A former member of the Malaitan Eagle Force carries his gun after the group agreed to surrender their weapons in the Solomon Islands in August 2003. (© Reuters/Str DG/RCS)

Trouble in Paradise:
SMALL ARMS IN THE PACIFIC

9

INTRODUCTION

Recent events in the Pacific offer clear lessons, both in success and failure. Innovative links between disarmament and national aspirations for autonomy, clear-cut contrasts between weapon collection methods deployed in adjacent island communities, the 'good neighbour' traditions of the region, and relative transparency of information all combine to provide a small laboratory of ideas and examples.

Pacific nations are no strangers to small arms. During the Second World War, island states in the region were home to thousands of armed troops, and suffered many bloody conflicts. More recently, small arms have reappeared as vectors of human rights abuse, death, and injury in the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, and even Australia.

Unlike its neighbours in South-east and South Asia, the region is not afflicted with large-scale trafficking. Yet the Pacific experience demonstrates how deeply even a small number of small arms can damage small communities. Armed conflict and violent crime have had profound social and economic effects in the region, not least on the prospects of young Pacific Islanders.

The line between the legal and illegal small arms trade is as blurred in the Pacific region as it is anywhere. The great majority of firearms used in violence were legally imported, then diverted to crime from civilian, military, and police holdings.

Most guns used in violence began as legal weapons owned by civilians, military, and police.

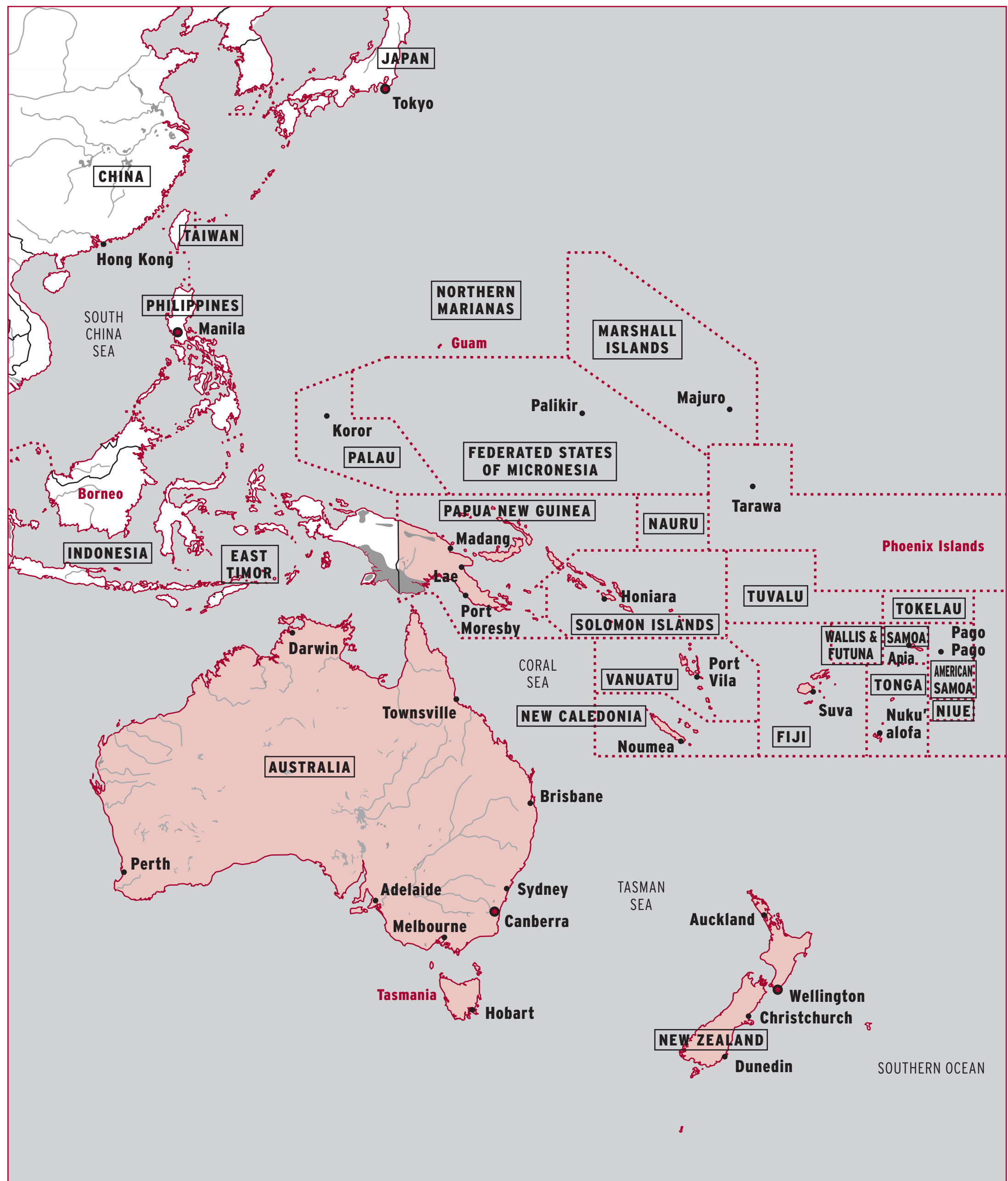
Among the chapter's principal findings are the following:

- *Civilian gun ownership in the Pacific is higher than the global average.* There are some 3.1 million privately owned firearms, the great majority of which are in Australia (11 per 100 people) and New Zealand (22 per 100 people).
- *Security stockpiles in the Pacific are moderate.* Police and armed forces hold an estimated 226,046 firearms, or one-fourteenth the civilian stockpile.
- *At least 26 nations export small arms to the Pacific.* The US is the largest exporter and provides more than half of all known Pacific imports.
- *Gun smuggling is rare,* though Papua New Guinea remains a hot spot.
- *Gun laws are inconsistent and contain many loopholes.* Until firearm legislation in the Pacific is harmonized, the region remains vulnerable to gun-running.
- *Safe storage is a real concern.* Most firearms used in crime or conflict were obtained locally from lawful gun owners or leaked from state or police armouries.
- *Craft manufacture is common.* Crude home-made guns are locally manufactured in times of scarcity and conflict, but their relative importance is often overrated.
- *Weapon disposal efforts have had positive results.* In the recently conflict-torn Solomon Islands and Bougainville, disarmament is now firmly linked to progressive political change, social stability, and economic development.

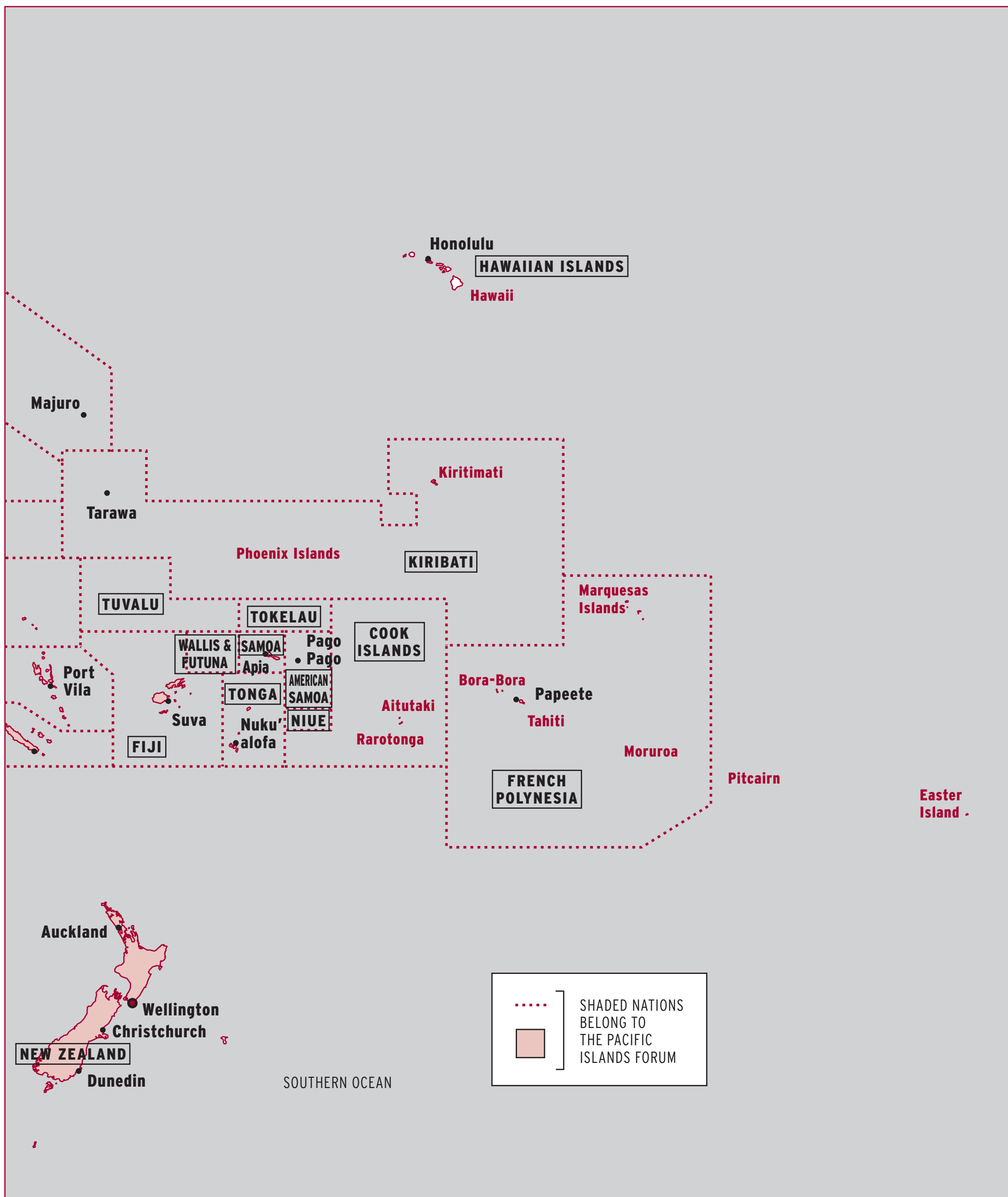
In the Pacific, disarmament is firmly linked to social stability and development.

This chapter summarizes and updates *Small Arms in the Pacific* (Alpers and Twyford, 2003), a recent study of 20 nations[1] sprinkled across the largest stretch of water on the globe (see Map 9.1). A comprehensive examination of firearm ownership, legislation, and gun violence in the Pacific, this 14-month study assembled the insights and experience of more than 100 organizations and communities.

Map 9.1 Pacific Islands Forum countries



The first section of this chapter considers the scale and volume of legal exports, imports, and known holdings among civilians and security forces. The second section turns to some of the vectors of the illegal trade, including smuggling, leakage from civilian and official stockpiles, and armed crime. The third section reveals the human costs associated with firearm availability and misuse in the Fiji Islands, the Solomon Islands, and Bougainville, an island province of Papua New Guinea. The fourth section relates recent experiences with weapon collection and destruction in Bougainville and the Solomon Islands, while the final section summarizes arms-related legislation in the Pacific.



