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# Illicit Small Arms in the Pacific

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## Executive summary

With the exception of Papua New Guinea, the number of illicit small arms<sup>1</sup> likely to be in circulation in Western Pacific island countries is not particularly large or widespread. The region remains relatively ‘gun free’ as Philip Alpers’ recently proclaimed.<sup>2</sup> Supply is not bountiful, controls in the form of regional and national laws are sound, disarmament and amnesties have been somewhat successful, and demand is neither strong nor state or region-wide—Papua New Guinea being the exception.

In broader context, the Pacific Institute for Public Policy points out that:

*The Pacific has seen its share of coups and conflict, but deserves recognition for being a largely peaceful region ... It also has a wealth of traditional mechanisms to end conflict ... It is worth bearing this in mind as the region develops a more ‘bottom-up’ approach to contemporary security issues.*<sup>3</sup>

The project conducted a strategic assessment, rather than a detailed stocktake, of the illicit small arms in the Western Pacific island region with a focus on Fiji, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea (excluding Bougainville). As anticipated, most of the illicit small arms in the region come from within the countries studied and are largely recirculated within them. However, there are pockets where weapons transgress borders, but this is not particularly organised or substantial. There are also trends with new weapons entering the region, but these are mostly imported by or with the knowledge or approval of the national governments. That makes illicit small arms in the Western Pacific island countries less of a transnational problem and more one for national governments. There are also five additional region-wide trends linked clearly and potentially to small arms proliferation. They were outside the scope of this project, but are worth bringing to attention and they are discussed briefly in this report.

International organisations and national non-government organisations (NGOs) have been at the forefront of activism and information on small arms in the Pacific. Yet after more than a decade, the Nadi Framework and Goroka Gun Summit, both grand initiatives, remain largely dormant. In part, this reflects the reality that many illicit small arms—firearms essentially—are sourced from inside the country in which they are used, and recycled multiple times within it, and that the security sector has

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- 1 For definitions, please refer to the author’s earlier report to the APMC, ‘Illicit Small Arms in the Pacific: Cause for Concern?’ Australian Civil-Military Centre, <https://www.acmc.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Stephanie-Koorey-Illicit-Small-Arms-in-the-Pacific-Cause-for-Concern-2.pdf>. Essentially the terms ‘small arms’ and ‘weapons’ are used generically, and ‘firearms’ used where appropriate to refer to specific small arms. It does not include bladed weapons.
  - 2 Philip Alpers, ‘The Pacific Region Lives Up to its Name with Disarming Success’, *The Conversation*, 27 February 2015.
  - 3 Pacific Institute of Public Policy, ‘Keeping the Peace: Rethinking our Approach to Security Issues as New Threats and Opportunities Emerge’, Discussion Starter, 26 November 2014, p. 1.

been, or remains, both a source of supply and driver of demand. This is particularly so for the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary.

The problems with illicit small arms in the Western Pacific are indicative of societal and governance problems and should not be seen as an isolated phenomenon. As such, this report cautions against any isolated firearms ‘fetish’<sup>4</sup> responses, or for the issues raised to be seen solely as ‘a gun problem’. As Wondemaghen noted, fears generated by media stories of armed violence ‘generates a temptation to reach for simple, often punitive solutions to multi-faceted complex problems’.<sup>5</sup> As such, this report makes suggestions regarding illicit small arms control and broader, societal factors that may mitigate demand in the three focus countries.

The research indicates tangible factors are a strong driver of demand and that the ‘motives and means’<sup>6</sup> hypothesis holds true. Small arms, mostly firearms, are sourced for personal or property protection, to participate in tribal fighting, to perpetrate crime, to coerce and influence political activities, but not to create state-wide conflict or coup against an extant government. In parts of Papua New Guinea there appears to be a constant overt demand for firearms, for both the tangible reasons listed above, as well as the more intangible predilection towards wanting firearms for the status they bestow on the user. However, this avenue of research could not be confirmed in this project.

Conclusions that can be drawn from the research are that the hallmarks of the region are overt demand and supply in Papua New Guinea, reduced and low demand in Solomon Islands and Fiji, and internal supply, including the skills to build home-made firearms.

Finally, the relationship between the civilian legal market of sporting and recreational shooters and the illicit market is emotionally potent. Globally and regionally, civilian stocks are leaked onto the illicit market. However, the position of this paper is that the Pacific sporting shooters are an informed and engaged stakeholder in small arms control, and that in many cases ‘providing a path to legal firearms possession’, including its safe storage and use, can be one element of effective small arms control.<sup>7</sup>

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4 As explored in the Literature Review to the Australian Civil-Military Centre, January 2015. Unpublished.

5 Meron Wondemaghen, ‘Media Construction of a School Shooting as a Social Problem’, *Journalism*, Vol. 15, No. 6, 2014, p. 708.

6 As explored in the Literature Review to the Australian Civil-Military Centre, January 2015. Unpublished.

7 Personal communication, New Zealand, 15 August 2014.

## Methodology

This research project was a case study investigation of the supply and demand of illicit small arms in Fiji, Solomon Islands, and Papua New Guinea excluding Bougainville. As with many works on illicit small arms, quantitative research and verifiable facts are rare. The subject matter is inherently sensitive, and as David Capie noted, '[a]rms traffickers do not usually grant interviews or otherwise seek attention'.<sup>8</sup>

An additional problem, particularly in Papua New Guinea, is the marked absence of verifiable facts and statistics, including for loose or illicit small arms. The president of the Shooting Association of Papua New Guinea stated in 2005 that '[i]t is an unfortunate fact that NO credible statistics on the number of illegal firearms in the country exist'.<sup>9</sup> A decade later, this is still the case. More than one interviewee in Papua New Guinea commented on the country-wide dearth of data. The data that is available, including its collection, verification and aggregation, was noted by the World Bank's 2014 *Trends in Crime and Violence in Papua New Guinea* report as highly problematic.<sup>10</sup>

As such, this research sought to capture trends, and verify assertions where possible, in order to provide a contemporary strategic assessment of illicit small arms movements in the Western Pacific countries outlined above. It was a qualitative, rather than quantitative, research project; however, quantitative research in this area would be welcome to provide much needed data.

The project gained Human Ethics approval from the University of New South Wales Canberra to which both the author and the project's adviser, Honorary Associate Professor Stefan Markowski, are affiliated. All participants were offered the approved 'Participant Information and Consent Form'. Interviews were coded and at the request of all participants, non-attribution adhered to. Serving Australian Defence Force personnel were not formally interviewed as this would have required a separate ethics approval process that is notoriously slow.

In terms of method, it followed the snowball sampling technique using semi-structured interviews. The author is extremely grateful to all those who gave their time, knowledge and insights to this project. These people were in Australia, New Zealand, in each of the focus countries of Fiji, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea (excluding Bougainville), and the late addition of Samoa. Over 70 people were interviewed formally and informally.

The project also referred to recent literature, both black and grey, and to media and other primary sources, all of which were used to verify or bolster assertions. The author is grateful to have been granted access to the document library database hosted by the Norwegian Institute for Small Arms Transfers.

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8 David Capie, *Under the Gun: The Small Arms Challenge in the Pacific*, Victoria University, Wellington, 2003, p. 19.

9 Mel Donald, 'PNG Gun Summit Presentation', July 2005, p. 4. Emphasis in the original.

10 Sadaf Lakhani and Alys M Willman, *Trends in Crime and Violence in Papua New Guinea*, Paper No. 1, The World Bank, May 2014, pp. 20–21.

## Regional assessment

As put forward in this author's preliminary paper for the APMC,<sup>11</sup> this project was based around five themes:

1. the dynamics of illicit small arms movements—where they are going to and where they are coming from
2. weapons numbers—noting that even small numbers of small arms can be destabilising and that numbers are estimates, not definitive
3. weapons types—to ascertain likely sources, intent of use and firepower
4. the main drivers of demand—increased criminality, increased civil unrest, increased supply, decreased prices, retention for pre-existing reasons, lack of trust, expectation of increased violence, etc
5. what might be the most effective ways of returning loose and illicit weapons to state control.

First, the project found that illicit small arms are not a major trafficked commodity across the Western Pacific to the countries that this study focused on. While there is no evidence of significant numbers of firearms in Solomon Islands or Fiji, illicit small arms are a current and constant problem in Papua New Guinea. One major area of concern should be the Torres Strait between Australia and Papua New Guinea because demand is strong in Papua New Guinea, and Australia has at least 260,000 illicit firearms in circulation,<sup>12</sup> which might find their way to Papua New Guinea across this border.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the genuine concerns of Australian and Papua New Guinean governments over firearms reaching Papua New Guinea from Australian territory, and from across the border with Indonesia, the illicit small arms movements to and within Papua New Guinea actually involve an extraordinary montage of actors, activities and linkages that rivals the infamous American 'spaghetti' diagram slide that sought to explain the insurgency in Afghanistan in 2010. As previous research indicated, most illicit weapons inside Papua New Guinea come into the country legally.

The research did not find that sea vessels were a major means of transshipping firearms across the region. Only small numbers of firearms have been seized from vessels used by recreational seafarers

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11 Stephanie Koorey, 'Illicit Small Arms in the Pacific: Cause for Concern?' Australian Civil-Military Centre, July 2014, <https://www.acmc.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Stephanie-Koorey-Illicit-Small-Arms-in-the-Pacific-Cause-for-Concern-2.pdf>

12 Australian Crime Commission, 'Illicit Firearms', <https://www.crimecommission.gov.au/publications/intelligence-products/crime-profile-fact-sheets/illicit-firearms>, accessed 17 May 2015.

