informal school programmes for students in PNG.
8. The PNG-CDC should collaborate with schools and universities in PNG to establish school-based civil defence clubs to enable school children to develop informal civil defence skills.

### Concluding remarks

This paper has described the current trends adopted by reputable countries to boost security in cities and local communities. Countries such as Singapore, Nigeria, Malaysia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have the 'Police' and 'Armed Forces' to address security challenges in their countries. The insights provided in this paper could assist the GoPNG in constituting and operating the PNG-CDC as a trial for a few years before introducing it to address security issues in the other three regions which are Momase, New Guinea Islands and the Southern regions. The PNG-CDC presented in this paper should be able to complement the efforts of the RPNGC and PNG Defence Force to contain and control armed groups terrorising local or remote communities in PNG.

### References

- Nangoi, D. (21 February 2023). Armed gang holds researchers hostage, negotiations continue. *Post Courier*. Retrieved from Armed gang holds researchers hostage, negotiations continue - *Post Courier*. (Accessed 3 October 2023)
- Telecommunications and Digital Government Authority [TDRA] United Arab Emirates. (2023). Entities responsible for security and safety. Entities responsible for security and safety | The Official Portal of the UAE Government (Accessed 31 July 2023).

- The Civil Defence, Immigration and Prisons Service Board (CDIPB) (2023). History of NSCDC. <https://cdcib.org.ng/history-of-nscdc> (Accessed 16 July 2023).
- The Government of Malaysia. (2016). Laws of Malaysia Act 221: Malaysia Civil Defence Force Act 1951 (As of 15 October 2016). <https://www.civildefence.gov.my/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Malaysia-Civil-Defence-Force-Act-1951Kemaskini-2017.pdf> (Accessed 15 July 2023).
- The Government of Nigeria. (2003). The Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps Act 2003. <https://legal-tools.org/doc/49e0a2/pdf/> (Accessed 16 July 2023).
- The Government of Singapore Ministry of Home Affairs. (2023). Ensuring Civil Defence and Emergency Preparedness. <https://www.mha.gov.sg/what-we-do/civil-defence-and-emergency-preparedness> (Accessed 16 July 2023). The Telecommunications and Digital Government Regulatory Authority (TDRA), United Arab Emirates. (2023). Entities responsible for security and safety. <https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/justice-safety-and-the-law/entities-responsible-for-security-and-safety-in-the-uae> (Accessed 15 July 2023).
- The United Nations (2013). Constitution and Regulations of the International Civil Defence Organization.

[https://www.un.org/en/ga/sixth/70/docs/constitution\\_and\\_regulations\\_of\\_icdo.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/ga/sixth/70/docs/constitution_and_regulations_of_icdo.pdf) (Accessed 30 June 2023). Yanei, M. & Kuku, R. (9 June 2023). 17 female students raped, held captive. *The National*. Retrieved from 17 female students raped, held captive – The National. (Accessed 2 October 2023)

### About the Author

**Dr Olugbenga Ige** is a Senior Research Fellow and Program Leader of National Security and International Relations Research Program at the PNG National Research Institute. His research interests include cybersecurity education, social sciences education, ICT in education, gender studies, society and culture, and community-based research.

### Acknowledgements

This article forms part of the NSIRRP Project 1.2 ‘Non-state Actors Participation in Building Safer Communities’. The author expresses gratitude to the Government of Papua New Guinea (GoPNG) for the funding of NSIRRP Project 1.2. The views presented in this paper, and any errors that accompany it, are of course, the author’s.