LAWFUL GUN TRADE AND STOCKPILES IN THE PACIFIC

The legal trade in small arms in the southern Pacific region is surprisingly dynamic. Demand varies widely with population size, purchasing power, local firearm laws and their enforcement, the presence or absence of regular military forces or routinely armed police, and social attitudes to gun ownership and use. With the largest military and police forces, 3.1 million legal firearms between them, and the lion's share of annual arms imports into the region, Australia and New Zealand dwarf the rest of the Pacific in this respect.

Who buys?

Figures on commercial and military arms imports are rarely published, though some legal weapon transfers from the US are openly documented. Table 9.1 lists a range of Pacific countries for which US small arms and ammunition export licence approvals were granted between 1998 and 2000.[2] Note that export licences are often not fulfilled to the approved value, resulting in lower import figures declared in the receiving country (see Table 9.2).

Table 9.1 US small arms and ammunition export licence approvals to the Pacific, 1998–2000

Importing country	Licence value (nominal USD)
Australia	127,137,186
New Zealand	8,123,120
New Caledonia	804,898
Papua New Guinea	325,769
Solomon Islands	199,406
Tonga	34,514
Federated States of Micronesia	3,131
Nauru	2,514
Vanuatu	1,517
Total	**136,632,055**

Source: Federation of American Scientists (2002)

Limited commercial sales data from other exporting states and some information on government sales are also available, mainly from customs authorities (Marsh, 2003). Table 9.2 indicates the extensive network of suppliers of small arms and light weapons dealt with by Pacific states in 2000.

Table 9.2 Declared small arms and ammunition imports, Pacific countries, 2000[3]

Importing country (% of known imports into the region)	Exporting country	Small arms USD value	Ammunition USD value	Combined USD value	Country total USD known imports
Australia (76.8)	Austria	32,000	194,000	226,000	33,953,700
	Belgium	21,000	537,000	558,000	
	Bosnia & Herzegovina		814,000	814,000	
	Brazil	251,000	637,000	888,000	
	Canada	41,200	302,000	343,200	
	China	15,500		15,500	
	Cyprus		75,000	75,000	
	Czech Republic	472,000	69,000	541,000	
	Finland	289,000	69,000	358,000	

Table 9.2 (cont.) **Declared small arms and ammunition imports, Pacific countries, 2000**[3]

Importing country (% of known imports into the region)	Exporting country	Small arms USD value	Ammunition USD value	Combined USD value	Country total USD known imports
	France		16,000	16,000	
	Germany	436,000	1,967,000	2,403,000	
	Italy	1,344,000	835,000	2,179,000	
	Japan	542,000		542,000	
	Korea, Republic of		1,134,000	1,134,000	
	Netherlands	39,000		39,000	
	Philippines	50,000	55,000	105,000	
	Portugal	78,000		78,000	
	Spain	165,000	544,000	709,000	
	Switzerland	36,000		36,000	
	UK	96,000	2,658,000	2,754,000	
	US	2,362,000	17,778,000	20,140,000	
New Zealand (17.87)	Australia	67,000	529,000	596,000	7,898,000
	Austria	16,000		16,000	
	Belgium	192,000		192,000	
	Bosnia & Herzegovina		300,000	300,000	
	Brazil	47,000	966,000	1,013,000	
	Canada		16,000	16,000	
	China	29,000		29,000	
	Czech Republic	30,000	11,000	41,000	
	Finland	153,000	149,000	302,000	
	France		1,487,000	1,487,000	
	Germany	91,000	30,000	121,000	
	Italy	180,000	200,000	380,000	
	Japan	206,000		206,000	
	Korea, Republic of		53,000	53,000	
	Philippines	15,000	33,000	48,000	
	Portugal	37,000		37,000	
	Mexico		15,000	15,000	
	Spain	35,000	176,000	211,000	
	Sweden	10,000		10,000	
	UK		884,000	884,000	
	US	907,000	1,034,000	1,941,000	
French Polynesia	Unspecified	566,000	12,000	578,000	1,277,000
(2.89)	France		681,000	681,000	
	New Zealand		18,000	18,000	
New Caledonia (1.7)	Australia		43,000	43,000	750,000
	China	21,000		21,000	
	Czech Republic	58,000		58,000	
	Finland	49,000		49,000	
	France	51,000	198,000	249,000	
	Germany	50,000		50,000	
	US	171,000	109,000	280,000	
Papua New Guinea	Australia	19,000	101,000	120,000	160,000
(0.36)	US	40,000		40,000	
Fiji (0.25)	Australia	110,000		110,000	110,000
Tonga (0.06)	Australia		11,000	11,000	28,000
	New Zealand		17,000	17,000	
Nauru (0.03)	Thailand	15,000		15,000	15,000
Samoa (0.03)	UK		13,000	13,000	13,000
Vanuatu (0.01)	Australia	2,368		2,368	2,368
TOTALS		**9,437,068**	**34,770,000**	**44,207,068**	**44,207,068**

Source: Marsh (2003)

Australia and New Zealand, the dominant economic powers in the region, are by far the largest importers of small arms and ammunition in the Pacific. Between 1998 and 2000 they accounted for virtually all (99 per cent) of imports into the region from the US and almost 95 per cent of recorded small arm and ammunition deliveries from any source (see Tables 9.1 and 9.2). Demand in these countries is fuelled by relative affluence, the region's largest military and police forces, agricultural pest control, and strong hunting and sport shooting traditions. Although permissive firearm legislation has until recently facilitated private gun ownership in Australia and New Zealand, Australian figures to June 2002 show a 66 per cent decrease in average annual firearm imports since gun laws were tightened in 1996–97 (ACS, 2003a).

Papua New Guinea maintains the next largest defence and police forces in the region, but lacks the resources to import proportionate quantities of small arms and ammunition. In 2000, the French territories of New Caledonia and French Polynesia imported 86 per cent of all known small arms and ammunition destined for countries in the Pacific other than Australia and New Zealand.

Who supplies?

Small arms and ammunition are supplied to the region from a global range of nations. In 2000, 26 countries are recorded as having delivered arms and ammunition worth over USD 44 million to the Pacific. Major suppliers other than the United States included Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the UK, reflecting closer political and economic ties to Europe than to Asia, as well as long-standing trade patterns and familiarity with European and US brands. Brazil and Australia were also in the top ten, while in the military sphere, Singapore, Israel, and South Korea are important suppliers to the defence forces in the Pacific.[4]

At least 26 countries export arms and ammunition to the Pacific.

Surprisingly, some of the world's leading arms suppliers are only minor players in the Pacific. Of the Eastern European and Balkan arms-producing countries, only the Czech Republic and Bosnia and Herzegovina featured in reported exports, suggesting that their marketing reach does not extend far into the Pacific. Chinese small arms are far less common in the Pacific than in other regions, both in imports declared and in numbers of illegal weapons discovered.

Private gun ownership

Lawfully held civilian stockpiles of small arms in the Pacific include 3.1 million firearms, or ten privately held guns for every 100 people. This is more than 50 per cent higher than the global average (Alpers and Twyford, 2003, p. 12). In the Pacific, per capita rates of gun ownership vary considerably from country to country (see Figure 9.1).

With one firearm for every ten people, the Pacific's rate of private gun ownership is 50 per cent higher than the global average.

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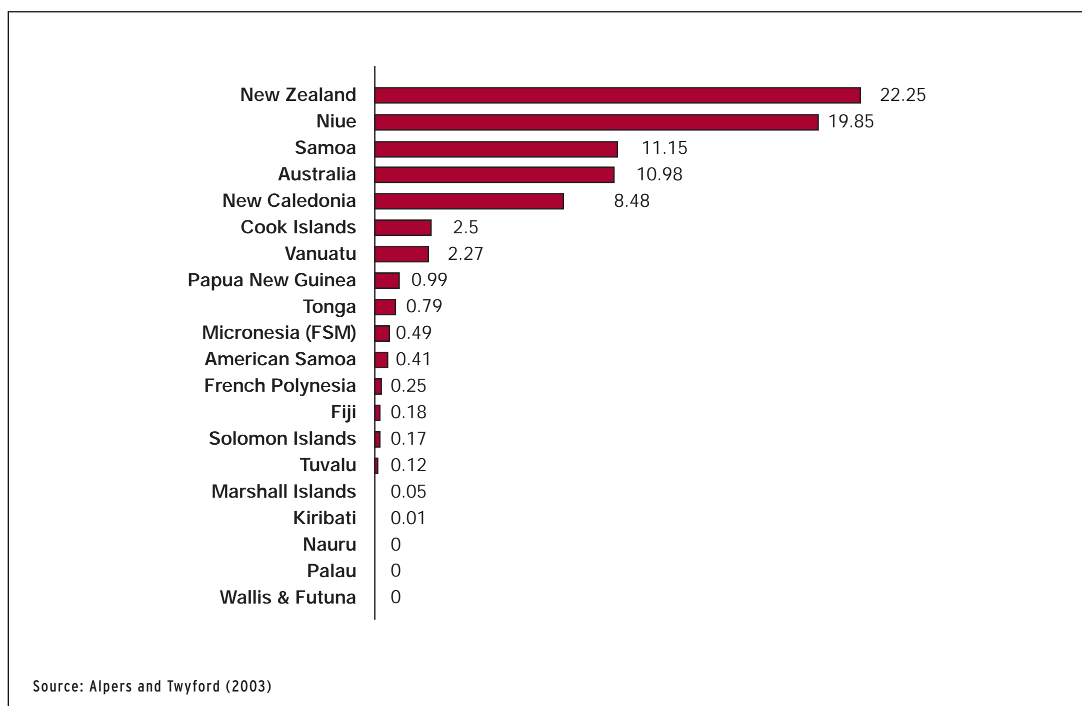
A police officer stacks guns with crushed barrels on the last day of the Australian gun buy-back programme in September 1997. Australians surrendered more than 700,000 guns in the wake of the country's worst shooting massacre, which killed 35 people at Port Arthur in April 1996.

Figure 9.1 Rate of lawful civilian firearm ownership per 100 population in 20 Pacific nations



Source: Alpers and Twyford (2003)

Heavily armed Pacific people

The vast majority of firearms in the Pacific are owned by Australians and New Zealanders, who rank among the most heavily armed civilians in the industrialized world. With some 2.1 million registered firearms (Mouzos, 2002a, p. 5), Australia has eleven legal guns for every 100 head of population. New Zealand's ratio of 22 legal guns per 100 people is twice that of Australia. This is a conservative figure,[5] with NZ Police citing a higher estimate of one million guns in a population approaching four million (Green, 2002).

Australians and New Zealanders rank among the most heavily armed civilians in the industrialized world.

Per capita gun ownership in some of the smaller Pacific states is also surprisingly high. Almost one in five people in Niue, for instance, owns a registered firearm, while the rate of legal gun ownership in Samoa is slightly higher than in Australia. In Nauru and Palau, private guns are prohibited.

Firearm ownership estimates for all Pacific nations remain low in comparison with the US, where four per cent of the world population possesses 50 per cent of the planet's privately owned firearms, or 67 guns per 100 people (Alpers, 2002, p. 262; Alpers and Twyford, 2003, p. 11).

State security force stockpiles

The combined military and law enforcement holdings of the southern Pacific are estimated to be 226,046 small arms, or seven per cent of the civilian stockpile (see Table 9.3). As military inventories are rarely published, this figure was derived using a multiplier technique developed by the Small Arms Survey (STOCKPILES).[6] These are conservative estimates, and much more can be done to refine the assumptions on which they are based.

