

Hon. Laurie Chan.
Chairman,
Parliamentary Foreign Relations Committee.

C/- P O Box G 28.
19/9/08

22/9/08
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Dear Hon. Chairman,

INQUIRY INTO THE FACILITATION OF INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE NOTICE

In response to your call for submissions on the above subject, I offer the following.

a) On the question of the composition of the 'Visiting Contingent'. The participating countries are listed in the 'Agreement' as Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, and Tonga. Vanuatu and the other Pacific States, though not specifically listed are participating as provided for under Article 1 of the 'Agreement'.

The composition of the 'Visiting Contingent' presents opportunities for the Solomon Islands to benefit from a number of factors. Firstly, the number of different countries contributing enables people from those countries to go about their assignments with a variety of social, economic, and cultural background experiences. The mix of Caucasians, Polynesians, Micronesians, and Melanesians, allows for this. Such mix also allows for assignments to benefit from appropriate levels of moderations etc. as may be dictated by the need to be sensitive at times. Secondly, the involvement of Australia and New Zealand provides the necessary leadership in terms of resourcing, advanced technology, and expertise. The success of the 'Visiting Contingent' in carrying out its mission is heavily dependent on these. Thirdly, being part of the South Pacific Region, the countries contributing people to serve under the 'Visiting Contingent' would be bound to be more committed to the cause for the sake of their own security and stability. Any involvement by countries and people from outside the Region may not necessarily guarantee this. Global terrorism and international and trans-national crime are increasing concerns throughout the Region. Investing to ensure a secure and stable South Pacific neighborhood is in the best interest of all the participating countries under the present arrangements.

b) On the question of how long the 'Visiting Contingent' should remain. I fully support the belief that the 'Visiting Contingent' (RAMSI) should remain in the Solomon Islands as long as the ordinary people of the country continue to see and feel the need for it. This should not be an issue at the moment as the people feel strongly that RAMSI's presence is still needed. When it becomes an issue, it must be decided upon through a plebiscite and not merely the Executive of Government or even the national Parliament. This is the ordinary/common Solomon Islanders' issue to decide. We have seen how individuals in power at the national level were construed to call for the termination of RAMSI for political and reasons other than those in the interests of the peace, justice, and security the ordinary/common Solomon Islanders need. Specific reasons as to why RAMSI's stay in the Solomon Islands should be indefinite for the time being are as follows:

- Political tensions. There is an element of the population who thrived on the ethnic tensions and related events of 2000 which feels that the country continues to owe them dues. There are national politicians especially those with relationships forged during the

ethnic tensions that would tend to capitalize on this element to destabilize the national Government.

- Economic tensions. Life is becoming increasingly difficult due to population pressures on land and resources; lack of employment opportunities; and effects of urban drift. These circumstances are potential for instability and insecurity. Since the country has not fully recovered from the effects of the ethnic tensions, it could easily slide back into turmoil.
- The capacity and institutional rebuilding and strengthening of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force in my view, still has a long way to go. Even already at this stage there are instances where the integrity and professionalism of the Force are questioned. The law and justice strengthening program must also continue to full completion. Even when this is realized, a period of guidance and mentoring should follow to allow for proven maturity.
- Whilst the strengthening and normalization of governance, administration and management may have been well advanced at the national level in a number of Ministries, the same process has not been applied to the same extent in all the Provinces. Even though not all the Provinces were directly involved in the ethnic tension, all of them were affected one way or another. It is important that all are brought up to scratch so as to be in a position to articulate positively with the improvements at the national level. My view is that RAMSI should next include the strengthening and normalization of all the same areas in all Provinces in any phase II of its assignment.

c) On specifics of the Act.

- Under Interpretation, (Section 2), “public purpose”. If the meaning does not include activities which are related to economic development and promotion an amendment should be made to allow the “visiting Contingent” to be involved in such activities henceforth. The meaning as it is seems to me to be entirely on the restoration of law and order, and peace and security which have already been achieved.
- Immunity from legal proceedings. I support the existing provisions for this as long as the incidents are in the course of, or are incidental to official duties.

d) On specifics of the “Agreement”.

- Article 5, “Status of the Participating Police Force”. The impression I got from this Section is that it calls for the separation of the PPF and Royal Solomon Islands Police Forces, whereas they ought to be a united Force and working together. This makes me believe that some of the ongoing challenges and difficulties in the whole area of policing thus far, have arisen because of this. In order for the local Police Force to effectively learn to be truly professional and one of the highest integrity, the two Forces must not be separated.

Yours truly,



G. Taloikwai. (Ph: 91470)