Police-Building in the Solomon Islands
(RAMSI - Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands)
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Contexts

UN Missions
Help “create conditions for lasting peace in a country torn by conflict”
Help establish functioning, democratic, accountable policing systems which are essential to peace, security and public wellbeing and integral to sustainable state-building
Three overlapping phases: military to stop conflicts and violence (peacekeeping);
‘constabulary,’ transitional period;
institutionalize sustainable democratic government and policing (peacebuilding)
Concurrently: develop other criminal justice institutions, legal reforms, governmental capacity, integrity and accountability mechanisms
As of Jan. 31, 2012: 15 UN peacekeeping missions including 118,756 personnel from 115 countries; 82,187 military personnel; 14,492 police; others - observers, civilians, volunteers
Ten UN missions with a police presence
Costs per year about 7.8 billion US dollars
 Biggest Missions: Darfur, DRC (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Haiti.
 USA participation: 127 total, mostly in Haiti
Other peacekeeping missions conducted by regional organizations: e.g. African Union force in Somalia

RAMSI
Operation Helpem Fren
The Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) is a partnership between the people and Government of Solomon Islands and Micronesian countries of the Pacific region. RAMSI is helping the Solomon Islands lay the foundations for long-term stability, security and prosperity — through improved law, justice and security; more effective, accountable and democratic government; and, stronger, broad-based economic growth
Australia as lead actor, main financial support to promote Solomon Islands and Pacific Area stability and security
Fifteen participating countries in RAMSI: military, police, civilian advisors (large majority from Australia)
Contingents from Australia, Cook Island, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu
In 2003, about 2,200 military and police deployed
In 2011, about 230 police and about 66-70 military personnel
About 130-150 Million Australian dollars annually
Three phases of activity
Stop violence and establish law and order (police and military patrols); 2003-2004
Stand up effective government (SIG) and local police (Royal Solomon Island Police – RSIP); 2004-2008; establish tension trials
Continue capacity building under a Partnership Agreement between RAMSI and SIG; 2009
Overall goal of RAMSI intervention: as in Partnership Agreement
“A peaceful Solomon Islands where key national institutions and functions of law and justice, public administration and economic management are effective, affordable and have the capacity to be sustained without RAMSI’s further assistance.” Specifically,
.A secure, safe, ordered and just Solomon Islands society where laws are administered fairly regardless of position or status, giving due recognition to traditional values and customs. (Law and Justice Aspiration);
.A Solomon Islands achieving broad-based economic growth and a more prosperous society (including for those living in rural areas) supported by a fiscally responsible government which promotes sound economic policies (Economic Governance and Growth Aspiration);
.A public administration that is strategic, professional, transparent and accountable in the delivery of services and priority programs of the government of the day (Machinery of Government Aspiration).”

PPF
Participating Police Force (PPF)
Overall goal: establish an effective, professional, sustainable and democratic RSIP
Main Activities
Executive policing, mentoring, management and professional police conduct training (in Australia and Solomon Islands), providing resources (equipment, financial, police stations and police housing), outreach (radio interviews, publications, village visits), skills and capacity building, village constables scheme, transitioning to RSIP command and control

Village Outreach
Radio interviews – “Talking Truth”
Interviews with RAMSI and PPF personnel broadcast to villages to explain the goals and activities of RAMSI and PPF
Mentoring (this is still the main activity of PPF personnel)
Joint patrols and administrative tasks between RSIP and PPF personnel; suggesting alternative and more effective and professional ways of doing the work; competence assessments.

The village constable idea
The majority of the population lives in isolated villages and on small islands. There are no permanent police personnel stationed in the villages, and the RSIP has to fly in, mainly by helicopters, if a serious crime occurs. Only a few villages on the big islands are connected by road.
The RSIP and PPF leadership as well as the SIG are thinking about resuscitating the rural village constable system, as a way to provide security services. Village constables would be trained but not be considered police, and would have to interact and coordinate with local political leaders, mainly chiefs and elders.

Transitioning the leadership of the RSIP
From 2003 until 2010, the commanding officer of the RSIP has been a police officer from the PPF. The first local commander was appointed in 2011, a sign of confidence in the (re)emergence of the local police as a professionally led service.

Outcomes

Successes
Initial rapid restoration of law and order in 2003, and the effective suppression of the 2005 riot in Honiara
Strong support for RAMSI and PPF by the public
Increased social order
Decline in crime rates
Enhanced capacity of RSIP personnel in technical and administrative skills
Some moves toward institutionalizing accountability for RSIP
Transition to local command of the RSIP (in 2011)
Continuing problem areas
The paradox of success (public does not want RAMSI to leave; negative perceptions of RSIP continue)
Slow process of transitioning at the mid level and street level ranks of the RSIP and returning control over local policing to the RSIP
Inappropriate language by PPF personnel
Limited success in gender mainstreaming and lessening the victimization of women (domestic violence)
Continuing instability of governments and oversight institutions
Limited penetration into local villages and linkages to traditional law, and justice institutions
Little movement toward local sustainability of reforms (financial, political, local); RAMSI cannot stay forever

Source
Information from RAMSI personnel and SIG officials and participant observations by me in Solomon Islands in August 2009, courtesy of the Australian Federal Police.

Solomon Islands
Former British colony; independent since 1979
Population about 670,000 (about 70,000 in the capital- Honiara)
96 Islands, stretching 930 miles (Guadalcanal, Malaita, others)
Dependent economy, high levels of poverty, few resources
90 Islands, stretching 930 miles (Guadalcanal, Malaita, others)
Population: about 700,000 (about 70,000 in the capital- Honiara)
Former British colony; independent since 1979
Fragile and turbulent politics and government
Isolated rural villages; few roads; barges and helicopters strong local traditions and social controls
Melanesian groups, 97% Christian, Pijin lingua franca
Tropical paradise from the air
Dependent economy, high levels of poverty, few resources
30% of people are employed in the public sector
90% of government servants are recruited through the local Civil Service Commission
Villages on the big islands are connected by road.

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www.ramsi.org
www.ode-assess.gov.au (Office of Development Effectiveness website): has three think pieces on how to conduct evaluations in the law and justice sector: three country assessment reports, including the Solomon Islands, and a final report on the effectiveness of law and assistance programs funded by the Australian Foreign Aid