Table 9.3 State security forces in the Pacific, 2002

State-owned small arms in the Pacific are estimated at 226,046, or seven per cent of the civilian stockpile.

	Population	Sworn police officers	Police routinely armed?	Regular military
Australia	19,707,200	43,722	Yes	50,700
Papua New Guinea	5,028,000	5,311	Yes	4,400
New Zealand	3,820,749	7,038	No	8,695
Fiji	840,000	1,970	No	3,500
Solomon Islands	479,000	1,442	Yes	0
French Polynesia	241,000	220	Yes	530
New Caledonia	224,000	268	Yes	704
Vanuatu	207,000	319	No	256
Samoa	160,000	490	No	0
Federated States of Micronesia	124,000	500	Yes	0
Tonga	101,000	418	No	390
Kiribati	92,000	458	No	0
American Samoa	61,000	200	No	0
Marshall Islands	54,000	130	No	0
Cook Islands	20,000	100	No	0
Palau	20,000	75	Yes	0
Wallis and Futuna	14,700	20	Yes	46
Nauru	12,000	80	No	0
Tuvalu	10,000	72	No	0
Niue	2,000	16	No	0
Totals	**31,217,649**	**62,849**	**Yes 82% No 18%**	**69,221**

Source: Alpers & Twyford (2003)

Routinely unarmed police protect more than 5 million citizens in 12 of 20 nations surveyed.

Military inventories: In 2000, it is conservatively estimated that defence and paramilitary forces of the south-western Pacific supported 69,221 active personnel. Combining this figure with the standard small arms multiplier of 2.25 yields a conservative estimate of 155,747 military small arms in the Pacific. It is quite likely that total troop numbers have declined since then,[7] though it is also probable that total stocks have increased since ageing firearms tend to be retained rather than destroyed.

Police inventories: Not all Pacific police officers carry guns. As shown in Table 9.3, routinely unarmed police protect more than five million citizens in 12 of the 20 nations surveyed. Combining a standard small arms multiplier of 1.3 weapons for each of 51,558 routinely armed police officers[8] yields a figure of approximately 67,025 police firearms. Adding guns stored for officers who are routinely unarmed, as in New Zealand, increases the total to 70,299.

Table 9.4 Civilian, military, and police firearms in the Pacific, 2002

Firearms	Number held
Lawfully held civilian firearms	3,112,272
Military firearms	155,747
Police firearms	70,299
Total	**3,338,318**

THE ILLICIT TRADE: GUN SMUGGLING, LEAKAGE, AND CRIME

> Illicit trade in small arms is simply an extension of the legal trade. It's good trade gone bad.
> (Warren A. Paia, Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Solomon Islands.
> Pacific Islands Small Arms Seminar, Tokyo, January 2003)

Crime and conflict are, as elsewhere, the main drivers of demand for illegal small arms in the Pacific region. The key centres of gun trafficking for the purposes of armed crime are those with the largest populations—Australia and Papua New Guinea. Yet, when compared with the legal trade, illicit firearm imports into the Pacific appear to be minor.

The great majority of illicit, commercially manufactured small arms in the Pacific began as legal weapons in the hands of local civilians, military, and police. Firearms seized following crime and conflict, collected during gun amnesties, and turned up in routine policing are commonly sourced to licensed gun owners and dealers and to state-owned armouries. With the possible exception of Papua New Guinea, domestic leakage of legally held guns greatly exceeds the volume of firearms smuggled into the region.

Domestic leakage of legally held guns greatly exceeds the volume of firearms smuggled into the region.

Smuggled weapons

Conflicts in the region have generated organized gun-running in the past, such as a container of small arms intercepted on its way to Fiji in the late 1980s.[9] Less organized gun-running from South-east Asia and Australia to Papua New Guinea undoubtedly occurs and continues to cause alarm. Gun smuggling into Australia, New Zealand, and the smaller island states is invariably revealed to be small-scale, opportunistic, and relatively uncommon.

The Australian Institute of Criminology found that most firearms smuggled into Australia were imported as parts by mail from the United States (Mouzos, 1999, p. 4). In a country of 20 million, the Australian Customs Service intercepted a modest 204 handguns in fiscal year 2000–01, and later reported 'no significant evidence or intelligence to suggest that large numbers of handguns are being illegally imported into Australia' (ACS, 2003b). According to Australia's federal Justice and Customs Minister Chris Ellison, most firearms that fell into the wrong hands were stolen from licensed gun owners (Toohey, 2002).

Claims of systematic smuggling of illicit firearms into New Zealand surface from time to time but have not been substantiated. In an extensive judicial review of firearm regulation, Sir Thomas Thorp (1997, pp. 25–6) concluded that '[b]oth Customs and the Police believe that illegal [firearm] imports into New Zealand have at least until recently been at low volume, and that large-scale imports would have become apparent were they occurring'. In the past decade, New Zealand Police and Customs have discovered only a few dozen smuggled firearms, all one-off imports or in very small numbers, trafficked by opportunistic individuals.

Law-enforcement officers also speak of illicit handgun possession in the Samoan fishing fleet and illegal long guns in Nauru, Niue, and the Cook Islands. Again, evidence is scarce or non-existent.

Illegal trafficking in small arms is a pressing issue in Papua New Guinea. A number of smuggling routes appear to be active, sourcing firearms from South-east Asia and Australia. Illicitly produced firearms from the Philippines and military-issue weapons from Vietnam and other South-east Asian countries have been discovered in Papua New Guinea. Visiting forestry contractors are among those suspected of smuggling handguns.

Illegal trafficking in small arms is a pressing issue in Papua New Guinea.

Hand in hand with a recognized trade in drugs, arms trafficking is also allegedly taking place along the rugged, rarely patrolled border between Papua New Guinea and the Indonesian province of Irian Jaya, or West Papua. It is nevertheless difficult to be sure in which direction the arms are flowing, as both countries claim to be the target of local gun-runners.[10]

The narrow, island-studded Torres Strait between Australia and Papua New Guinea is recognized as a favourite smuggling route for both commodities and people, and so is carefully monitored. Despite this attention, small arm seizures have been few in number and small in scale. In testimony to a parliamentary inquiry, Australian Federal Police described Torres Strait smuggling as 'ad hoc, opportunistic, unsophisticated, albeit effective' (Saunders, 2000).

It is rumoured that quantities of illegal firearms have been smuggled into the Pacific region from elsewhere, perhaps from China. While this remains unsupported by any evidence of smuggled guns, such guesswork continues to fuel a debate beyond resolution. Until adequate samples of crime guns have been traced back to their last lawful owners, whether domestic or foreign, evidence-based policy options are likely to remain elusive.

Leakage from civilian stocks

In Australia, 25,171 firearms were reported stolen in the six years to June 2000. Of these, 81 per cent were taken from private homes while an unknown number of additional thefts went unreported. One South Australian licensed gun dealer lost up to 600 handguns in a single robbery, and 'highly organized' raids on firearm dealers and private collectors in Victoria and New South Wales netted at least 500 more (Mouzos, 2002b; *The Advertiser,* 1999). Several licensed gun dealers have also been prosecuted for large-scale, organized firearm sales to criminals.

Theft of privately owned firearms is the most important source of illegal guns in Australia.

© AP Photo/Edward Wray

A Fijian soldier enforces martial law at a checkpoint just before curfew during the fourth week of the civilian coup in June 2000 in Suva.

In the second half of 2003, a spate of burglaries and armed robberies netted 60 handguns from licensed security guards in Sydney alone (Geohegan, 2003). Australia's federal Justice and Customs Minister declared the theft of privately owned firearms to be 'the major source of illegal guns in Australia' (ABC, 2003).

In New Zealand, a survey of prison inmates indicated that the bulk of firearms available on the black market had been stolen from legitimate owners (Newbold, 1999, p. 73, cited in Chatvick, 1999, p. 2). Another study found that 54 per cent of firearms reported stolen were rifles, 34 per cent shotguns, and five per cent handguns. Sixty per cent of these guns had been stolen from urban dwellings, while 52 per cent of incidents of gun theft involved firearms that had not been securely stored by their owners (Alpers and Walters, 1998).

An officer in charge of the New Zealand Police Firearms Licensing Task Force once wrote: 'I have no doubt that in the overwhelming majority of cases, those firearms [used in crime] came into this country lawfully, and their original New Zealand owners were the holders of firearms licences or permits.'[11]

In the island nations of the Pacific, figures on gun theft from private owners are rarely collected. It is known that, of the commercially manufactured firearms surrendered during the Solomon Islands and Bougainville disarmament campaigns, most had been diverted from a legitimate civilian or state purpose. Firearms used in peacetime for hunting, pest control, and policing had been pressed into service during conflict, then surrendered to authorities by former combatants.

Leakage from police and military holdings

> I'm the most powerful man in the country. I hold the key to the armoury.
>
> (A Pacific Island delegate, speaking at a small arms seminar in Tokyo.)[12]

In Fiji, the Solomon Islands, and Papua New Guinea, groups bent on rebellion, intimidation, and profit have treated state-owned armouries as gun supermarkets, helping themselves to weapons when needed. Stolen military small arms have fuelled a variety of police and defence force insurrections, made possible the overthrow of elected governments, and greatly increased the lethality of armed crime and tribal and ethnic conflict. Resource constraints, corruption, and ethnic loyalties limited the capacity of authorities to retrieve lost weapons, many of which quickly found their way into criminal hands. In recent years the most destructive firearms used in crime and conflict in Pacific island nations were provided by soldiers and police.

The relative importance of home-made weapons in the Pacific is often overstated.

Fiji Islands: The May 2000 raid on parliament could hardly have been executed without assault rifles stolen from the Fiji Military Force armoury. The number of firearms used in Suva was small—only seven gunmen executed the coup, later providing arms to perhaps another 100 young rebels—yet this was sufficient to unseat a democratically elected government. Members of Fiji's Counter-Revolutionary Warfare Unit—ironically, a crack military team established in the wake of two earlier coups in 1987—were implicated in providing the guns.

Solomon Islands: In January and June 2000, Malaitan militants raided Royal Solomon Islands Police (RSIP) armouries at Auki and Honiara, the latter in collusion with the RSIP's own paramilitary force. More than 500 assault rifles and machine guns were taken, some of which were used to overthrow the elected government. Quickly diverted to criminals, the guns then enabled armed gangs to embark on a three-year spree of intimidation and violence. Hundreds of civilians were injured and killed, and thousands were driven from their homes.

Box 9.1 Home-made firearms

Home-made firearms added significantly to the combatants' arsenal in both the Bougainville and the Solomon Islands conflicts, primarily as a substitute for unobtainable commercial firearms. In Bougainville, home-made weapons made up more than half of those surrendered to peace monitors in the first 11 months of disarmament (BPMG, 2002a). In the Solomon Islands, they made up 35 per cent of the weapons confiscated in the three years to January 2004 (Solomon Islands IPMT, 2001; RAMSI, 2004).

In both conflicts, home-made weapons were produced in greater quantities by the side with proportionately less access to high-powered firearms. For example, in the Solomon Islands close relations with the police meant that the Malaita Eagle Force (MEF) sourced many of its firearms directly from the police armoury. By contrast, the Isatabu Freedom Movement (IFM), from an opposing ethnic group, had fewer claims on police support and so augmented its arsenal by producing home-made weapons.