13 An interdiction of firearms into PNG from Australia was carried out in October 2014, although the news reports did not indicate where the firearms were from. See 'Arrests Over Australia PNG Drugs Firearms Racket', *PNG Attitude*, 22 October 2015, [http://asopa.typepad.com/asopa\\_people/2014/10/arrests-over-australia-png-drugs-firearms-racket.html](http://asopa.typepad.com/asopa_people/2014/10/arrests-over-australia-png-drugs-firearms-racket.html)

in port in Fiji and Solomon Islands, who claim they are used purely for protection at sea. However, logging ships in Papua New Guinea, and potentially Solomon Islands, are alleged to be a supply of firearms.

If any firearms are being shipped into Solomon Islands, it is likely to be across the traditional border with Bougainville. However, indications are that demand is not strong in Solomon Islands at present. It is feasible that demand oscillates, and weapons go back and forth across this border rather than stream in one direction. Demand in the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea is overt, strong and unwavering, and it would seem quite feasible that small arms from Bougainville more likely traverse Papua New Guinea from east to west rather than into Solomon Islands in large numbers.

If civilians are willing to transport and sell firearms or other small arms, an inherently risky activity, they would be expecting a good return on their efforts and would set a high price for them. Outside crime and corruption circles, high prices for small arms are unaffordable for most people.

Second, as anticipated, and due to data limitations, there is no clear picture of the number of illicit firearms in these countries. However, the maxim that even small numbers can be destabilising, particularly in small Pacific island countries, remains valid.

Third, ascertaining the illicit weapons types, particularly in Papua New Guinea, requires considerable data. In a country where accurate and disaggregated data is almost unknown, this remains a considerable challenge. Many of the weapons allegedly being brought into Papua New Guinea, mostly legally, have firepower that is seemingly excessive for a country not at war. The alleged numbers and types of home-made weapons also indicate a significant demand for firearms. A complicating factor in Papua New Guinea is the opacity surrounding legal and illegal firearms.

Illicit weapons types in Solomon Islands and Fiji are not firearms to any great extent. In both countries, there are occasional reports of firearms being fired, or seized by authorities, but in Solomon Islands, deadly improvised projectiles are more apparent in crime and disturbance. Traditional bush knives also feature commonly in Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, indicating cheap or accessible firearms are not in abundance.

Fourth, the drivers of demand remain largely tangible—for personal or property protection, to participate in tribal fighting, to perpetrate crime, to coerce and influence political activities. There does not appear to be an appetite for a return to civil disorder in Solomon Islands or to start it in Fiji. In parts of Papua New Guinea there appears to be a constant demand for firearms, for both the tangible reasons listed above, as well as the more intangible tribal predilection towards wanting firearms for the status they bestow on the user. This area of study was not pursued given that this project was not able to make a return visit to rural Papua New Guinea and the Southern Highlands.

What is fair to say is that firearm ownership and use is socially entrenched in parts of Papua New Guinea. Further research would reveal the extent to which firearms have, or have not, become



culturally valued or ‘iconic’<sup>14</sup> in the region. Given the extensive use of bush knives, and, in Solomon Islands at least, other improvised tools in crime and violence, the utility of a weapon seems to override any symbolism attached to it.

The literature indicated that motivation and means are strong drivers of demand, and while this project confirms that this is ostensibly true, particularly in Papua New Guinea, there is now also a strong element of self and corporate interest in acquiring and retaining firearms. The project also confirmed a politicised dimension of illicit small arms proliferation in Papua New Guinea.

Fifth, and with the exception of Papua New Guinea, small arms control over the past decade has been largely successful in the Western Pacific island countries of this study. There have been demonstrable effective examples of returning loose small arms to state control. In Solomon Islands, supply was significantly reduced, disarmament was successful, and drivers of demand were mostly tangible and therefore arguably easier to address than intangible—emotional and psychological—demand factors. In Fiji, the repeated use of legal firearms being used illegally against sitting governments gave stronger political, albeit self-serving, impetus for greater state control. Papua New Guinea and Samoa both demonstrate that political and legal solutions can work up to a point, but in markedly different ways they show how lasting control has a social context, including how it is normalised or penalised. Specific recommendations for Australia to consider regarding small arms control in each country are listed at the end of each country case study, and regional recommendations are listed at the end of the country studies.

Australia can continue to promote best practices in small arms control, and offer specific assistance, but mature bilateral relationships that form the backdrop to any such developments or discussions are vital. For example, Australia’s Pacific Patrol Boat program allows for significant interaction and relationship building with recipient countries. Such relationships are invaluable when crises occur—whether small arms related or not. Finally, in the course of this project, five additional region-wide trends were identified that influence the proliferation of licit and illicit small arms in the region. While they fall outside the scope of the original project, they are important, and are considered briefly below.

## **Additional Trends**

### **1. The expansion in Private Security Companies (PSCs) and Resource Extraction Companies**

The expansion in private security companies (PSCs) in the region is cause for some alarm. While the industry has a legitimate role to play in the protection of people and property, as Maclellan noted, not only is the lack of accountability and regulation of these security actors in the Pacific disturbing,

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14 As discussed in the Literature Review to the Australian Civil-Military Centre, January 2015. Unpublished. Also briefly outlined in Stephanie Koorey, ‘Illicit Small Arms in the Pacific: Cause for Concern?’ Australian Civil-Military Centre, July 2014, <https://www.acmc.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Stephanie-Koorey-Illicit-Small-Arms-in-the-Pacific-Cause-for-Concern-2.pdf>

funding them can ‘come at the expense of improving the conditions and equipment of existing police and military forces, which weakens their capacity and justifies renewed corporate incursions into the security sector’.<sup>15</sup>

In many countries, and certainly in the 1997 ‘Sandline Affair’ in Papua New Guinea,<sup>16</sup> there is a military component—private military and security companies (PMSCs). However, in contemporary Papua New Guinea the industry is purely security—the provision of security guards and facilities to protect people and property, both public and private. This also appears to be the case in Solomon Islands and Fiji, although on a much smaller scale. In Solomon Islands and Fiji they are not armed, at least not legally. Fijian nationals, however, particularly former Republic of Fiji Military Forces personnel, have a reputation for being highly sought after by this industry, including in Papua New Guinea.<sup>17</sup> While this project did not focus on PSCs, their rapid expansion particularly in Papua New Guinea, where they are able to import, carry and use small arms, including high-powered weapons in large numbers, is deeply concerning.<sup>18</sup>

There are two small arms dimensions to PSCs in the Western Pacific. The first is that they generate their own supply and demand chain. The second is that governance is not clear, including over the weapons imported and used by private security firms in the region or in-country. This means there could be a proliferation risk, and that the weapons they bring into the region could be stolen or lost, resulting in more firearms and a quantifiable increase in the firepower in the region’s illicit small arms market.

While the Government of Papua New Guinea set up the Security Industries Authority to regulate the private security industry, the authority itself acknowledges the extraordinary broad range of powers that the PSCs in Papua New Guinea have in that they ‘play an important secondary role as a quasi law enforcing agency beside the the [sic] Police force. In that they basically perform asset Protection

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15 Nic Maclellan, ‘Fiji, the War in Iraq, and the Privatisation of Pacific Island Security’, *APSNNet Policy Forum*, 6 April 2006, <http://nautilus.org/apsnet/0611a-maclellan-html/>. As with many businesses in PNG, private security companies also provide medical and other assistance to their employees, and Capie notes that the largest PSC in the country, G4S set up a domestic violence hotline, ‘reflecting the limits of the state and an indictment of the effectiveness of the police force’ (emphasis added). David Capie, ‘Small Arms Violence and Gender in Papua New Guinea: Towards a Research Agenda’, *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, Vol. 52, No. 1, April 2011, pp. 51–52.

16 The Sandline Affair occurred in 1997 when the PNG government contracted a South African company, Executive Outcomes, subcontracted by a UK provider of military and security personnel and equipment, Sandline International, to quell the rebellion in Bougainville. The PNG Defence Force intervened by removing the contractors, prompting a political crisis and collapse of the government.

17 Personal communication, Papua New Guinea, 22 January 2015. McLellan also noted this, however, in relation to Fijians contracted to companies working in the Middle East. ‘Fiji, the War in Iraq, and the Privatisation of Pacific Island Security’, *APSNNet Policy Forum*, 6 April 2006, <http://nautilus.org/apsnet/0611a-maclellan-html/>

18 Personal communications, Papua New Guinea, 20 January 2015. There are over 400 registered private security companies in PNG; however, not all of them are necessarily registered. See ‘Security Companies Information’, Security Industries Authority website, <http://www.sia.gov.pg/seccomps.html>, accessed 21 April 2015.

duties, investigation and also do citizen's arrest of suspects'.<sup>19</sup> The Papua New Guinea National Security Policy states that PSCs' involvement in 'operations in areas designed for PNG's state security agencies is a concern', with a 'serious concern' being their 'uncontrolled importation and use of firearms'.<sup>20</sup>

While the extractive industry fuels the private security industry, it can also be a direct catalyst for conflict. The Institute for Pacific Policy states:

*Resource extraction projects have a sorry history of sparking everything from village arguments... to a full blown war such as occurred in Bougainville...The modern 'gold rush' in Papua New Guinea from oil and gas has already claimed dozens of lives in tribal disputes.*<sup>21</sup>

In a country so uniquely layered with the supply and demand of small arms already, new additions of an armed private sector, and for a resource opportunity again to become a catalyst for conflict, the government of Papua New Guinea, at least, may have only limited opportunity to manage the small arms dimensions of these developments.

