

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

THE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

A number of basic features shape the security environment of Papua New Guinea (PNG): its size, ruggedness, socio-cultural diversity, early stage of economic development, and its South Pacific location between Indonesia and the Solomon Islands. PNG is 2,000 kilometers from east to west and 1,200 kilometers from north to south. With the inclusion of some 600 smaller islands, its territorial claims cover a sea area of over 3 million square kilometers. The physical ruggedness of the landscape and the vast ocean spaces contribute to the country's socio-cultural diversity and constitute tremendous barriers to economic development. More than seven hundred languages are spoken. Welding this territory and people into a modern nation remains the premier challenge facing the PNG government. While engaged in this internal task, PNG requires a favorable external environment. Strong or improving relations with its neighbors provide such an environment.

Internal Security Challenges. From the perspective of government policymakers, the most pressing security challenges are internal. There are several distinct but related internal security problems, all of which contribute to potential political instability and, unless effectively addressed, could threaten the survival of the central government. First, there is the maintenance of law and order by controlling criminal activities, public disputes and riots. That task concerns the country's police and paramilitary forces. A second concern is the distribution of resources among the provinces. This is an issue of political management. A final concern is where the law and order situation or provincial unrest has escalated to the point of open insurgency requiring action by the regular military forces in defense of the country.

Law and order has become a serious internal security concern in recent years. Well-organized criminal gangs operate in the cities. On occasion, public demonstrations have turned into riots. Outside the cities, occasional tribal fights over land disputes occur, a problem especially common in the highland provinces. The Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary (RPNGC) has responsibility for the immediate security aspects of such problems.

Inter-provincial and provincial-central government tensions over resource allocations have been increasing but have not led to violence. Mineral and natural resource rich provinces, following the lead of North Solomon Province, are particularly strident in demanding that they be allowed to keep a greater share of

the wealth generated in their provinces through increased royalty and revenue-sharing percentages from the national government. Landowners have often joined in pressuring their provincial and national governments for increased benefits. Following open rebellion in Bougainville, the national government that has learned that it is best to address and try to resolve distributional issues before new mining operations commence.

Insurgency is a problem in Bougainville. Originally viewed as a law and order problem stemming from a land compensation dispute, the situation escalated to become a serious military security concern when landowners-turned-militants developed a well-organized force called the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA). The BRA has a military command structure and has engaged in hit-and-run guerrilla tactics against the government. Another security concern is the existence of the Organisasi Papua Merdeka (OPM) operating at a low level in areas near the border with Indonesia. The OPM is a small group of indigenous Melanesians from the western half of the island of New Guinea who oppose the Jakarta government's control and incorporation of Irian Jaya as Indonesia's 27th province. OPM members occasionally mount small-scale terrorist actions at Indonesian authorities.

Needless to say, internal security concerns arising from the crime situation and Bougainville insurgency are of grave concern to PNG leaders, to the country's citizens, and to potential foreign investors. Adverse internal security conditions have already deterred some foreign companies from investing in PNG, especially in the mineral sector.

External Security Relations. PNG's external security concerns closely parallel its internal ones in that they principally involve international dimensions of internal concerns. The PNG government has identified the following possible scenarios involving neighboring countries: (1) mismanagement of borders, leading to border incursions by the forces of a neighboring country; (2) BRA threats against PNG's diplomatic mission in the Solomon Islands and other missions abroad; and (3) cross-border raids or arms smuggling by small armed groups—most likely BRA rebels operating in maritime border areas.

Continued illegal activities in border areas could pose serious internal and external security threats to PNG. The potential that such threat scenarios may arise has led to government reviews of contingency plans aimed at developing relevant security force capabilities to effectively counter such scenarios. But PNG's primary efforts have involved political and diplomatic efforts to strengthen its ties with its neighboring countries, particularly Indonesia and the Solomon Islands.

PNG shares a long land border with the Republic of Indonesia. Because of its large, population, rapidly growing economy and modernizing military forces, Indonesia is likely to become PNG's most powerful neighbor. The two countries have enjoyed cordial bilateral relations since the signing of the Treaty of Mutual Respect, Friendship and Cooperation in 1986, but only in May 1994 did they hold their first security meeting. This resulted in the establishment of a Joint Subcommittee on Security (JSCS) under the preexisting Joint Border Committee (JBC) that manages the common border. The meeting was an encouraging sign of maturity in the relationship, especially since the subcommittee is instituting a forum through which the two countries' military forces can exchange views and share information. The JSCS has also established an official border management process that involves both the Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF) and the Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia (ABRI). This development indicates both countries' desire for better management of the border zones and their mutual concern over the OPM rebels.