There remains a thriving market for home-made guns in Papua New Guinea, where police collections of confiscated weapons are littered with primitive, one-off, locally made firearms used in clan conflict and crime (Dorney, 2000). Yet the relative importance of home-made weapons in the Pacific has often been overstated. In reality, a length of water pipe firing mismatched and/or ancient ammunition can be as dangerous to the user as it is to the target, and craft manufacture is seen as a last resort.

Single-shot, smoothbore pistols and long guns are the only home-made firearms discovered to date, and these cannot be compared in terms of range, accuracy, and firepower to mass-produced, repeating firearms with rifled barrels and matched ammunition. There is no evidence of local production of rifled barrels, nor of multi-shot firing mechanisms such as pump-action or lever-action, semi-automatic or automatic firearms in the south-western Pacific.

Source: Alpers and Twyford (2003, pp. 25–6)

Groups bent on rebellion, intimidation, and profit have treated state-owned armouries as gun supermarkets.

Papua New Guinea: In December 2000 almost 100 police firearms were reported missing, including assault rifles, semi-automatic pistols, and shotguns, along with thousands of rounds of ammunition. An audit the following year reported that as many as 600 firearms had disappeared from the police armoury. In March 2001 a quantity of military weapons and ammunition were taken from the Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF) headquarters, followed a year later by large-scale firearm thefts from Moem Barracks at Wewak. During nine years of armed conflict on the islands of Bougainville, PNGDF forces and police either supplied or lost many hundreds of small arms to combatants on both sides.

Box 9.2 World War II small arms

Firearms and ammunition salvaged from World War II stockpiles provided a small but significant proportion of firepower in the Bougainville and Solomon Islands conflicts. Both Japanese and Allied troops dumped thousands of tonnes of war materiel in the region, yet 60 years on, less than ten per cent of the firearms documented in recent years in Bougainville—many of them no longer capable of being fired—came from wartime stocks. In the Solomon Islands, the 'handful' of war relics handed in were all degraded and unusable (BPMG, 2002b). Although ex-combatants possibly retain some carefully preserved World War II small arms for future use, relics from the 1940s remain less desirable, and ammunition for them harder to obtain, than modern equivalents.

Most of the firearms used in the Fiji coup appear to have been returned. However, in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands hundreds of former security force firearms remain in circulation, adding to the challenges of disarmament and fuelling fears of continued armed violence.

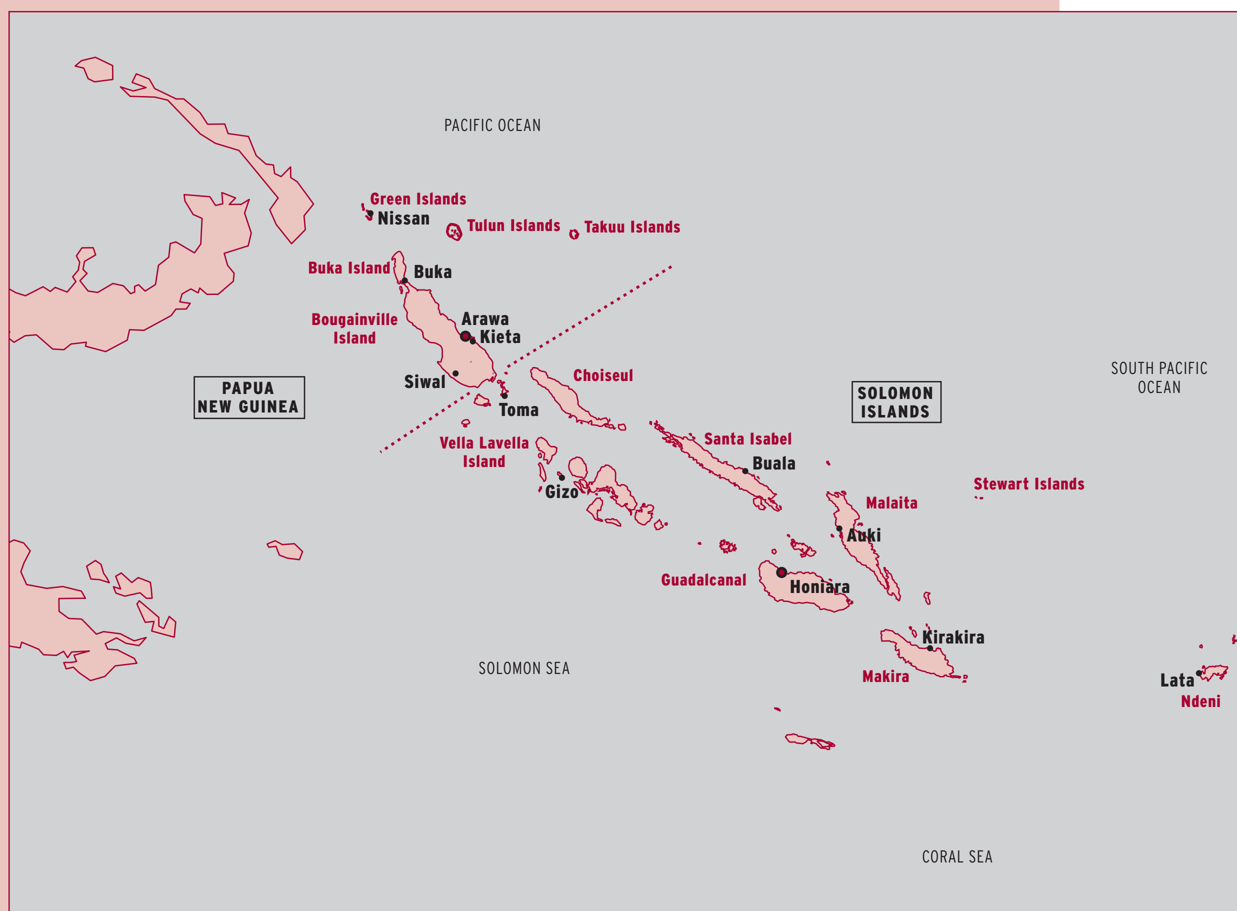
In recent years Australia and New Zealand have prioritized development assistance for armoury management in Pacific Island nations, providing training and funding to secure small arms held by military and police. Both nations see disarmament and weapon destruction programmes as essential prerequisites for peace, human security, and development.

Box 9.3 After the shooting stops: The recirculation of leftover weapons

Following conflict, former combatants commonly trade their weapons into black markets, which then transfer them to the next centre of demand. This has been most apparent among three of the region's closest island neighbours: the Solomon Islands, Bougainville, and mainland Papua New Guinea.

Community leaders in the Papua New Guinea islands of Bougainville report that, when transport links reopened following conflict, PNG mainlanders began travelling to Buka to purchase firearms. The going rate for a self-loading military rifle was as high as USD 250, and could make the trip worthwhile. Papua New Guinea police and customs occasionally check ships, but only in ports. Further down the main island of Bougainville, long-time residents working closely with ex-combatants report a 'steady stream' of weapons out of Buka, particularly since the beginning of the 2002 peace-building and election period. Prices allegedly ranged from USD 500 for an M-16 assault rifle to USD 2,500 for an M-60 machine gun.

Close cultural ties exist between the people of Bougainville and the western Solomon Islands, and no doubt there is some trafficking across the narrow border strait between them. In addition to known movements of armed criminals, caches of Bougainville Revolutionary Army weapons are still believed to exist in parts of Gizo and Western Province. Nevertheless, despite a few isolated incidents, there is little evidence to support claims of serious trafficking. Authorities in Honiara have not observed any 'new or unusual' influx of firearms to the Solomon Islands.



Source: Alpers and Twyford (2003, pp. 26–7)

> We were once able to draw tourists from across the globe, tourists who were in search of the perfect Pacific paradise—warm, friendly people, clear blue waters, white beaches, a wealth of custom and culture found nowhere else in the world. However, I fear that this image has been shattered by the recent crises in our region. We shouldn't be surprised if people view our region as one characterised by coups, militancy, instability and general lawlessness.
>
> (Sir Peter Kenilorea, Chairman, Peace Monitoring Council Honiara, Solomon Islands, 2001)

THE HUMAN COST OF FIREARM MISUSE IN THREE PACIFIC COMMUNITIES

In many of the smaller Pacific Island countries, development processes are fragile. States such as the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, which rank alongside Cambodia and Zimbabwe as two of the 'least developed' countries in the world, lack the resources or capacity to deliver basic services such as health and education adequately to their citizens (UNDP, 2003). Where inequality, lack of economic opportunity, and long-standing disputes over land and resources lead to violence, the availability of firearms makes conflict more lethal, more protracted, and more difficult to resolve.[13] Clearly, small arms alone do not cause states to fail. Yet ready access to small arms can quickly bring weak states to the brink of collapse and spark humanitarian and developmental crises.

Fiji

> It's a sad situation—one our military was not trained for. To combat internally. But here we're seeing our own soldiers kill at random, indiscriminately… When we see the bullet marks, we cannot believe this is happening in our own country. It's something you expect to see in the Middle East or elsewhere, but never in our own country.
>
> (Major Howard Politini, spokesman, Fiji Military Forces, 2000)

In Fiji, longstanding social inequalities and ethnic tensions built a tinderbox, with the sudden availability of small arms providing the spark. The 1999 election of Mahendra Chaudry, the country's first Indo-Fijian prime minister, encountered bitter opposition from many in the indigenous Fijian establishment. Already unsettled by two coups in 1987 and the adoption of an explicitly multi-racial constitution in 1997, an increasingly radicalized opposition began to foment insurrection.

The availability of firearms has made Pacific conflicts more lethal, more protracted, and more difficult to resolve.

Following two violent protests against the newly established government, a small group of men armed themselves with Uzi and Galil assault weapons from state armouries. On 19 May 2000, led by local businessman George Speight, the gang stormed parliament buildings, where for 56 days they held hostage the Prime Minister and most of Fiji's elected government. Five people were killed.

Unprecedented rioting and looting broke out across Fiji, with 20 shops set alight in the capital, Suva, alone. Indo-Fijians were targeted in widespread mob violence, evictions, rape, and arson. Many hundreds fled their homes, farms, and businesses, some never to return. Tourist resorts, police stations, and a military base were taken over by nationalists, while power cuts and prolonged roadblocks added to the chaos. Then on 2 November the Counter-Revolutionary

Warfare Unit of the Fiji Military Force—many members of which had been involved in the coup—attempted to murder the military Chief of Staff. Eight soldiers were killed and scores more, including civilians, were hit by stray bullets.

The economic costs of armed violence in Fiji were severe. The vital tourism sector collapsed (see Box 9.4), albeit briefly, mass redundancies and shorter working hours followed across most other sectors, and unemployment doubled to 15 per cent. Even 18 months after the coup, the Fijian government estimated that at least 9,000 workers had been made redundant as a result of the crisis. In addition, by May 2002 more than 11,500 people had left Fiji since the coup (population 840,000). The great majority of those who left permanently were Fijians of Indian extraction (Gurdayal, 2002; *Port Vila Presse,* 2002).

© AP/Rob Griffith

George Speight stands beside weapons used during the 2-month coup he led in Suva, Fiji, in July 2000. The weapons were handed over to the Great Council of Chiefs later that day.