## 2. Private Maritime Security Companies

Private maritime security companies are a newer phenomenon developed to protect commercial shipping in international waters, especially in areas where land-based armouries and equipment storage is illegal, unwelcome or insecure. Most reports document their operations particularly in the piracy-prone western Indian Ocean between the coast of Africa, Gulf of Aden and Sri Lanka.

The vessels owned and operated by these security companies and based in international waters can be straightforward storage armouries, armouries with weapons for rent, or more comprehensive providers of weapons, ammunition and operators.<sup>22</sup> Of concern is that these 'floating armouries' are also poorly regulated, if at all. This is particularly so if the flag state has limited (or no) controls over the storage and transfer of military equipment, and the company's home state has no extraterritorial brokering controls on the weapons. Even if the home state does have extraterritorial controls, it may have no knowledge that companies registered under its jurisdiction are operating floating armouries.<sup>23</sup>

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19 'Security Companies Information', Security Industries Authority website, <http://www.sia.gov.pg/seccomps.html>, accessed 21 April 2015. On this webpage, the authority also requests assistance with establishing a training academy for private security personnel.

20 Government of Papua New Guinea, National Security Policy, 2013, p. 37.

21 Pacific Institute of Public Policy, 'Keeping the Peace: Rethinking our Approach to Security Issues as New Threats and Opportunities Emerge', Discussion Starter, 26 November 2014, p. 5.

22 Remote Control, 'Floating Armouries: Implications and Risks', Omega Research Foundation, December 2014, p. 8.

23 Remote Control, 'Floating Armouries: Implications and Risks', Omega Research Foundation, December 2014, pp. 1-2.

No international laws or international registry regulate or govern these companies; instead the companies themselves and the operator of the vessel set their own standards.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, any vessel can be turned into a ‘floating armoury’,<sup>25</sup> leading to questionable armoury management and security. In 2011 the Sri Lankan government ‘lost track’ of hundreds of small arms it had rented to a private maritime security company, with the weapons finally seized in Poland.<sup>26</sup>

The Pacific is the largest ocean in the world, and is said to be on the cusp of it coming of age in terms of global trade,<sup>27</sup> making the rise of maritime security companies to protect sea freight and vessels worth monitoring. While there is little in the public domain on the PMSCs, the UK report notes the flag state for one of its listed PMSC vessels, the MV *Southern Star*, was possibly Vanuatu.<sup>28</sup>

The potential for PMSCs to operate in or be flagged to countries in the Pacific region, and thus contribute to a new small arms proliferation and control dynamic, is a development requiring attention.

### 3. Illicit Brokering

Illicit brokering has long been a concern of the international arms control communities. Regulation of brokering appears in the Arms Trade Treaty, Firearms Protocol and United Nations Programme of Action, although not in the Nadi Framework. Even if it is not host to large numbers of illicit weapons, the risk to the Pacific is that the illicit brokering of weapons through Pacific countries which do not have legislation prohibiting it, is a serious vulnerability.

A report by Oxfam New Zealand in 2010 detailed the brokerage of a weapons shipment from North Korea to Iran—both countries then under UN arms embargoes—by a shell company in New Zealand.<sup>29</sup> The network had linkages from Kazakhstan, United Arab Emirates, Spain, Ukraine, Hong Kong and the shipment was interdicted in Thailand.<sup>30</sup> This does not appear to have been a one-off incident, with allegations that an arms deal possibly involving the same or similar brokers, involving Russian Dragunov sniper rifle parts and ammunition, was discovered in a New Zealand port around

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24 Remote Control, ‘Floating Armouries: Implications and Risks’, Omega Research Foundation, December 2014, p. 1; ‘Any Port in a Storm for Floating Armouries?’ *maritimesecuritynews*, 3 March 2014, <https://maritimesecuritynews.wordpress.com/2014/03/03/any-port-in-a-storm-for-floating-armouries/>, accessed 11 May 2015.

25 Remote Control, ‘Floating Armouries: Implications and Risks’, Omega Research Foundation, December 2014, p. 1.

26 Remote Control, ‘Floating Armouries: Implications and Risks’, Omega Research Foundation, December 2014, p. 15.

27 See for example Henry Tricks, ‘The Pacific Age’, *The Economist*, 14 November 2014.

28 Remote Control, ‘Floating Armouries: Implications and Risks’, Omega Research Foundation, December 2014, p. 13.

29 Jamilla Homayun, ‘Brokers Without Borders: How Illicit Arms Brokers Can Slip Through Gaps in the Pacific and International Arms Control System’, Oxfam Case Study, 18 October 2010.

30 Jamilla Homayun, ‘Brokers Without Borders: How Illicit Arms Brokers Can Slip Through Gaps in the Pacific and International Arms Control System’, Oxfam Case Study, 18 October 2010, Map, p. 11.

the same period.<sup>31</sup> The arrangement also had links to Kazakhstan, and the weapons were destined for the Indian armed forces. This deal also had the weapons transgressing through Pacific territory.

As they seek to develop their economies by attracting investment and expanding trade links with the rest of the world, developing Pacific countries are vulnerable to illicit arms brokers. These countries' desire for trade and investment makes them attractive havens for shell companies and as trans-shipment ports. In the absence of legislation against brokering, which could be triggered by ratifying the legally-binding Arms Trade Treaty, other countries in the Pacific may be exposed to such organised extra-regional illicit arms trafficking.

#### 4. Casinos and Criminal Deportees<sup>32</sup>

Casino developments with extra-regional funding in Fiji and Papua New Guinea, and possibly Samoa, can be used to facilitate transnational crime unless regulated to ensure their activities are lawful. Similarly, criminal deportees returning to the Pacific region from Australia, New Zealand and the United States pose a risk of generating or facilitating illicit activity. In keeping with current trends, the most likely illegal behaviours would involve illicit drugs, money and identity laundering, and possibly human trafficking. However, firearms could also be involved if demand was generated. In the Pacific, such demand appears to be more for protection of persons and property rather than for on-selling. While the literature from elsewhere has noted the role of diaspora populations in funding insurgencies in their home countries, such as the Tamil diaspora of Sri Lanka, criminal deportees as displeased returnees does not appear to be covered by the literature. Nonetheless, the growth in the potential misuse of and protection of casino revenue, as well as returning criminals are developments worth monitoring as potential new drivers of supply and demand.

#### 5. Additive Printing

Additive printing of firearms was not identified as a problem in the three country studies of this project; however, it is emerging as an international small arms proliferation risk. A recent *Small Arms Survey* report reviewed the proliferation likelihoods and application of current laws and practices. It pointed out that:

*3D manufacturing will not render current international and national controls on firearms obsolete. It may, however, make applying these controls more difficult, in effect posing new law-enforcement challenges.*<sup>33</sup>

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31 Personal communication, New Zealand, 7 August 2014.

32 Document in the possession of the author. Personal communication, Samoa, 12 December 2014.

33 Nic Jenzen-Jones, 'Small Arms and Additive Manufacturing: An Assessment of 3D-printed Firearms, Components, and Accessories' in Benjamin King and Glenn McDonald (eds), *Behind the Curve New Technologies, New Control Challenges*, Small Arms Survey Occasional Paper 32, 2015, p. 62.

This would be the larger risk in the developing countries of the Western Pacific, and particularly Papua New Guinea, if these replica firearms were to enter the region. This development reaffirms the need for accurate and centralised recordkeeping of all seized firearms.

However, it also brings the discussion back to demand. If illicit demand is able to be mitigated, then the motivation for supply may also be eased.

Given this project's findings and trends, and these five additional concerns, considerations for effective small arms control are listed in the policy recommendations at the end of this report, following the country studies.

# Country assessments

## Solomon Islands

The author conducted field research in Solomon Islands over 7–14 October 2014. Eighteen interviews and informal discussions were conducted with Australian officials, as well as representatives from NGOs, the private sector, the Church and academia. Australian nationals, internationals and Solomon Islanders were all represented amongst the interviewees. The Royal Solomon Islands Police Force Commissioner was also interviewed. The author conducted these and other interviews in and around Honiara.

The success of the policing component of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) in removing and deterring firearms ownership and use over the preceding 11 years, the sensitive manner in which the rearmament of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) is being carried out, the armoury security enacted, and the absence of proof of organised or extensive illicit small arms usage indicated a country that was not experiencing or expecting high amounts of illicit firearms caching, manufacturing or use.

Solomon Islands does not currently appear to have a high demand for illicit firearms. While there were many anecdotes and much hearsay about firearms being stockpiled<sup>34</sup> and fired, the author was repeatedly referred to a lack of evidence on this.<sup>35</sup> While 200 police weapons remain unaccounted for,<sup>36</sup> repeated interviewees shared doubts that any tensions-era<sup>37</sup> weaponry that was still loose would be useable, and that the RAMSI-era crackdown on illicit firearms was considered one of its successes.<sup>38</sup> Very rare firearms use has been noted over recent years, with allegedly 13 confirmed reports of illicit firearms being discharged from 2004–2014,<sup>39</sup> and an armed automatic teller machine robbery in Honiara in mid-2014, although that firearm and its user have not yet been located.<sup>40</sup>

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34 Not only on land, but in sealed in pipes hidden under water. Personal communications, Solomon Islands, 8 and 10 October 2014.

35 Personal communications, Solomon Islands, 8 October 2014.

36 Personal communication, Solomon Islands, 8 October 2014.

37 ‘The tensions’ is the phrase Solomon Islanders use to describe the civil conflict of 1998–2003.

38 Personal communications, Solomon Islands, 8 and 12 October 2014. An excellent discussion of RAMSI’s perceived successes and failings is in Jon Fraenkel et al, *The RAMSI Decade: A Review of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands, 2003–2013*, 14 July 2014, pp. 87–90. Fraenkel et al surmise that from a ‘minimalist perspective’, success included that most firearms were removed or rendered unusable, p. 89.

39 Personal communications, Solomon Islands, 8 October 2014; Australia, 20 July 2015. There was also a shooting incident in May 2015 where three firearms were confiscated.

40 Assumpta Buchanan, ‘Alleged Robbers Deny Charges’, *Solomon Star*, 26 March 2015.

Perhaps of greater concern was the shooting at the boat of political candidates on Mbike Island on 10 December 2014. While the alleged intention was to incapacitate their boat so the 17 candidates could not return to vote in the prime ministerial election the next day, the alleged perpetrator, an employee of a company owned by a north Malaitan politician, has been charged with firearms offences and attempted murder, although the police investigation is continuing.<sup>41</sup> It is not yet public what firearm was used, or where it and the related ammunition came from.

Interviewees indicated some concern that the most likely demand for small arms in Solomon Islands would be from political actors, a concern validated by the Mbike Island shooting. Some succour, however, could be taken from the public outcry and pressure from Pacific neighbours, when in 2007 the previous prime minister attempted to create an armed palace guard to be trained in Taiwan—ultimately abandoning the idea.<sup>42</sup> With a number of former militants now parliamentarians, the risk of one or more politicians, or those aspiring to become politicians, creating their own secret militia similar to that created by East Timor’s former Interior Minister Rogerio Lobato in 2006<sup>43</sup> remains a concern.

What has remained a constant over many years is the assertion that weapons traverse the maritime border between Solomon Islands and Bougainville with relative ease. However, it is feasible that demand oscillates, and that firearms actually go back and forth across this border rather than stream in one direction. Demand in the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea is stronger than in Solomon Islands at this point in time, and it would seem more feasible that small arms from Bougainville transit Papua New Guinea from east to west where the demand is stronger. The recent interdiction in northern Solomon Islands of armed Papua New Guinea police following Bougainville criminals into Solomon Islands territory, and RAMSI Participating Police Force officers disarming them of their weapons, while possibly one rare case, does indicate that the border in this area is at least partially patrolled and national laws enforced.<sup>44</sup> Yachts transiting the Pacific have had firearms seized when they dock in Solomon Islands; however, these are said to be for protection at sea.<sup>45</sup>

The considerable pilfering of explosives from the expansive and easily accessible WWII unexploded ordnance (UXO) at Hells Point is evident, and children routinely collect remnants to sell to tourists as souvenirs. It is reassuring that there is no evidence of UXOs being reused to make small arms ammunition, although they are used to make explosives for reef bombing. These home-made

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41 See for example, Phillip Lilomo, ‘More Resources Put into Mbike Island Shooting Probe’, *Island Sun*, 9 March 2015.

42 See for example, ‘Guns in the Solomon Islands’, *GunPolicy*, <http://www.gunpolicy.org/firearms/region/cp/solomon-islands>

43 See Stephanie Koorey, ‘“Orphans” and Icons: Small Arms Control and Armed Groups in Southeast Asia’, e-thesis, <https://digitalcollections.anu.edu.au/bitstream/1885/7183/2/KooreyO2whole.pdf>, p. 175.

44 ‘Bougainville Police Disarmed in Pursuit Across Solomon Islands Border’, *ABC Radio Australia*, 20 April 2015. Other reporting claimed armed Bougainvillian criminals were entering Solomon Islands-based logging camps to steal chainsaws and cash. See ‘Calls for Border Policing between Bougainville and Solomon Islands’, Pacific Islands News Association, 20 April 2015.

45 Personal communication, Solomon Islands, 8 October 2014.



grenades—composed of the harvested explosive, packed into a 300ml plastic water bottle, and a matchstick head taped onto the lid,<sup>46</sup> are lit by igniting the matchstick head and then thrown into the sea, exploding underwater. This destroys the fish swim bladders, thus allowing for easy fishing of dead fish floating on the surface, and causes reef and wildlife destruction. Three such bombs were found being sold in the local market in 2014 allegedly for a princely sum of SID500 (approximately AUD82.00).<sup>47</sup> These bombs have not been seen to be used in any land-based civil disturbance.

The weapons that do exist and sighted in crime and disputes are more commonly bush knives, and craft produced projectiles, the latter including sharpened bolts and screwdrivers destructive enough to pierce metal.<sup>48</sup> The author approached the National Referral Hospital in Honiara for disaggregated casualty figures on injuries, but did not receive a response. A medical source working in Solomon Islands confirmed the author's suspicions that disaggregation of such data injury was unlikely to exist.<sup>49</sup>

The author also noted newer-looking ammunition at Hells Point.<sup>50</sup> While originally advised it could be Australian Defence Force early RAMSI-era ammunition, the ammunition was confirmed as being of WWII vintage, and while looking newer, or at least cleaner, it was still thought to be unusable.<sup>51</sup>

While the employment of private security companies in Solomon Islands was not as apparent as in Papua New Guinea, and is not well documented, unarmed private security guards do exist, and personnel from three separate companies were sighted patrolling in Chinatown in Honiara in 2013.<sup>52</sup> The Chinese community and their businesses have been the target of attacks in the past.

Despite the imminent partial rearming of the RSIPF with lethal rounds, as an institution it is much less of a proliferation risk than it was at the start of the tensions. The combined efforts of its new commissioner, increased armoury security, and the expansion and rearmament of three units of the RSIPF is being handled sensitively and consultatively. The three units to be armed are Close Personal Protection for dignitaries, police operating at international airports, and a Police Response Team to respond to civil disturbance. At the time of writing, the choice of firearms for these units had not been announced.<sup>53</sup> The recent recruiting that deliberately targets potential police cadets from across the country<sup>54</sup> reflects a determination to lose the traditional Malaitan dominance of the RSIPF, which was a key vulnerability in the police during the tensions.

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46 Photographs in the possession of the author.

47 Personal communication, Solomon Islands, 14 October 2014. A bush knife costs around AUD10.00.

48 Personal communications, Solomon Islands, 8 and 10 October 2014.

49 Personal communication, Solomon Islands, 13 October 2014.

50 Photographs in the possession of the author.

51 Personal communication, email, 2 May 2015.

52 Anna Powles, 'The Private Sector, the Solomon Islands and the Peace-Economic Dividend', Humanitarian Futures/ Kings College, December 2013, p. 15, footnote 100.

53 Personal communication, Solomon Islands, 9 October 2014.

54 '40 New Recruits in for Training Next Monday', Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation, 18 April 2015.

Should demand reignite, small arms could be shipped in and across Solomon Islands easily, most likely sourced from Bougainville, by those motivated, unscrupulous and wealthy or well-connected enough to do so. There were said to be airstrips across Solomon Islands where light aircraft could alight and land, and firearms construction materials could also be easily shipped into harbours undetected.<sup>55</sup> Firearms could be craft produced as they were during the tensions. Through the significant machine tool use and construction machinery over the past decade Solomon Islanders could have developed more sophisticated knowledge and skills as has occurred in Papua New Guinea. However, there was a sense that there was not the technology or skills for ammunition production—as confirmed by the rudimentary grenades used in reefbombing.<sup>56</sup> If greater sophistication in the manufacture of firearms, ammunition or grenades did appear, it was said to most likely be from disgruntled former explosive ordnance police.<sup>57</sup>

Perhaps an indicator of a lack of demand is that the WWII memorial brass plaques have been intact over the past decade—unverifiable allegations were that the brass was removed and melted to make bullet casings during the tensions.<sup>58</sup> More tangibly, increased predation by crocodiles indicates there is not a widespread availability of firearms.<sup>59</sup> The strongest catalysts for demand in Solomon Islands appear to be RAMSI's departure by 2017;<sup>60</sup> the limited rearmament of the RSIPF being exploited or unpopular; the creation of politically-aligned militias; and the frequently heard refrain that the causes of the tensions were never adequately dealt with, including Malaitan transmigration to Guadalcanal.

The relationship with Solomon Islands continues to be in one direction, from Australia as benefactor and Solomon Islands as recipient. Given the relatively benign operating environment in Solomon Islands, it remains tragic that Australian container ships from Honiara return to Australia empty. Trade and seasonal and permanent labour mobility would greatly assist in developing the Solomon Islands economy, and the latter would ease the frictions caused by internal migration.

Prior to RAMSI's departure in 2017, a friendship visit from the Australian Defence Force might be considered. In April 2015 Taiwan conducted its 13<sup>th</sup> navy visit to Solomon Islands since 1984.<sup>61</sup>

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55 Personal communications, Solomon Islands, 10 October 2014.

56 Personal communication, Solomon Islands, 14 October 2014.

57 Personal communication, Solomon Islands, 14 October 2014. Reflective of the relatively short time span of the tensions, the illicit small arms market remains relatively underdeveloped. More sophisticated and production line weapons and ammunition appears to be more a hallmark of longstanding and constant demand. In the decades-long conflict in Aceh, for example, the Free Aceh Movement used reload machines. See Stephanie Koorey, "Orphans" and Icons, p. 179.

58 Photographs in the possession of the author.

59 Personal communication, Solomon Islands, 12 October 2014.

60 The public sentiment that there would be a return to some form of conflict if RAMSI were to leave is confirmed in Jon Fraenkel et al, *The RAMSI Decade: A Review of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands, 2003–2013*, 14 July 2014, summary of population surveys over the late 2000s, p. 91.

61 'The ROC (Taiwan) Navy Squadron to Make Goodwill Visit to Solomon Islands', Embassy of the Republic of China (Taiwan) in Solomon Islands, 16 April 2015.