Fiji's economy contracted sharply following the crisis, with an overall decline in 2000 of between 2.8 and 4 per cent of GDP.[14] While the crisis remained unresolved, major donor countries such as Australia and New Zealand introduced a range of sanctions. Official aid was reduced by 30 per cent, and most humanitarian programmes were cut. At the request of Fijian trade unions, both Australian and New Zealand unions imposed temporary bans on the loading and unloading of cargo to and from Fiji, resulting in losses of approximately USD 57 million. The threat of further trade sanctions led to falling export demand, and export levels fell by more than 20 per cent in the three months following the coup. Health and education funding dried up, and schools were closed for months. In 2000, the overall costs of the armed coup were estimated at USD 300 million, or more than one-third of GDP (Alpers and Twyford, 2003, pp. 35–8). Despite a temporary decline in revenue after 11 September 2001, however, a recovering tourism sector and a modest growth in exports have been features of continued growth in the Fijian economy from 2000 to 2004 (ADB, 2003, p. 44).

The economic costs of armed violence in Fiji were severe, collapsing the country's vital tourism sector.

Box 9.4 The effects of armed violence on Fiji's tourist industry

Tourism is Fiji's primary source of foreign currency. In 1999, the industry generated USD 250 million, or 30 per cent of GDP, directly and indirectly employing more than 45,000 people. That year, 410,000 tourists arrived in Fiji, an increase of ten per cent on the previous year.

Following the May 2000 coup, massive decreases were recorded for visitors from all major markets. In the third quarter of 2000, tourist numbers dropped by 62 per cent to just 45,000, compared with 119,300 in the same quarter of 1999. Over 2,000 employees of the tourism and hospitality sector lost their jobs. Financial losses were estimated at USD 500,000 daily, or USD 46 million over the crisis period. Two years on, employment figures for the tourism accommodation industry were still 5.2 per cent lower than before the conflict. Nevertheless, by 2003 tourist arrival figures had reached 430,800—more than the 1999 figure—and were predicted to rise to 445,000 in 2004.

Sources: Alpers and Twyford (2003, pp. 35–8); Fiji Government (2004)

The Solomon Islands

> ... the problem lies deep within our hearts. A relatively small number of men are establishing a new way of acting. The gun and what it stands for—intimidation and power—is creating a society where the culture of violence rules.
>
> (John Roughan, Solomon Islands NGO leader, 2001)

Four years of armed conflict and instability in the Solomon Islands brought into sharp focus the extent of underdevelopment, and quickly reversed a decade of social and economic gains. The outbreak of violence in 1998 was initiated by young men from the main island of Guadalcanal, who, frustrated with the failure of successive governments to address local problems, armed themselves with privately owned hunting rifles, home-made firearms, World War II relics, and ammunition. Their frustrations were focused on long-standing, smouldering disputes over the occupation of land in Guadalcanal by settlers from the island of Malaita, aggravated by one-off incidents of Malaitan violence against people from Guadalcanal.

Small groups of organized 'Gualese' began attacking Malaitan households in the capital, Honiara, and surrounding areas. By the end of 1998, a Gualese militant group with as many as 2,000 members had been formed, initially called the Guadalcanal Revolutionary Army but later renamed the Isatabu Freedom Movement (IFM). By mid-1999, at least 50 people had been killed by armed militants, and about 20,000 people, including 13,000 Malaitans, had fled Guadalcanal.

Four years of armed conflict in the Solomon Islands reversed a decade of social and economic gains.

Malaitans reacted by forming the Malaita Eagle Force (MEF), which in January 2000 raided the police armoury at Auki, greatly augmenting its firepower with 34 military assault rifles and ammunition. By late 1999, open confrontations were occurring between the IFM and the MEF. At the request of the Solomon Islands government, the Commonwealth Secretariat deployed a contingent of police officers from Fiji and Vanuatu, but this failed, as did other attempts to facilitate a peace process.

On 5 June 2000 the MEF colluded with police to raid the Rove armoury in Honiara, stealing over 1,000 assault rifles and machine guns and forcing the resignation of the Prime Minister. In August 2000 the two factions agreed to a ceasefire, and in mid-October a peace agreement was signed in Townsville, Australia. The Townsville Peace Agreement established an International Peace Monitoring Team and a local Peace Monitoring Council, with provision for weapon surrender (see below).

Armed violence continued, with an estimated 100 deaths in 2000 and 30 'post-conflict' firearm fatalities in the first half of 2003 alone (Muggah and Alpers, 2003). Many more are believed to have died due to limited access to basic health services. Police retreated or joined the rebels, villages were burnt, armed crime and rape became commonplace, and, in a nation of 480,000 people, 40,000–50,000 residents had been displaced from their homes. Of these, 23,000 were Malaitans fleeing Guadalcanal. Forced dislocation of families left enduring scars on the islands' traditional, village-based society. The number of single-headed households increased dramatically, and ruptured social structures heralded long-term disempowerment for youth. An estimated 100 child soldiers fought in the conflict, and many other children were forced to abandon their schooling.

Financial resources that would ordinarily have been devoted to development were spent instead on emergency relief. New Zealand ceased the vast majority of its development programmes, and over the next two years redirected 73 per cent of its USD 3.2 million aid budget to humanitarian assistance and conflict resolution. Australia redirected extra funds to the Solomons, increasing its assistance from an average of USD 8.6 million a year over the previous six years to more than USD 22 million a year in the three budget years following the coup. The European Union, however, suspended its USD 72 million 1998/99 development assistance funding to the Solomons for more than two years.

The *Economist* headlined the Solomon Islands as 'The Pacific's First Failed State?'

Armed conflict and official mismanagement pushed the already fragile Solomon Islands economy into ruin. Most industries ceased operations, prompting a dramatic fall in export earnings and a sharp decline in GDP. At the end of 2001, gross external reserves were sufficient to cover only a month of imports, while external reserves continued to decline in 2002 at the rate of USD 10 million a week. On 15 February 2003, *The Economist* headlined the Solomon Islands as 'The Pacific's First Failed State?'

Bougainville

> Without warning one day [the BRA] came to my village firing shots indiscriminately. It was chaos and nightmare. Families were separated. The next day I gave birth prematurely with the assistance of a local doctor in an abandoned bank. A few minutes later on the same morning, another pregnant woman came in—she was not so fortunate. She died from loss of blood. Her baby survived. After her came another pregnant mother who needed to give birth by Caesarean method. Her stomach burst open—she died. Her baby survived. What could the doctor do without equipment and medicine? He was helpless. Ten days later our village was completely burnt and we had to run into the jungle to hide.
>
> (Helen Hakena, Bougainville peace activist, UN Small Arms Conference, New York, July 2001)

The nine-year crisis in Bougainville was the longest and most devastating conflict in the Pacific since the Second World War. The roots of the violence in this mountainous island province of Papua New Guinea extend back to the colonial era.[15] Tensions between the indigenous population and the Papua New Guinea government worsened as a result of Rio Tinto's development of the Panguna gold and copper mine on Bougainville Island. Between 1972 and 1989, production at the mine accounted for 40–50 per cent of Papua New Guinea's foreign exchange, with few visible

benefits to local inhabitants. Growing inequalities, environmental damage, and disputes over compensation payments to traditional landowners sowed the seeds of the conflict that eventually erupted in the late 1980s.

In November 1988, mining operations were brought to a standstill after a coordinated attack by armed landowners. By June 1989 the conflict had escalated into a war between the Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF) and the newly formed Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA). Although the PNGDF was by far the better equipped of the two forces, the BRA, armed with World War II relics, home-made weapons, and stolen PNGDF firearms, forced a ceasefire in March 1990. For four years, Papua New Guinea imposed a total blockade of the island.

From 1992, the PNGDF began to recapture parts of the province. It was aided by the Bougainville Resistance Forces (BRF), local groups formed in reaction to the at times unrestrained violence of the BRA. Gradually a secessionist conflict evolved into a much more complex internal war. Most factions fought each other, and small arms-related human rights atrocities were committed by all sides.

Small arms-related human rights atrocities were committed by all sides.

© Reuters

With his pistol drawn, a major urges PNGDF troops not to join anti-government protests in March 1997. Disillusionment was at a high after the dismissal of an army commander who had demanded the resignation of the prime minister for hiring foreign mercenaries to quash a nine-year secessionist rebellion in Bougainville.

Several attempts had been made since 1990 to negotiate an end to the conflict, but none was successful. Ironically, a heavy-handed move by the Papua New Guinea government, in 1997, to hire British and South African mercenaries to crush the BRA and recapture the mine provided the catalyst for a peace process to begin. Amidst public outrage, the then Papua New Guinea Prime Minister was forced to resign, and the Sandline mercenaries never reached the shores of Bougainville. Military solutions had been effectively discredited.

In October 1997 a truce was negotiated at Burnham, New Zealand, followed by a ceasefire in 1998. Deployment of a New Zealand-led Truce Monitoring Group was followed by an Australian-led Peace Monitoring Group (PMG)[16] endorsed by the UN Security Council. The Bougainville Peace Agreement, finalized at Arawa in August 2001 between the Papua New Guinea Government, the BRA, and the BRF, included provisions for a transition to autonomy and a deferred referendum on independence, as well as a complex plan for weapon disposal (Regan, 2002). In March 2002 Papua New Guinea's parliament cleared the way for elections for an autonomous Bougainville. By late 2003 both the international Peace Monitoring Group and a smaller civilian group that replaced it had withdrawn from the province, and a new constitution and elections had been scheduled for 2004.

In Bougainville, peace negotiations explicitly link weapon destruction to autonomy and an eventual referendum on independence from Papua New Guinea.

Throughout these negotiations, disarmament was a paramount concern, with explicit conditions linking the destruction of small arms to any eventual independence from Papua New Guinea (see next section).

The nine-year Bougainville conflict is commonly reported to have caused 12,000 to 15,000 deaths, though no clear methodology for this estimate has been advanced. Most observers agree that at least several thousand Bougainvillean civilians were killed, as well as several hundred PNGDF personnel, along with similar numbers from the two combatant groups, the BRA and the BRF.

The four-year blockade of Bougainville by the Papua New Guinea government led to the complete collapse of the health system and contributed significantly to the casualties of war. Malaria, whooping cough, and malnutrition spread unchecked, tuberculosis and leprosy made a comeback, and immunization, medicines, and health care were simply not available. In central and southern Bougainville, 100,000 people lived from 1992 to 1998 without access to a doctor.

Armed conflict forced thousands of civilians into the bush, where many hid for months, even years. Others were forced into 'care centres' run by the Papua New Guinea government. By mid-1995, some 64,000 displaced Bougainvilleans (population approximately 160,000) had taken refuge in 39 such centres. As many as 9,000 fled as refugees to the neighbouring Solomon Islands.

For many families in Bougainville, the war has not ended. One of the most common forms of human rights abuse was gender-based violence, and many cases of sexual violation and abuse are only now coming to light as women and children report events long suppressed by fear.

Prior to 1988, Bougainville had one of the highest rates of literacy in the Pacific. Armed conflict collapsed the best-achieving primary and secondary school system in Papua New Guinea, and 15,000–20,000 young people were denied the opportunity of learning. Recovery is slow, and young men in particular have difficulty resuming normal life, their memory of atrocities never far from the surface.

Bougainvilleans see the destruction of small arms as essential to renewed development, good health, education, and prosperity.

Funds allocated to the Bougainville peace process and associated weapon-disposal efforts represent an opportunity cost to donor partners, who might otherwise have spent them on ongoing development assistance. In 2001–02, New Zealand spent more than a fifth of its entire Bougainville assistance budget of USD 1.58 million on weapon disposal. During the five years following the start of formal peace talks in mid-1997, Australia spent at least USD 12.4 million, or more than 15 per cent of its entire Bougainville budget, on direct support to the peace process.