## Policy recommendations

- > Australia should offer access to the Australian Crime Commission online firearms trace portal, <https://www.crimecommission.gov.au/user> for Solomon Islands security sectors (police, customs and the PPF) and to promote this resource to Australian Defence, police and customs personnel working in Solomon Islands .
  - » If this is unworkable, seized illicit small arms must be accurately and consistently recorded, including an accompanying photograph.
  - » Australia to offer to assist with templates and procedures for data gathering of firearms incidents, including the nature of the incident, location, weapon type used, ammunition used and disaggregate firearms-related injury from other trauma injuries recorded by medical facilities.
- > Prior to the partial rearmament of the RSIPF, the PPF to offer to conduct an audit of less lethal RSIPF stocks such as bean bag rounds and pepper spray, to identify any weaknesses in stockpile management, and to encourage accountability.
- > The PPF to consider ways in which crocodile infestation can be reported and responded to quicker than at present.
- > Prior to the departure of RAMSI, for RAMSI to conduct a joint exercise between the ADF and RSIPF with a frigate visit with a strong Indigenous component such as patrolmen from North-West Mobile Force, and invite Indigenous officers throughout the ADF. The exercise could include survival, medical and intelligence training and a demonstration of UXO clearance at Hells Point. This would enhance professional relationships and develop Indigenous links, which are important if the ADF were required to return to Solomon Islands.
- > The Australian Government to consider the feasibility of funding a regional explosive ordnance disposal school to conduct UXO risk education for civilians and benchmark professional standards. This may minimise the pilfering of UXO and the potential for explosive devices, or knowledge of how to build them them, to be used in civil disturbance.
- > To ease tensions created by internal migration, a strong contributor in the past to demand for firearms, the Australian Government to more strongly encourage participation in labour mobility to Australia.

## Fiji

The author conducted field research in Fiji over 8–11 December 2014. Thirteen interviews and informal discussions were conducted with Australian officials, as well as representatives from NGOs, international organisations, the private sector and academia. Australian nationals, internationals and Fiji Islanders were all represented. The author conducted these and other interviews in Suva over 8–10 December.

Two months before the field research, Fiji had conducted the first democratic elections since the 2006 military coup. Conducting field research two months after the elections allowed for the immediate post-election euphoria or despair to settle. The field research also took place as Australia posted in its first ambassador to Fiji since severing relations in 2006, and also during the visit of Australia's Vice Chief of the Defence Force (VCDF).

Illicit small arms do not seem to be a major problem in Fiji at this point in time.

While there are still missing weapons from the 2000 coup, military rule under Commodore Frank Bainimarama and a subsequent peaceful election indicate there is no obvious supply of or demand for illicit small arms. This is despite its strategic location as a crossroads in the Pacific, a stop-off for many trans-Pacific yachts, and despite the emergence of other transnational crime such as drug production and trafficking. Research indicates that violent crime in Fiji is generally carried out by unarmed gangs and individuals.

Where there have been weapons seized from docked vessels in Fiji, the number of weapons on board was said to be small, and allegedly used for personal protection at sea, not intended as stockpiles for sale.<sup>62</sup>

There are two areas of some concern, however. The first relates to Fiji's isolation by Australia over the past nine years of military rule, during which Fiji openly proclaims to have found 'new friends' particularly in its 'Look North' policy. There is also now a generation of Fijian military officers who have no links to Australia. The visit of the VCDF and resumption of diplomatic ties are important; however, Fijian officials were cool about the visit<sup>63</sup> and it would be naïve to expect Fiji to be quickly forgiving of Australia's sanctions. A week later, this was made clear during a visit from the United States, when the RFMF spokesperson identified that defence ties had been established with China, India, Malaysia, North and South Korea, Russia and the United Arab Emirates, pointedly adding that these new

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62 Personal communications, Fiji, Samoa, 9 and 12 December 2014. While there is some suspicion that these firearms are not purely for protection at sea (Personal communication, New Zealand, 15 August 2014) and may well be intended to be sold when in port, there is no current evidence to support this claim. Canadian and American researchers found with firearms were deported from Fiji in 2013, although not convicted of any offence. See 'Researchers Deported', *Fiji Times online*, 10 June 2013, NISAT Document Library, <http://nisat.prio.org/Document-Library/>

63 The VCDF visit was reported in the Fiji media as being treated 'cautiously' by the RFMF; see Maika Bolatiki, 'Fiji, Australia in Defence Talks', *Fiji Sun*, 9 December 2014.

relationships ‘we do value as they have come on board in the last eight years and we’ll never sever those ties’.<sup>64</sup>

Perhaps relatedly, the RFMF has announced equipment upgrades. The RFMF has allegedly already ‘made small arms purchases from Indonesia and talked with China about more significant assistance’.<sup>65</sup> Fiji’s closer relationship with China has brought with it military and police training, although not for firearms as far as can be ascertained, and is said to also benefit China as it will establish friendly Pacific ports for the People’s Liberation Army Navy.<sup>66</sup> A less anticipated development is rumour of an arms deal with Russia,<sup>67</sup> although the RFMF denied this.<sup>68</sup>

Although there is no apparent current large scale leakage from RFMF armouries, there are repeated allegations that RFMF personnel sell firearms and other ‘souvenirs’, particularly upon returning from overseas missions. That said, there is little public evidence to support these allegations, and others countered the assertion stating that Fijian military personnel are professional and loyal, not least due to the considerable financial benefit their peacekeeping service brings to the country.

It is also not clear what the RFMF plans to do with its older equipment. Appropriate and comprehensive disposal or vigilant transshipment would be needed to prevent the risks of even accidental diversion to the black market. The previous problems with misused firearms in Fiji were from those taken from or used by the RFMF during political turmoil.

The Fiji Police have also announced they are considering partial rearmament. This is not problematic in itself, so long as armoury security and safe firearms procedures and use are ensured. The disarmament of the police at the start of the 2006 coup has also understandably led the police to seek redress and to reestablish itself.

Demand in Fiji is from the security sector, not the illicit market, and it is understandable that the security forces would be looking to upgrade equipment

In such circumstances, it is the potential of leakage from these armouries—either deliberate or accidental—that would be the sources of illicit small arms. Maintaining existing mechanisms and keeping a vigilant eye on potential disruptors, such as the regional trends noted earlier in this report, could be the best control of illicit small arms in Fiji.

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64 Maika Bolatiki, ‘US Army Pacific Head in Fiji’, *Fiji Sun*, 16 December 2014.

65 Richard Herr, ‘Another BRIC in the Wall’, *ASPI Strategist*, 26 July 2013.

66 Cornelius Weeling, ‘Xi Signs Strategic Partnerships with Eight Pacific Island Countries’, *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, 26 November 2014.

67 There is some confusion as to whether this is for Fijian peacekeepers in the Middle East or more broadly for the RFMF. See for example, Richard Herr, ‘Another BRIC in the Wall’, *ASPI Strategist*, 26 July 2013; ‘Russia Likely to Sell Weapons to Fiji’, *Radio New Zealand*, 6 February 2015, <http://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/265443/russia-likely-to-sell-weapons-to-fiji>

68 Maika Bolatiki, ‘No Weapons Deal with Russia’, *Fiji Sun*, 7 February 2015, <http://fijisun.com.fj/2015/02/07/no-weapons-deal-with-russia/>

## Policy recommendations

- > Australia should offer access to the Australian Crime Commission online firearms trace portal at: <https://www.crimecommission.gov.au/user> for Fiji's security sectors (defence, police, customs) and to promote this resource to Australian Defence, police and customs personnel working in the Western Pacific.
  - » If this is unworkable, seized illicit small arms must be accurately and consistently recorded including an accompanying photograph.
  - » Australia to offer to assist with templates and procedures for data gathering of firearms incidents, including the nature of the incident, location, weapon type used, ammunition used and disaggregate firearms-related injury from other trauma injuries recorded by medical facilities.
- > Australia to nurture the military diplomacy and military education links after almost a decade of their lying dormant. Immediately offer subsidised places for 2016 to Fijian officers at the Australian Defence Force Academy, the Australian Staff and Command College, and the Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies.
- > Australia to nurture Australia–Fiji informal links through a 1.5 Track Dialogue to be held in early 2016.
- > Continue Australian Federal Police (AFP) support for the Transnational Crime Unit.
- > AFP to offer police leadership, investigation and intelligence sharing skills, and AFP support for the Fiji review of police weapons.
- > Australia to offer assistance on the disposal or transshipment of weapons surpluses.
- > AFP or Australian Crime Commission to offer training on weapons and weapons parts identification and on international laws and agreements on weapons trafficking.

## Papua New Guinea

The author conducted field research in Papua New Guinea over 19–25 January 2015. Twenty-three interviews and informal discussions were conducted with Australian officials, as well as representatives from NGOs, international organisations, the private sector and academia. Australian nationals, internationals and Papua New Guinea nationals were all represented.

The literature on illicit small arms in the Pacific gave strong indication that Papua New Guinea was quantifiably different to other countries in the region. The field research conducted for this project confirmed that this is still the case, indeed even understated. Papua New Guinea bucks the trend of small numbers of small arms in supply and demand as found in the other case study countries. Its extremely high levels of armed violence, a reviled police force, politicised weapons distribution, increased number of private security and extraction companies, and their related weapons types and storage are all cause for concern. That said, this research concurs with Singirok's 2005 comment that 'the illegal use of guns is only one of a series of social epidemics'.<sup>69</sup>

The research confirmed that 'guns are a constant in PNG',<sup>70</sup> and armed violence and demand remains extraordinarily high. A 2014 World Bank report noted that while homicide figures over 2000–2010 had not necessarily increased, the use of firearms in violent crime had increased, and that firearm crime was likely under-reported.<sup>71</sup> While the World Bank study did not include tribal or ethnic fighting, indications are that small arms, particularly firearms, and in at least once case also hand grenades, continue to be used lethally in these conflicts.<sup>72</sup> They are also in continued use against extraction companies and their transport support, including when they land by helicopter to avoid banditry on the roads.<sup>73</sup>

Demand for firearms is therefore strong across society to protect persons and assets, as well as in crime and tribal fighting. While firearm ownership for personal protection is legal, the costs of licencing was widely considered prohibitive for many.