The widespread destruction of infrastructure, the collapse of the mining, copra, and cocoa industries, and years of lost education in Bougainville constitute a major, long-term economic setback to the province once known as the country's most productive. Bougainville's provincial government now lacks the financial and human capacity to

Box 9.5 Gun violence and crime in Australia, New Zealand, and Papua New Guinea

Australia's gun death rate has declined considerably since the 1980s (see Box 6.5). Of the 299 firearm-related deaths recorded during 2002 in Australia, 217 (73 per cent) were suicides, 45 (15 per cent) were homicides, 31 (ten per cent) were unintentional, and six (two per cent) were law enforcement shootings (Bell, 2003). In the five years to June 2001, handgun homicide as a proportion of firearm homicide grew from 13 per cent to 50 per cent. Handgun violence has emerged as a serious problem in some suburbs of Sydney and Melbourne, and public concern at the level of illicit firearm trafficking in Australia—particularly the trade in handguns, which were used in 67 per cent of all armed robberies in 2001—has risen accordingly.

In 2000, **New Zealand** recorded 53 murders. Firearms were used in six of these, one of which involved a handgun. In the period 1988–98, there were 1,046 gun-related deaths, an average of 95 per year. Of these, 76 per cent were suicides, 13 per cent homicides, and seven per cent unintentional shootings. Violent robberies totalled 1,657 in 2000–1, of which 164 involved firearms. Both New Zealand's and Australia's per capita rates of firearm violence are moderate by world standards.

In **Papua New Guinea,** although figures are scarce and unreliable, firearm-related violence has by all accounts reached epidemic proportions. In the rural highlands, where guns are rapidly replacing traditional weapons, tribal fighting claims an average of 200 lives per year. A UN survey of three major towns, Port Moresby, Lae and Goroka, found rates of violent crime to be twice those of Johannesburg and Rio de Janeiro.

Source: Alpers and Twyford (2003, pp. 25–6)

undertake many of its core functions. Throughout all this, observers, donor agencies, governments, and many Bougainvilleans see disarmament and the destruction of small arms as essential and urgent prerequisites to renewed development, good health, education, and prosperity.

DISARMAMENT PACIFIC STYLE: EXPERIENCES IN BOUGAINVILLE AND THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

In Bougainville and the Solomon Islands, disarmament is seen as an essential pillar of durable stability. Without comprehensive disposal of small arms, challenges to law and order persist, and the threat of armed violence undermines any restoration of peace.

No two conflicts are alike, nor are they resolved in exactly the same way. In Bougainville, the war was long and its resolution involved a wide range of actors. A complex three-stage 'weapons disposal plan' is now intricately linked to aspirations for political autonomy and possible independence.

The Solomon Islands conflict was more acute, its outrages in the end more criminal than political, its gun-fuelled anarchy resolved only by the collapse of government and unprecedented outside intervention. Prior to this, peace processes focused almost exclusively on weapon disposal, arguably at the expense of broader conflict resolution, justice and law reform, corruption control, and a more integrated peace-building process.

This section considers the problems and challenges encountered in two very different disarmament processes. The people involved, however, remain culturally and ethnically north and south Solomon Islanders, their nation cut in half, annexed in 1899 by Germany, with the North Solomons (Bougainville) more recently declared a province of Papua New Guinea. Their contrasting experiences illustrate disarmament, Pacific style.

Bougainville: Getting the house in order

> After ten years of war, we have had these weapons too long . . . to achieve what we want, we have to lose our weapons. Tomorrow we will be free; the country will be free. The house will be in order.
>
> (Komoiki, Bougainville ex-combatant; UNDP, 2002)

Weapon disposal is now intricately linked to aspirations for political autonomy and independence.

In Bougainville, following the agreement of an agenda for successful peace negotiations in mid-1997, weapon disposal remained one of the more sensitive issues on the table. Due to mistrust between combatant factions and continuing fear of the PNGDF, disarmament was sidelined until January 2001, when factional leaders met the Papua New Guinea government to establish a set of principles for a referendum on Bougainville's political status. Now weapon disposal took centre stage, and in August 2001 the Bougainville Peace Agreement included provisions for a transition to autonomy and a deferred referendum on independence, both linked to a complex weapon disposal process (see Box 9.6). The three-stage disarmament plan was launched in December 2001, then gradually implemented across Bougainville.

In March 2002, the Papua New Guinea parliament unanimously passed a set of constitutional amendments to give effect to the Bougainville Peace Agreement. In the months preceding the vote, ex-combatants made remarkable progress on disarmament, mindful that support for the passage of legislation was contingent on visible progress being

made on weapon disposal. Though progress was variable in both time and place, by late October 2002 1,639 firearms had been surrendered—304 'high-powered' firearms,[17] 284 sporting rifles, 892 home-made guns, and 159 Second World War relics.

Box 9.6 From weapon disposal to independence: The three-stage arms disposal plan

Stage One: Small arms are handed in to regional faction commanders for storage in portable containers. These are then publicly sealed by representatives of the UN Observer Mission on Bougainville (UNOMB).

Stage Two: Senior commanders from each faction move the weapons to larger, secure containers in central locations. Following the passage of amendments to the Papua New Guinea Constitution, the arms are secured with two locks: one key held by the ex-combatant commander, the other held by UNOMB. This stage ends after constitutional amendments come into force, and UNOMB has verified that sufficient arms have been collected and safely secured. Only then can preparations for the first autonomous elections begin.

Stage Three: Discussions on the final disposal of weapons are held within four-and-a-half months of autonomy legislation coming into effect. If no decision is made, the BRA, BRF, and Papua New Guinea government can decide whether or not sufficient weapons have been collected to allow elections to proceed. UNOMB may also be called upon to determine whether sufficient weapons have been collected for free and fair elections to take place, a decision which binds all parties. After this, a referendum on independence for Bougainville is to be held no fewer than ten, but no more than 15, years after the first autonomous elections.

The most positive development in the latter half of 2002 was the widespread shift of all ten Bougainville districts from Stage One to Stage Two containment. But there had also been a number of direct challenges to the weapon disposal initiative. These included the theft of hundreds of firearms from Stage Two containers, issues of amnesty and pardon for former combatants, political hesitation during the 2002 PNG national elections, crisis-related compensation payments, the non-participation of some factions, and the complications of individual versus group weapon ownership. At several stages of the bargaining process, threats were made against weapon containers.

Donors and civil society groups also had reservations. Ex-combatants and their groups had built up a formidable position within the process, sometimes impeding both disarmament and recovery. Large segments of the community were being excluded, most notably women. But the chief concern among donors related to their 'exit strategy'—or lack thereof. The peace process, some feared, had become so comfortable that there was little incentive to complete it.

The peace process, some feared, had become so comfortable that there was little incentive to complete it.

By mid-2002, funding for weapon disposal had lost much of its impetus, and frustrations simmered over the way in which initial funds had been disbursed. Given the uncertainty surrounding political negotiations, donors became reluctant to contribute to Stage Two. Yet despite a number of setbacks, the momentum for weapon disposal remained.

Following the verification of Stage Two by the UN in August 2003, the constitutional amendments implementing the peace agreement became law in Papua New Guinea. By October of that year the total number of guns held in containers exceeded 1,900. In December 2003, the parties met to discuss Stage Three and agreed that the ultimate fate of the weapons would be destruction. By early 2004, nearly one-third of the collected firearms had been destroyed in the presence of UN observers. Bougainville was 'getting the house in order'.

The Solomon Islands: A society in armed collapse

> Many militants and villages were reluctant to hand over weapons for fear of being attacked when their defences were down. The other factor was sense of balance. Each side wanted to know what the other was handing back. If one side knew what the other had, and what was, or was not, handed over, then they could calculate the threat to their village or area.
>
> (RNZAF Flt.-Sgt. John Phillips, former IPMT armourer, June 2002)

After several failed attempts, peace—or at least an end to overt hostilities—finally came to the Solomon Islands with the signing of the Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) in October 2000. The nine-part agreement covered a broad spectrum of issues,[18] including two provisions for amnesty. An initial *weapon amnesty* required all arms and ammunition used during the conflict to be handed over to the respective commanders within 30 days. In return, former militants and police would be granted immunity from prosecution with respect to the theft or illegal possession of firearms. In the event that the weapon amnesty was fully complied with, those concerned could then potentially be granted a *general amnesty* regarding unlawful acts committed in connection with the conflict.

To facilitate the peace and disarmament process, an International Peace Monitoring Team (IPMT)[19] was established, along with an indigenous Peace Monitoring Council (PMC). The IPMT was to assist with confidence-building, receive and monitor weapon surrenders, maintain an arms inventory, and monitor and report breaches of the TPA. The PMC provided local leadership, liaised closely with communities throughout Guadalcanal and Malaita, and ran a spirited media campaign to encourage militants to comply with the terms of the TPA.

As with the peace monitors in Bougainville, neither the IPMT nor the PMC had any enforcement authority, instead focusing on building community confidence to make arms secure. Relations with the influential Anglican Melanesian Brothers and Sisters were especially important when negotiating weapon surrenders with militants.

The early stages of the disarmament initiative were promising. By June 2001, some nine months after the signing of the TPA, over 1,000 firearms and 3,600 rounds of ammunition had been surrendered, including 141 military firearms, 62 commercially manufactured guns, and 831 home-made guns. As expected, most of the police-issue firearms came from the MEF, military firearms were returned from Malaita, and home-made guns were mainly handed in by Gualese ex-combatants. But by July 2001 there was concern about the declining number of guns surrendered. Authorities were aware that 500–600 high-powered police firearms remained in circulation, yet there was no sign of them.

A number of deterrents existed to the complete disarmament of ex-combatants. Persistent insecurity fuelled by armed crime, issues of compensation, the low morale of police forces, and uncertainty associated with the amnesty all acted as disincentives. Many ex-combatants, especially Gualese groups in Honiara and villagers in rural Malaita, feared retribution if they disarmed. As in Bougainville, a man's firearm could be his most potent, and perhaps only, source of social and economic power. As the Solomon Islands government sought to appease armed men with essentially corrupt 'disarmament allowances', expectations grew of continued financial incentives for those with access to guns.

A man's firearm can be his most potent, and perhaps only, source of social and economic power.

Demoralization had also spread through the police force. Many senior officers refused to return their weapons or were pardoned under the provisions of the TPA, despite their role in human rights abuses. The recruitment by the Solomon Islands government of hundreds of former militants into the police as 'special constables' created a whole new raft of problems. Prior to the coup, only about 200 of these unarmed, village-based police had existed. By the

second half of 2001, the number of untrained special constables, newly armed with police weapons and many with criminal records, had swollen to 2,000. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the Solomon Islands government began to reduce their numbers in 2002, but the special constables continued to generate disorder, on occasion using their guns to demand payment directly from the Treasury. A flawed attempt at demobilization and reintegration had backfired badly, leaving the police force in worse shape than ever.

On occasion, police 'special constables' used their guns to demand payment directly from the Treasury in Solomon Islands.

Despite these challenges, in early 2002 community support for disarmament developed fresh momentum. Some 10,000 people participated in a 'Wokabaot for Pis' (Walkabout for Peace) organized by civil society groups in Honiara. Backed by a vigorous radio and media campaign, the Peace Monitoring Council and the Solomon Islands government launched a new effort to recover small arms, ammunition, explosives, and stolen property. More importantly, senior police officers were outspoken in their support for revitalizing the police force and the weapon surrender campaign. Two weeks after the expiry of the amnesty, 2,043 weapons were held in IPMT containers. In June 2002, the IPMT dumped hundreds of guns into the aptly named Iron Bottom Sound off the coast of Honiara under the watchful eye of Melanesian Brothers and to the cheers of Solomon Islanders.

In the event, piecemeal attempts at disarmament were overtaken by national collapse. On 18 July 2003, mired in an economic and social crisis—largely of its own making—which could no longer be ignored, the Solomon Islands parliament voted without dissent to request foreign intervention. One week later the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) landed in Honiara with the first of 2,250 military, police, and civilian personnel from Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Samoa, and other neighbouring nations. Their first order of business was to quarantine and destroy small arms.

© AP/Jim Baynes, Pool

An Australian soldier of the Regional Assistance Mission cuts up 12 guns handed in by rebels at Avu Avu, Solomon Islands, in August 2003.

In all the international debate and preparation surrounding the Pacific's first solicited invasion, nothing was accorded more urgency by governments, the intervention force, development agencies, and news media than the drive to collect and destroy firearms and ammunition. The proliferation and misuse of firearms had long been identified as the most immediate impediment to recovery in the Solomon Islands, and there was to be no dispute about disarmament.

The misuse of firearms had long been identified as the most immediate impediment to recovery in the Solomon Islands, and there was to be no dispute about disarmament.

Five days after its arrival, the multinational RAMSI force launched a national weapon amnesty, followed by determined enforcement of a ban on private guns. The most recent assessment of remaining small arms in the Solomon Islands had counted a high figure of 3,520 missing, illicit firearms (Muggah and Alpers, 2003). Five months later, in January 2004, the RAMSI weapon surrender campaign had collected 3,713 small arms, 386 of which had been stolen three years earlier from police armouries (RAMSI, 2004). This brought the total to 6,000 guns surrendered since November 2000. Destruction followed quickly, with no exceptions.

Although swift intervention, coupled with widespread community goodwill, had delivered a remarkable result, in early 2004 as many as 240 looted modern military assault rifles and machine guns were still missing in the Solomon Islands.

DOMESTIC AND REGIONAL ARMS CONTROL LEGISLATION

Comprehensive firearm legislation, though not sufficient in itself, forms the foundation of effective small arms control, both domestically and regionally. Stringent rules on firearm ownership and use, limits on access to ammunition, careful background checks of licence applicants, and regularly updated firearm registers are just some of the components of such legislation, underpinning national security and sustaining effective law enforcement.

Like most transnational crime, illicit small arms trafficking thrives on the ability to exploit differences between and inefficiencies in jurisdictions. Countries seeking to combat small arms proliferation thus need to focus not only on improving local and national laws but also on harmonizing key components of firearm laws across states. Uniform import–export laws and penalties for illegal trafficking are particularly important, as are common rules on marking, tracing, and record-keeping for arms and ammunition.

The many inconsistencies among small arms-related laws in the Pacific leave the region vulnerable to gun-running.

The many inconsistencies among small arms-related laws in the Pacific leave the region vulnerable to gun-running. Loopholes and permissive attitudes to small arms encourage illicit traffickers to mark countries as soft entry points, thus gaining access to whole regions. Wide variations in legislation have created holes in the Pacific's net for traffickers to exploit.

Domestic regulation of firearms

Six Pacific states have either banned the private ownership of firearms entirely or have suspended civilian firearm ownership for an indefinite period. Rules regarding civilian possession vary widely, from outright bans in Nauru, Palau, and the Marshall Islands to suspension of private gun ownership in the Solomon Islands and Fiji, a licensing moratorium in Papua New Guinea, multi-tiered registration systems in the French territories, and widespread licensed ownership in Australia and New Zealand.

Of the 20 nations surveyed,[20] 15 prohibit the private ownership of handguns (pistols and revolvers), while the remainder allow licensed handgun ownership only in exceptional cases. Semi-automatic weapons commonly attract

tighter regulations, with many varieties banned altogether. Australia in particular has made sweeping recent efforts to reduce its civilian arsenal of semi-automatic long guns and short-barrelled handguns (see CRIME).

Fully automatic firearms (machine guns and sub-machine guns) are either prohibited in civilian possession or restricted to thousands of licensed gun collectors, as in Australia and New Zealand.

As the only two fully industrialized nations in the Pacific, with 75 per cent of the region's population between them, Australia and New Zealand enjoy greater capacity for legislative reform. Through their foreign policies, both countries also play a leading role in small arms policy development in the Pacific. Australia has led by example, comprehensively tightening its own gun laws since 1996. Although New Zealand encourages its island neighbours to curb the proliferation of small arms and supports their efforts to do so, the country's domestic gun laws remain, overall, the most permissive in the Pacific. With the region's highest per capita rate of firearm ownership, New Zealand is nevertheless the only Pacific nation to have abandoned registration of most firearms. In this regard, New Zealand stands almost alone with the US among the world's industrialized nations.

Fifteen out of 20 Pacific nations prohibit the private ownership of handguns. Only two permit private firearms for self-defence.

Although governments are committed at a regional level to addressing small arms issues in the Pacific by way of the *Nadi Framework* (see Box 9.7), there remain glaring inconsistencies in domestic firearm legislation. With few exceptions, such as Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu, smaller states have not significantly altered their firearm legislation since independence. Existing gun laws tend to reflect the legislative style and attitudes to firearm control of former colonial administrations—as they stood in Europe in the early 1900s (see Box 9.8).

Box 9.7 The Nadi Framework: A regional approach to arms control

Recognizing that domestic and regional controls are crucial to any international effort to curb the illicit trade in firearms, the 16 member states of the Pacific Islands Forum have worked since 1996 to develop a common regional approach to weapon control. In March 2000, this culminated in the *Nadi Framework* agreement (SPCPC and OCO, 2000), which seeks to encourage cross-border cooperation and harmonize legislation throughout the region.

The *Nadi Framework* is premised on two basic ideas: that the possession and use of firearms, ammunition, other related material, and prohibited weapons is a privilege that is conditional on the overriding need to ensure public safety, and that public safety will be enhanced by imposing harmonized controls on the importation, possession, and use of these commodities.

To achieve these objectives, the *Nadi Framework* and its draft legislation would require that individual applicants for a licence demonstrate 'genuine reason' for arms ownership. Stringent controls over the importation, possession, and use of weapons are also recommended. If uniformly adopted, these would significantly improve the firearm laws of many states, and provide a common regional deterrent to small arms traffickers. In August 2003, the *Nadi Framework*'s draft model legislation for the Pacific was unanimously accepted for consideration by all 16 member states of the Pacific Islands Forum.

Common themes in Pacific gun laws

Licensing of gun owners, as in most nations, is the primary public safety measure regulating firearms in the Pacific. The requirements for a licence to possess firearms vary according to the type of weapon concerned and any 'genuine reason' required for ownership. Gun safety training and safe storage requirements are components of several licensing regimes.

Most of the smaller Pacific Island nations tightly restrict firearm licences regardless of gun type or calibre, permitting only a narrow range of acceptable uses. In recognition of the subsistence lifestyles still practised by many Pacific citizens, genuine reasons for gun ownership often include hunting, farming, and pest control. Only Papua New Guinea and the French territories permit the possession of private firearms for self-defence.

In New Zealand, police interview the spouse of each gun licence applicant.

Background checks on licence applicants vary widely, and are often not specified in law. Police attempt to discover previous violent, criminal, and mental histories where available, and character references are often required. In New Zealand, one referee must be the applicant's current or most recent spouse or partner.

Firearm registration is the second pillar of information-based policing, allowing law-enforcement authorities to track the flow of small arms within and between countries. Of the Pacific countries that permit civilian firearm ownership, Australia, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, the Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu all maintain comprehensive firearm registers under legislation. Firearm registers are also kept in Niue, American Samoa, and the Solomon Islands, even though there is no express legal requirement. In the French territories, gun dealers must transmit information on each firearm transfer to the police each month. New Zealand is the only Pacific nation without comprehensive firearm registration.

Access to ammunition is controlled in most Pacific jurisdictions, where gun owners can legally obtain and possess ammunition only for the specific type of firearm for which they are licensed. Only New Zealand, the Cook Islands, and the Australian state of Queensland have no such requirement. Most jurisdictions also place a legal ceiling on the amount of ammunition that may be purchased during the life of a firearms licence.

Marking and identification regimes also form a crucial element of effective small arms management, enabling accurate record-keeping, improving inventory security, and strengthening police capacity to track missing weapons. Though many states have provisions allowing (though not requiring) marking of individual firearms if no serial number exists, only the Federated States of Micronesia, American Samoa, the French territories, and the Solomon Islands legally require a serial number or identifying mark to be recorded.

Box 9.8 The origins of Pacific small arms legislation

Legislative arrangements in place at the time of independence or transition to self-governance have largely determined the complexion of existing firearm laws in most Pacific Island countries.

Former British protectorates such as Fiji, Kiribati, the Solomon Islands, and Tuvalu share almost identical small arms legislation, copied from the UK. Three countries with direct colonial links to New Zealand—the Cook Islands, Niue, and Samoa—exhibit a wide degree of variation in the wording, structure, and content of their gun laws, perhaps reflecting a looser style of colonial administration. Several former trust territories of the US—including the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Palau, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands—possess virtually identical arms control legislation. American Samoa, still a US territory, appears to have developed its laws quite separately. All have chosen far more stringent controls than would be tolerated on the US mainland.

The French Pacific territories of New Caledonia, French Polynesia, and Wallis and Futuna have modified gun laws based on complex French legislation dating back to the Second World War.

Small arms legislation in the former British colonies of Australia and New Zealand was originally based on British law, but in both countries has evolved considerably over the last few decades. While one law covers all of New Zealand, there is no uniform national firearm legislation in Australia. Australian federal law controls imports, but each state and territory has separate legislation regarding civilian ownership and use of firearms. Most progressive reform in Australia has been initiated at the federal level, primarily by negotiating uniformity between states.

Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu have some of the most comprehensive small arms legislation in the Pacific. The former, which became independent from Australia in 1975, and the latter, which was jointly administered by the British and French until 1980, are almost alone among Pacific developing states in having extensively revised and adapted their legislation in recent years.

The tiny state of Nauru (population 12,000) has perhaps the most idiosyncratic small arms legislation in the Pacific. A former Australian-administered British protectorate, its Arms and Opium Prohibition Ordinance (1936–1967) bans 'natives and Chinamen' from possession of firearms, and clearly has not been updated since independence in 1968.

Manufacture and trade in arms are controlled, although with wide variations between countries. All non-commercial firearm transfers—private sales, exchanges, and even loans—are also generally legislated for in Pacific law. In Australia, civilian firearm transfers may be carried out only by licensed arms dealers or the police, in Vanuatu or Tuvalu there are no legal provisions for transfers, while New Zealand does not require any record-keeping for most gun transfers.

In many of the smaller states, controls on manufacturing are a formality to allow for the unlikely prospect of legal mass production of arms within their borders. Licensed manufacturing is permissible only in Australia, New Zealand, the Federated States of Micronesia, Samoa, and Vanuatu. Of these, only Australia has the capacity to manufacture small arms in any quantity (PRODUCERS).