The meaning behind the readily available and widely displayed pun bumper sticker 'Baby Glock on Board' is a society comfortable with asserting, even jokingly, that the driver carries a handgun.<sup>74</sup>

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69 Jerry Singirok, *The Use of Illegal Guns: Security Implications for Papua New Guinea*, Discussion Paper 2005/5, State, Society and Governance in Melanesia, 2005, p. 1.

70 Personal communication, Papua New Guinea, 20 January 2015.

71 Sadaf Lakhani and Alys M Willman, *Trends in Crime and Violence in Papua New Guinea*, Paper No. 1, The World Bank, May 2014, pp. 2, 14, 15.

72 See for example, Jane's Terrorism Watch Report, 'Grenade Attack Kills 34 People in Papua New Guinea's Southern Highland's' [sic], *Jane's IHS*, 15 November 2013.

73 Jane's Intelligence Weekly, 'Armed Robbers Target Helicopter Crew in PNG Highlands', *Jane's IHS*, 8 August 2013.

74 Car sticker in the possession of the author.

Research for this project has substantiated Alpers' assertion that 'crime and corruption'<sup>75</sup> facilitate the presence of many of Papua New Guinea's loose firearms. The research also revealed there are longstanding and systemic weaknesses in the management processes of licit firearms in Papua New Guinea, and that allegations of 'corruption' and 'serious flaws' first identified in the Central Firearms Registry in the mid-1990s, confirmed by Jerry Singirok a decade later,<sup>76</sup> appear to be entrenched. These anomalies have resulted in a proliferation of licit firearms being diverted to the illicit market, and sometimes from the illicit back to the licit.<sup>77</sup> This diversion can be directly linked to the inability to validate the currency of firearms ownership, the lack of police resources to confirm rural-based addresses where a firearm is registered, and a renewal system that requires local police to receive and send for processing, firearm renewal notices that are sent to the Central Firearm Registry in Port Moresby. It was said it was not firearms that were the problem, but 'who signs off on them'.<sup>78</sup> Further, managing the possession, use and carriage of firearms in Papua New Guinea, both legal and illegal, is hindered by cultural tradition and systemic corruption within the government and the private sector, and by what Capie referred to as 'a troubling level of confusion surrounding the importation of military weapons among PNG authorities'.<sup>79</sup> Such mishaps continue, with the Clerk of the Parliament who in 2013 allegedly purchased 32 'high powered' firearms and ammunition—including five M4 carbines, five Glock pistols, a HK MP7A1 submachine gun (with night vision and silencer)—not only for personal protection but for protection 'in Parliament'.<sup>80</sup>

Compounding the incapacity to control the illicit firearms market is the value placed on firearms ownership, whether legal or illegal, in a society that has little faith in law enforcement agencies to protect them from violence.<sup>81</sup> Peake and Dinnen refer to 'police brutality' as a 'consistent theme over the years', and Dinnen's 2001 perceptively disturbing comment that the 'violence of the state is hard to distinguish from the violence it seeks to control'<sup>82</sup> remains true. Considerable under-resourcing afflicts the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary (RPNGC), compounding the general lack of faith in the police. It was said members of the RPNGC regularly 'lose' their firearms and it was not known how

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75 Philip Alpers, 'Gun-Running in Papua New Guinea: From Arrows to Assault Rifles in the Southern Highlands', *Small Arms Survey*, Geneva, June 2005, p. 50.

76 Jerry Singirok, *The Use of Illegal Guns: Security Implications for Papua New Guinea*, Discussion Paper 2005/5, State, Society and Governance in Melanesia, 2005, pp. 1, 9.

77 Personal communication, Papua New Guinea, 20 January 2015.

78 Personal communication, Papua New Guinea, 20 January 2015.

79 David Capie, 'Small Arms Violence and Gender in Papua New Guinea: Towards a Research Agenda', *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, Vol. 52, No. 1, April 2011, Note 7, p. 53.

80 'Papua New Guinea Parliament Armed', *pngfacts.com*, 25 January 2013, NISAT Document Library, <http://nisat.prio.org/Document-Library/>

81 Personal communications, Papua New Guinea, 20 and 21 January 2015.

82 Gordon Peake and Sinclair Dinnen, 'Police Development in Papua New Guinea: The Need for Innovation', *Security Challenges*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 2014, p. 44.



ammunition was accounted for.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, a firearm retrieved from a private security company had a serial number indicating it was originally a police weapon.<sup>84</sup>

The cost of legal firearms ownership in Papua New Guinea is considered to be a key factor in many originally legal weapons becoming 'illegal by technicality'.<sup>85</sup> The firearms legislation in Papua New Guinea was also considered outdated and unhelpful to the government authorities trying to control armed crime.<sup>86</sup>

Peake and Dinnen also note:

*the recruitment of better educated members, increasing use of violence (and firearms), and growing connections to more powerful political and business actors in an urban milieu where criminal opportunities are continuously expanding.*<sup>87</sup>

In the absence of statistics, armed crime was said by many interviewees to be both increasing and becoming more organised.<sup>88</sup>

That said, the price of purchasing illicit firearms is high: a firearms licence and handgun in Port Moresby was said to have a street price of Kina 50,000 (approximately AUD25,000).<sup>89</sup>

Allegations of firearms traded from logging vessels and extractive companies,<sup>90</sup> and of flows of weapons from Australia and West Papua into Papua New Guinea is concerning, and the other sources of leakage and questionably legal imports and distribution reflects the black hole of demand in Papua New Guinea. Daru, on Papua New Guinea's southern coast, was cited as a source of both Indonesian and Australian-sourced firearms.<sup>91</sup> What is more disturbing is the rumour reported by May and Hayley that a former defence minister used members of the PNGDF to collect weapons from Jayapura in West Papua in 2002 for his 'personal militia'.<sup>92</sup> The Papua New Guinea government sees the West Papua

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83 Personal communications, Papua New Guinea, 20 January 2015.

84 Personal communication, Papua New Guinea, 20 January 2015.

85 Personal communication, Papua New Guinea, 20 January 2015.

86 Personal communications, Papua New Guinea, 20 January 2015.

87 Gordon Peake and Sinclair Dinnen, 'Police Development in Papua New Guinea: The Need for Innovation', *Security Challenges*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 2014, p. 40.

88 Personal communications, Papua New Guinea, 20 and 21 January 2015. By organised, individuals are working together in groups facilitated by mobile phone use, and are increasingly being directed by Asian, and latterly West African, criminal groups.

89 Personal communication, Papua New Guinea, 20 January 2015.

90 Personal communication, Australia, 13 January 2015.

91 Personal communications, Papua New Guinea, 20 January 2015.

92 Ron May and Nicole Hayley, 'The Military in Papua New Guinea: A Culture of Instability but No Coup', *Security Challenges*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 2014, p. 64.

border to be a source of illicit firearms into Papua New Guinea. Yet the West Papuan independence movement is not only poorly armed, but also a driver of demand inside West Papua, therefore demand would be likely to traverse the border only if the prices paid for firearms on the Papua New Guinea side were higher than in West Papua. Underplayed, weapons—firearms, ammunition and ‘traditional weapons’—have also gone from Papua New Guinea into West Papua, with a news report suggesting this is driven by solidarity for West Papuan independence.<sup>93</sup> The inclusion of ‘traditional’ weapons in the interdiction also suggests firearms are not always easily acquired.

As firearms are traded for drugs with the logging vessels, with the new Papua New Guinea LNG projects, it was also thought possible that given demand for firearms inside Papua New Guinea is so strong, it was quite plausible that the new project across the Gulf of Papua and in Kumusi could also facilitate an illicit firearms trade.<sup>94</sup> Even minimal infrastructure development, such as logging tracks into remote areas of the country, were also said to make it easier to transport weapons across the country.<sup>95</sup>

Demand in the Highlands in particular was said to continue to outstrip supply, including pressure to arm ‘wantoks’.<sup>96</sup> An additionally disturbing trend in Papua New Guinea is the continued politicisation of firearms accumulation and distribution. The 2014 World Bank report states that one of the three main sources of illicit firearms in PNG was that ‘significant numbers of firearms had been brought into the country by political candidates prior to the 2007 election, and remain in circulation’.<sup>97</sup> In the 2012 elections in Southern Highlands, it was reported there was an increase in firearms and killings, and a political candidate from Mt Hagen was found with an illegal firearm and ammunition.<sup>98</sup> Weapons legally imported for the police were used against RPNGC officers during the election, and weapons confiscated by RPNGC for being unlicensed were supporters of sitting Members of Parliament (MPs), in the hands of sitting MPs as well as their family members, said to be used for both personal protection ‘and coercion of the electorate’.<sup>99</sup> MPs also use district funds to purchase weapons for their electorate.<sup>100</sup> It has been predicted that the use and political distribution of weapons in the 2017 election is likely to be worse than it was during 2012.<sup>101</sup>

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93 ‘Police and TNI in Papua Seize Firearms, Bullets From PNG’, *The Jakarta Globe*, 27 June 2014, NISAT Document Library, <http://nisat.prio.org/Document-Library/>

94 Personal communication, Australia, 13 January 2015.

95 Personal communication, Australia, 13 January 2015.

96 Personal communication, Papua New Guinea, 20 January 2015.

97 Sadaf Lakhani and Alys M Willman, *Trends in Crime and Violence in Papua New Guinea*, World Bank, Paper No. 1, May 2014, pp. 14–15.