Import and export controls are far from uniform across the Pacific, with Australia and New Zealand setting the standard for the most rigorous regimes. Most other Pacific states have only rudimentary import and export controls, and many do not stipulate any controls at all. Several have some restrictions on imports, but none on exports. This is one of the key areas where harmonization appears essential if a uniform regional deterrent to trafficking is to be established.

Penalty regimes provide a key legislative mechanism to deter small arms proliferation. Once again there is great inconsistency across the Pacific, with many penalties set too low to act as a serious deterrent.

Weapon collection and destruction can reduce the overall number of weapons in circulation, and are designed to improve the overall security of civilians. Many countries in the Pacific have legislation providing for compulsory weapon 'call-ins', with or without compensation. Fiji, Kiribati, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu all have provisions within their arms laws for the responsible minister to declare a prohibited area and to order the surrender of any or all arms and ammunition within its boundaries. In Palau and the Marshall Islands, compulsory surrender orders were enforced in 1982 and 1983.

Box 9.9 Gun amnesties: More style than substance?

Particularly in the wake of conflict, weapon amnesties and buy-backs are commonly promoted in an attempt to reduce the number of illegal small arms in circulation. In Fiji, the Solomon Islands, and Papua New Guinea, the results of amnesties have varied widely (see above).

In nations at peace, a growing body of evidence suggests that amnesties rarely succeed in removing targeted weapons from circulation (Plotkin, 1996; Sherman, 2001). Although widely favoured by policymakers as an instinctive and inexpensive option, firearm amnesties have been found to achieve better results in public relations and community building than in preventing future gun injury (Romero et al., 1998; Wintemute, 1999). Two leading US researchers have referred to gun amnesty and buy-back initiatives as 'a triumph of wishful thinking over all the available evidence', and 'the programme that is best-known to be ineffective' in reducing firearm violence (Dorning, 2000). Although authorities periodically promote gun amnesties, in reality unwanted firearms are accepted for disposal at any time, resulting in a year-round amnesty in most countries.

CONCLUSION

Most Pacific nations are at peace. Despite surprisingly high per capita civilian gun ownership in a handful of nations, rates of firearm-related violence in the region range from low to moderate.

Australia and New Zealand differ so markedly from their smaller island neighbours in wealth, stability, and per capita firearm ownership as to render many regional comparisons invalid. In weaker Pacific states, armed conflict has arisen where community control of small arms has been relinquished or usurped.

Though they feature only rarely in international headlines, several Pacific states are seen as potential tinderboxes for future armed conflict. Fiji, the Solomon Islands, and Papua New Guinea have all suffered recently from small arms-related violence, and firearm misuse has had profound direct and indirect consequences.

Neither the recent conflicts in the Pacific nor criminal activity have generated sufficient demand to prompt an influx of arms from countries outside the region, or even from Pacific neighbours. To date few combatant groups have had the money to procure a shipment of any size, while criminals seem satisfied with the rich and easy domestic supply of firearms available in larger Pacific states.

The ease with which firearms and ammunition leak from state armouries is a red flag for all states. Recent experience has shown that the injection of such weapons into fragile island communities can spark widespread, even regional, instability. It should be emphasized that existing domestic stockpiles, and not cross-border trafficking and smuggling, are the primary source of firearms misused in crime, conflict, and intentional and unintentional death and injury.

Although country-by-country legislative improvements may be on the horizon in the wake of the *Nadi Framework,* domestic and regional small arms-related legislation in the Pacific varies widely. The most comprehensive and up-to-date firearm legislation in the region is Australia's. By the standards of its 19 Pacific neighbours, New Zealand's domestic firearm laws are the most permissive, facilitating easy ownership and undocumented transfer of the region's largest unregistered stockpile of private guns. Despite these differences, the two nations experience similar rates of gun crime and injury.

Worryingly, most Pacific states lack basic firearm-related health and justice information. Accurate data are the lifeblood of informed policy-making and, without base-level knowledge of the impacts of firearm-related violence in affected communities, or the origins and trafficking routes of misused weapons, the small arms problem in the Pacific could become much worse before it improves. To avoid the sudden influxes of weapons common in less fortunate regions, donor partners in the Pacific have an important role to play in prevention.

Recent experiences with weapon disposal in Bougainville and the Solomon Islands have yielded positive results, and a number of lessons emerge. The early stages of the intervention yielded the best results, home-made or other less desirable weapons made up the majority of surrendered guns, the innovative linkage between weapon destruction and national aspirations for autonomy in Bougainville seem to have worked well, and the trust and involvement of community actors was essential in every case.

Grass-roots community involvement, in particular empowering partnerships between governments, donors, church, and women's groups, have been and remain the key to weapon collection, disposal, and peace in the Pacific.

9. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BPMG	Bougainville Peace Monitoring Group
BRA	Bougainville Revolutionary Army
BRF	Bougainville Resistance Forces
FSM	Federated States of Micronesia (also 'Micronesia')
IFM	Isatabu Freedom Movement
IPMT	International Peace Monitoring Team
MEF	Malaita Eagle Force
PMC	Peace Monitoring Council
PMG	Peace Monitoring Group
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PNGDF	Papua New Guinea Defence Force
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands
RNZAF	Royal New Zealand Air Force
RPNGC	Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary
RSIP	Royal Solomon Islands Police
TPA	Townsville Peace Agreement
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNOMB	UN Observer Mission on Bougainville

9. ENDNOTES

1 American Samoa, Australia,* Cook Islands,* Fiji,* French Polynesia, Kiribati,* Marshall Islands,* Federated States of Micronesia,* Nauru,* New Caledonia, New Zealand,* Niue,* Palau,* Papua New Guinea,* Samoa,* Solomon Islands,* Tonga,* Tuvalu,* Vanuatu,* and Wallis and Futuna. Note: an asterisk denotes each of the 16 member states of the Pacific Islands Forum.

2 The US government produces a range of reports on military and commercial small arms transfers, including the Pentagon Defence and Security Assistance Agency's Foreign Military Sales (FMS) report, the State Department's Section 655 Report (which contains a country-by-country listing of the value of all direct commercial sales, DCS, approvals), FMS export approvals, excess defence article (EDA) agreements, and the Department of Treasury's Export Commodity Reports (Lumpe and Donarski, 1998).

3 Although Table 9.2 includes Australian exports of 'Non-military Lethal Goods' declared in 2000 to Fiji (USD 110,000) and Vanuatu (USD 2,368), these figures lack transparency. The small arms and ammunition component of such transfers remains uncertain, but could be significant in the case of Fiji, where 100 per cent of that year's known arms trade was declared under this catch-all category. Due to uncertainty over their content, additional transfers of 'Non-military Lethal Goods' in 2000 from Australia to Papua New Guinea (USD 871,723), New Zealand (USD 358,000), and New Caledonia (USD 23,000) have not been included in Table 9.2.

4 In a 2001 survey of Pacific state armouries, small arms analyst David Capie identified Singaporean Ultimax-100 light machine guns and SR-88s in Papua New Guinean armouries, and Uzis, MP5s, Galils, and K2s (a South Korean copy of the M-16) in Fiji (Capie, 2003).

5 Alone among Pacific nations, New Zealand has ceased to register most firearms owned by licensed gun owners. For this reason, authorities can only estimate the number of lawfully held firearms.

6 The STOCKPILES chapter adopts a multiplier of 2.25, which is based on the number of small arms known to be possessed by the Canadian armed forces. This methodology has important limitations. It is a conservative estimate, and ratios are subject to change. If personnel are retrenched, for example, the ratio can increase because there are more small arms per soldier.

7 Trends in the Pacific are towards smaller military forces. Fiji's UN peacekeeping force has been downsized, and a Commonwealth review recommended that Papua New Guinea's armed forces be reduced by more than half.

8 Survey data from around the world indicate that the ratio of firearms to sworn police is lower than military weapon-to-troop ratios. In Norway, the ratio is 1.2 guns per officer, while in Belgium and Sweden it is 1.3. This rises to 1.45 in the case of South Africa (Small Arms Survey, 2001, p. 71). The Pacific region multiplier is conservatively calculated at 1.3 firearms per officer.

9 In May 1988, only months after two military coups in Fiji, customs officers in Sydney seized a 12-ton container of second-hand Czechoslovakian small arms labelled 'used machinery' en route to Fiji from North Yemen. In London, expatriate Fijian Indian Mohammed Raffia Khan was arrested in connection with the shipment and

served jail terms in Britain for other offences (Ross, 1993, p. 128). Although Fijian authorities claimed that another ten-ton shipment of primarily Soviet arms had arrived on the Suva wharves a month earlier, no evidence of this emerged. While a conclusive explanation was never provided, the weapons are widely suspected to have been connected with the organizers of the 1987 coup.

[10] The Papua New Guinea National Intelligence Organisation believes the West Papua border is PNG's main entry point for smuggled guns. There is also evidence of weapon trafficking from PNG to West Papua, to supply the local independence movement *Organisasi Papua Merdeka* (OPM).

[11] Personal correspondence with Inspector Phil Gubb, Coordinator, NZ Police Firearms Licensing Task Force, Wellington, 4 February 1994.

[12] Comment made at the Pacific Islands Countries Regional Seminar on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in Tokyo, 20–22 Jan. 2003. The delegate, who shall remain nameless, was reflecting on the responsibility he feels at holding the key to his nation's armoury.

[13] See, for example, Muggah and Brauer (2004).

[14] Nevertheless, GDP increased by an estimated 1.5 to 4 per cent in 2001, and 4.4 per cent in 2002. Consult ADB, 2002, p.43; ADB, 2003, p.44; WDI Online, 2004.

[15] In 1899, what is now the PNG province of Bougainville was arbitrarily annexed from the Solomon Islands by Germany. Bougainvilleans are culturally quite distinct from the people of Papua New Guinea, and are now separated by an international border from their kin in the Solomon Islands.

[16] The Bougainville PMG, 300-strong at its peak, was a neutral, unarmed organization of civilian commanders, negotiators, and monitors, supported by military personnel from Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, and Vanuatu.

[17] Although 'high-powered' is an official term routinely used to describe certain firearms in both the Solomon Islands and Bougainville, no standard definition exists. In Bougainville, peace monitors loosely defined these as factory-manufactured military-style weapons (M-16, AR-15, SLR, FAMAS, SIG, and so on). In the Solomon Islands, the IPMT defined a military weapon as 'any high-powered centre-fire semi-automatic, automatic, bolt action, magazine-fed shotgun, riot gun, or signal pistol issued to members of the Solomon Islands police'. In practice, 'high-powered' firearms were mass-manufactured military weapons of World War II or later design.

[18] Reconciliation, restructuring of the police force, rehabilitation of militants, compensation for loss and damages, increased autonomy for Malaita and Guadalcanal, and promises of infrastructure development in both provinces.

[19] Civilian-led and unarmed, the IPMT drew its 50 personnel from Australian and New Zealand police and defence forces, civilian government departments, and police forces in Tonga and Vanuatu.

[20] For a comprehensive list of domestic gun laws, comparisons between states, and an analysis of small arms-related legislation on export-import, marking and tracing, brokering, and other provisions in 20 Pacific nations, see Alpers and Twyford (2003).

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