98 Personal communication, Papua New Guinea, 22 January 2015; ‘Tensions Mount in PNG Highlands Ahead of Elections’, *Jane’s Intelligence Weekly*, 15 June 2012.

99 Personal communication, Papua New Guinea, 22 January 2015.

100 Personal communication, Papua New Guinea, 22 January 2015.

101 Personal communication, Papua New Guinea, 24 January 2015.

The research also revealed that the business owner of Lae Biscuit Factory, also a highly-regarded sporting shooter, was found by police to be illegally importing arms and ammunition in April 2012. Disturbingly, while arguing he was importing the materials to replace those lost in a fire, it was thought these imports were undertaken with either political support or political motivation, and that the weapons and ammunition were for distribution to influence the outcome of the elections.<sup>102</sup> Sporting shooters in Papua New Guinea consider themselves to have been unfairly disadvantaged by being unable to obtain ammunition from Australia.<sup>103</sup> Yet while their club rules and practices are seemingly diligent,<sup>104</sup> the actions of one of their own high profile members being convicted of illegal arms importation fails to demonstrate confidence that diligence is always applied.

As the Literature Review indicated, transient demand is confirmed, and is an unusual feature of the Papua New Guinea illicit small arms market, whereby not only are mercenary ‘rambos’ for hire, but also individual firearms and ammunition are loaned out,<sup>105</sup> including to criminals by police.<sup>106</sup> One police comment was that the ‘rambos’ were killing each other to the point of extinction,<sup>107</sup> but in a society where retribution and compensation are high, individuals’ weapons will be passed on to others and the violence will not diminish.

Crime in Papua New Guinea is already high by global standards and morphing into being more organised and linked to other illegal activities.<sup>108</sup> In the absence of disaggregated and scant data, it is possibly also more deadly. The effect of such an insecure environment has considerable repercussions for the business sector as well as for the government. In 2014 the Australian Broadcasting Corporation reported that 80 per cent of businesses in Papua New Guinea suffered considerable losses from violent crime, with 60 per cent hiring private security firms costing an average 5 per cent of annual operating costs.<sup>109</sup> It is therefore hardly surprising that businesses bring in or obtain their own weapons.

Another disturbing development also in 2012 was revealed with the interdiction of imported M4s and ammunition, again by a reputable industrial chemical company, KK Kingston. The serial numbers on the weapons did not match those of the United States’ manufacturer, with police believing they were

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102 Personal communications, Papua New Guinea, 20 and 21 January 2015.

103 Personal communications, Papua New Guinea, 20 January 2015.

104 Personal communications, Papua New Guinea, 20 January 2015.

105 Personal communication, Australia, 13 January 2015.

106 Jerry Singirok, *The Use of Illegal Guns: Security Implications for Papua New Guinea*, Discussion Paper 2005/5, State, Society and Governance in Melanesia, 2005, p. 6.

107 ‘Tribal Fight Claims 8 Lives’, *PNG Loop*, 17 April 2015.

108 Government of Papua New Guinea, National Security Policy, 2013, p. 38.

109 ‘Calls for PNG to Implement Gun Control Recommendations’, *ABC News*, 21 August 2014.

high quality Filipino replicas or modifications.<sup>110</sup> Galil rifles that were said to come from or at least through Indonesia also had questionable serial numbers.<sup>111</sup> In addition to those entering Papua New Guinea from Australia and Indonesia, firearms entering Papua New Guinea include Asian replicas of American firearms<sup>112</sup> and AK types. These appear to have been brought in for personal protection, including by politicians.<sup>113</sup>

As Capie forewarned, private security companies (PSCs) bringing in or obtaining weapons in a country where there is already a culture of crime and corruption and politicised arms distribution, adds an additional overlay of legal and illicit weapons movements into the country.<sup>114</sup> Not only are a considerable number of PSCs in Papua New Guinea staffed by serving or former security sector personnel, which should reflect professional skills, weapons handling and knowledge of the law, many such companies are said to be owned by politicians, their spouse or their close friends.<sup>115</sup>

All firearms held by PSCs were said to be licenced;<sup>116</sup> however, those held by some PSCs are said to be 'overkill', including M40 sniper rifle rounds and RPGs.<sup>117</sup> At least one private security company's shipping container armoury in Lae was seen with AK types and Ruger sniper rifles, and it was revealed that a PSC operating in a tourist area attempted to import a silencer.<sup>118</sup> Such developments are deeply concerning. This is in addition to intercepted illegal imports that are alleged to have political links or sanction. The insecurity posed by crime and banditry, including along the Highlands Highway, indicates protection of assets and personnel is necessary, and armoury security can certainly be conducted appropriately by some companies.<sup>119</sup> The lack of consistent official oversight and regulation of small arms imports and armoury security is where the problem lies. Further, the sizes of some of the alleged arsenals and the weapons types are disturbing given they are for private use in civilian areas.

Against such a confronting situation, there may be reason for some optimism.

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110 Personal communication, Papua New Guinea, 20 January 2015. Photographs and documents in the possession of the author.

111 Personal communication, Papua New Guinea, 20 January 2015.

112 Personal communication, Papua New Guinea, 20 January 2015; Documents in the possession of the author.

113 Personal communication, Australia, 13 January 2015.

114 David Capie, 'Small Arms, Violence and Gender in Papua New Guinea', *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, Vol. 52, No. 1, April 2011, p. 51.

115 Personal communications, Papua New Guinea, 20 and 21 January 2015.

116 Personal communication, Email, 5 January 2015.

117 Personal communication, Canberra, 13 January 2015.

118 Personal communication, Papua New Guinea, 20 January 2015. The tourist area was Alotau, the capital of Milne Bay province.

119 One company representative stated he chose to run his company armoury as if Australian state police were 'likely to do a check any day'. Personal communication, Papua New Guinea, 22 January 2015.

First, the experience of the Sandline Affair in 1997 could have ‘immunised’ Papua New Guinea from seeking the services of private military companies.

Second, it is heartening to see that the government considers small arms trafficking to be a Level One threat to the country.<sup>120</sup> While the author considers the smuggling component to be but one element in the illicit small arms proliferation dynamic in Papua New Guinea, the elevation of the effects of small arms proliferation and misuse may have begun to be taken much more seriously by the government, which might in turn involve implementing some of the Goroka Summit recommendations or other control mechanisms.

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) armoury stocktakes of the RPNGDF are a positive activity that reduces the risk of leakage.<sup>121</sup> The inventory process and recordkeeping template could provide an example of Australia–Papua New Guinea cooperation that other agencies could consider emulating, noting that ADF–PNGDF relationship is longstanding and high in mutual trust.

Society-wide disarmament is unlikely, and it is tragic that firearms use is not socially vilified or even managed, despite the efforts of NGOs and individuals. Effective demand reduction can only take place in a social context where weapons use is regulated, laws are understood and upheld—whether traditional, hybrid or legislated—and where supply is controllable. In Papua New Guinea, these conditions are a long way from being met, especially given the projected population increase and extractive industry increase. Amnesties and seizures do little to stem demand, and indeed can stimulate supply. Gun risk education, easing conditions for the legal ownership and safe storage of firearms, professionalising firearms importation and distribution, particularly in the RPNGC, updating firearms legislation, as well as sincere efforts by the Papua New Guinea Government to address trafficking, would be steps in the right direction.

### **Papua New Guinea (excluding Bougainville) recommendations**

- » Australia should offer access to the Australian Crime Commission online firearms trace portal at: <https://www.crimecommission.gov.au/user> for Papua New Guinea’s security sectors (defence, police, customs, prison guards) and to promote this resource to Australian Defence, police and customs personnel working in Papua New Guinea.
  - » If this is unworkable, seized illicit small arms must be accurately and consistently recorded including an accompanying photograph.
  - » Australia to offer to assist with templates and procedures for data gathering of firearms incidents, including the nature of the incident, location, weapon type used, ammunition used and disaggregate firearms-related injury from other trauma injuries recorded by medical facilities.

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120 Government of Papua New Guinea, National Security Policy, undated, pp. 42–43.

121 Document cited by the author, Papua New Guinea, 23 January 2015.

- > Australia to retain the Defence Cooperation Program annual armoury stocktake in its current form.
- > Retain AFP assistance, keeping expectations feasible based on the size of the deployment, and add in investigative training. Offer to assist with armoury security across Papua New Guinea, especially as the PNGDF and RPNGC are seeking to expand.
- > As both countries are concerned about firearms transgressing the Torres Strait, strengthen efforts to police the Australia–Papua New Guinea air and maritime space to assess and interdict illicit materials being trafficked and offer and adviser to the Papua New Guinea Joint Agency Group on transnational crime.
- > Australia to engage with Indonesia on how to assist in policing the West Papua firearms trafficking.
- > Australia to offer assistance with implementing some of the Goroka Gun Summit recommendations, such as public awareness through gun risk education.
- > Australia to offer assistance in the training, regulation and inspection of all private security companies, particularly in relation to their firearms licences, weapons storage, weapons importation and exportation, and weapons handling in line with the firearms laws in Papua New Guinea. This could be done through assisting with the development of a Private Security Academy training program.
- > Australia to offer assistance with the central Firearms Registration system.

## Samoa

Although Samoa was not originally included in the remit of this study, at the suggestion of the Australian Federal Police the author conducted a side field research trip to Samoa from Fiji over 11–14 December 2014. While the principal purpose was to interview personnel at the Pacific Transnational Crime Coordination Centre, the author took the opportunity to contrast Samoa with the other country studies in this research project. Six formal interviews and informal discussions were conducted with Australian, New Zealand and Pacific island officials in Apia.

In many respects, reflective of its strong and effective governance,<sup>122</sup> and commitment to conventional arms control architectures,<sup>123</sup> Samoa appears to manage any problems regarding illicit small arms. Although some firearms have arrived and been used in Samoa from American Samoa,<sup>124</sup> Samoa appears to have the capacity to deal with this adequately.<sup>125</sup> Indeed, it has what should be standard across the Pacific: ‘strong and enforced firearms laws’ and effective gun amnesties and disposal.<sup>126</sup>

### Policy recommendation

- Australia should offer access to the Australian Crime Commission online firearms trace portal at: <https://www.crimecommission.gov.au/user> for Samoa’s security sectors (police and customs) and to promote this resource to Australian police and any customs personnel working in Samoa.
  - » If this is unworkable, seized illicit small arms must be accurately and consistently recorded including an accompanying photograph.
  - » Australia to offer to assist with templates and procedures for data gathering of firearms incidents, including the nature of the incident, location, weapon type used, ammunition used and disaggregate firearms-related injury from other trauma injuries recorded by medical facilities.
- Australia to promote Samoa as a case of successful Pacific island small arms control.

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122 The Australian Government considers Samoa’s governance to ‘be among the strongest in the Pacific’, Samoa Country Brief, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, <http://dfat.gov.au/geo/samoa/pages/samoa-country-brief.aspx>, accessed 18 April 2015.

123 Although recently ratifying the Arms Trade Treaty, Samoa has not provided reports to the UN PoA nor has it ratified the Firearms Protocol to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

124 Document in the possession of the author.

125 Personal communication, Apia, 13 December 2014.

126 Personal communication, Apia, 13 December 2014.

## Regional policy recommendations

- > As with each country study, Australia should offer access to the Australian Crime Commission online firearms trace portal at: <https://www.crimecommission.gov.au/user> for Pacific security sectors (defence, police, paramilitary, customs, prison guards) and to promote this resource to Australian Defence, police and customs personnel working in the Western Pacific.
  - » If this is unworkable, seized illicit small arms must be accurately and consistently recorded including an accompanying photograph.
  - » Australia to offer to assist with templates and procedures for data gathering of firearms incidents, including the nature of the incident, location, weapon type used, ammunition used and disaggregate firearms-related injury from other trauma injuries recorded by medical facilities.
- > Continue to promote global norms in small arms transfers, including the Arms Trade Treaty, particularly to discourage the risks of brokering, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research International Small Arms Control Standards Assessment Tool and support the Pacific small arms projects such as the Pacific Small Arms Action Group.
- > Keep the firearms community engaged and encourage safety and competency training by sporting shooting associations for all firearm users.
- > Where a government or security agency has identified their Firearms Acts as being archaic, offer support with updating them.
- > Encourage reinvigoration of Pacific initiatives such as the Nadi Framework, the Pacific Islands Chief of Police Arms Importation arrangements, and technical support to PIF for its ammunition control and UXO removal projects.
- > Continue Australia's best practice case-by-case policy on exports of firearms and ammunition, and unarmed Pacific Patrol Boats.
- > Draw on best practice regional examples of small arms control, such as the ECOWAS Convention.
- > Invite Pacific island representatives to a 1.5 track workshop on new challenges to small arms control including private security companies, private maritime security companies, illicit brokering, additive printing, as well as criminal returnees and casino development.
- > That said, tensions could again erupt in a country in the region, and Australia could consider developing a counter irregular warfare strategy for the Pacific.
- > Strongly encourage participation in labour mobility to Australia and consider greater two-way trade and investment.



## Conclusion

Effective small arms control can be one way of preventing deadly violence and social insecurities. This project considered how the military-police-civil sector, including international organisations and non-government organisations, could more effectively prepare for and respond to small arms-related security problems. This research was timely, reassessing the situation in three countries—Solomon Islands, Fiji, Papua New Guinea excluding Bougainville, and a brief section on Samoa—a decade since the topic had been previously seriously investigated in the Western Pacific.

Small arms control and minimising misuse is a whole of society endeavour, not just a government one. Firearms are in use legally and illegally in most societies and in most cases ‘weapons free is a nicety not a necessity’.<sup>127</sup>

NGOs and IGOs can contribute a great deal to understanding drivers of illicit small arms demand in the Pacific and their efforts towards inclusion, non-violence and peacebuilding are commendable. This project’s only caution would be to ensure that small arms limitation and removal schemes—control and disarmament—take into account the wider societal drivers of demand to ensure such schemes have a lasting success. NGOs include the recreational shooters in the region, who can collectively provide advice on matters relating to legal and safe use of firearms.

Illicit small arms use should take into account the national and social context, and thus the demand factors. The focus on demand in this project was useful, allowing for ways of understanding the drivers and sources of supply, and to assess how and when demand was being met. When home-made firearms are in widespread use it indicates that factory-produced firearms are in short supply or are too expensive, which also indicate that controls, whether legal or societal, are working.

The dearth of reliable data particularly in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands is also an inhibitor to quantifiable assessment of the situation. Promoting and using the Australian Crime Commission’s tracing mechanism would go a long way towards obtaining reliable data.

Reliable data would inform grassroots and governmental understanding of the dimensions of illicit small arms sources and users. Once these dimensions are better understood, demand factors can be disaggregated and mitigated. For example, there is little point in pursuing poverty alleviation as part of a small arms control campaign if the more potent driver of demand is lack of trust—whether in one’s neighbour or with the government. This is where limits to both motivations and means, and tangible and intangible demand, can begin to be applied.

Normative developments can be invaluable, but they are inherently slow-moving. Changing attitudes requires education, societal and cultural support, and long-term engagement. Firearm and UXO safety campaigns target civilian audiences and are as important as encouraging government support for controls. In particular, promoting the Arms Trade Treaty may well bring attention to the risk of illicit brokering in the Pacific.

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127 Personal communication, New Zealand, 16 August 2014.

The current Australian Foreign Minister's interest in Pacific is encouraging. In broader terms of small arms control and reduced demand Australia would do well to work respectfully with Fiji, to continue to support Solomon Islands during the period of RAMSI's withdrawal, and continue engagement with Papua New Guinea. Australia's extant strong government-to-government ties with Papua New Guinea, particularly Defence ties with the PNGDF, are invaluable, as are the developing links between the AFP and RPNGC. The private sector may be able to do more, possibly in building and training of a private security company college—a capacity identified as desirable by the Papua New Guinea Government.

That said, the Pacific Institute for Public Policy points out that many Pacific island countries have 'learned to play off regional powers for their own benefit'.<sup>128</sup> There is also a cultural component to engaging effectively with the Pacific in which customary processes can take 'years, even decades'.<sup>129</sup> Given this, and the five new trends identified in this report, timely responses to them may be seen by Australia as frustratingly slow.

This may require Australia to listen more, speak less, and to support regional and national initiatives when invited. In a recent ASPI report, Claxton outlined a similar position, whereby Australia needs to 'prove it's a leader that listens', part of which would be to 'give islanders more space to "chart their own course"'.<sup>130</sup> Nonetheless, Australia should also be ready to respond when required. As Claxton also observes, 'there's no exit strategy from our own region'.<sup>131</sup> Similarly, promoting Pacific Islander labour mobility,<sup>132</sup> supporting, where necessary, traditional conflict resolution mechanisms and encouraging economic investment would aid in creating more people-to-people links and help build economic development, which may reduce some of the tangible drivers of illicit small arms demand.

Future research along the lines of this strategic assessment would be worthwhile. While this report is essentially a good news story, with the exception of Papua New Guinea, there are trends in the Western Pacific that should be monitored and where possible influenced. These are in exploiting legislative weaknesses allowing loopholes for brokering, in new technologies, in new money and activities that could develop a firearms component, and the increase in crime, private security and extraction companies, especially in Papua New Guinea.

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128 Pacific Institute of Public Policy, 'Keeping the Peace: Rethinking our Approach to Security Issues as New Threats and Opportunities Emerge', Discussion Starter, 26 November 2014, pp. 3, 4.

129 Pacific Institute of Public Policy, 'Keeping the Peace: Rethinking our Approach to Security Issues as New Threats and Opportunities Emerge', Discussion Starter, 26 November 2014, pp. 3, 4.

130 Karl Claxton, 'No Exit: Next Steps to Help Promote South Pacific Peace and Security', *ASPI Insights*, No. 87, April 2015, p. 9.

131 Karl Claxton, 'No Exit: Next Steps to Help Promote South Pacific Peace and Security', *ASPI Insights*, No. 87, April 2015, p. 3.

132 Also noted by Karl Claxton, 'No Exit: Next Steps to Help Promote South Pacific Peace and Security', *ASPI Insights*, No. 87, April 2015, p. 8.

It would also be worthwhile investigating other countries in the Pacific, particularly American Samoa, Vanuatu and New Caledonia, to obtain a more comprehensive update of the illicit small arms situation across Australia's eastern flank.

## Acronyms list

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ACMC	Australian Civil-Military Centre
ADF	Australian Defence Force
AFP	Australian Federal Police
MPs	Members of Parliament
NGO	non-government organisation
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PSCs	private security companies
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands
RFMF	Republic of Fiji Military Forces
RPNGC	Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary
RSIPF	Royal Solomon Islands Police Force
PNGDF	Papua New Guinea Defence Force
UXO	unexploded ordnance

ACMC



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