Historically, PNG had enjoyed excellent relations with its eastern neighbor, the Solomon Islands. Apart from minor customary disagreements between citizens of the two countries over traditional fishing grounds, border matters and security issues traditionally were given relatively low priority by both countries since there were no major issues between them. The emergence of the Bougainville crisis in the late 1980s, however, threatened this relationship. To avoid misunderstandings, the PNG government sought to promote a dialogue with its neighbor by employing special Melanesian gestures of friendship. The Solomon Islands, in turn, has been responsive in various regional discussions and conferences that have examined possible long-term solutions to the Bougainville crisis. Bilateral talks have addressed management of the border areas, paying particular attention to possible illegal crossings by PNG citizens, illegal gun smuggling by BRA members, and resulting infringements of the border by PNGDF troops in pursuit of the BRA. In addition to their efforts to address these problems, PNG and the Solomon Islands are cooperating to establish a maritime surveillance arrangement for the management of their maritime boundary.

The relatively high level of transparency in PNG's relationships with its neighbors should provide ample warning for the need to institute conflict resolution measures should a serious problem arise. Over the long-run, the ability of the PNG government to maintain stability and provide economic development along its border areas is a key to continued strong relations with its neighbors.

DEFENSE POLICIES AND ISSUES

Defense Objectives. The PNG government's 1988 Defense Policy Paper states that the country's defense forces should have the capability to deter, repel, and counter low-level threat situations. This approach heavily emphasizes continuous monitoring and patrolling of the border areas so as to detect any incursion. It also argues for the development and maintenance of a highly mobile conventional "core" force for both the defense of the country and involvement in nation-building activities. As a result, the government's overriding defense priority has been to reorganize its forces in order to develop and maintain an effective core force that will provide for the "total security" of PNG and its borders. Such a force must necessarily have the capability to conduct effective ground and maritime surveillance, assist in national emergencies, and help the police in the maintenance of law and order if required.

To implement these objectives, the government adopted the Defense Force Ten Year Development Plan (TYDP) in 1991. The TYDP provides the framework for establishing needed defense capabilities between 1990 and 2000 and transferring technology to the country in order that it may achieve greater self-reliance by 2000. In approving the TYDP, the Cabinet directed that the plan be implemented within the context of overall national economic development efforts, in accordance with the Papua New Guinea Defense Force's (PNGDF) priority requirements, and in consultation with the Department of Finance.

Currently, the PNG Department of Defence is working on a new defense white paper to shape the PNGDF for the year 2000 and beyond. As they look at future needs and priorities, PNG policymakers are asking such questions as whether internal security differs from "total security" and whether law and order should be recognized as a military security problem, thereby diverting military resources to address criminal activities.

Defense Relations with Australia. Since PNG achieved independence in 1975, Australia has been its main source of development assistance and support on national security matters, and is thus a critical element in PNG's defense considerations. The most significant external security cooperation arrangement in which PNG is involved is its Defence Cooperation Program (DCP) arrangement with Australia. The 1987 Joint Declaration of Principles (JDP) between Australia and PNG provided a framework for relations between the two countries. The JDP established guiding principles for relations: maintaining and improving historically close ties, advancing common interests, and building upon existing bilateral arrangement in the spirit of independent neighborly cooperation. The JDP also provides for wide-ranging, high-level discussions and

exchanges, including consultations about matters affecting common security interests, including any external attack against either country.

In the past, Australia's assistance has tended to be focused towards external threats. The DCP has proven helpful in reexamining PNG's broader internal security concerns. It has also provide a venue in which the PNG government has raised concerns that Australian assistance to the PNGDF is too often managed by Australian officials in a rigid and paternalistic manner.

It is estimated that 58 percent of the funds made available under the DCP return to Australia in the form of costs associated with loaned personnel. Another 25 percent is taken up by projects, while the remainder goes into training of PNGDF personnel. PNG believes that in-country training of larger numbers of personnel at domestic bases would be more cost-effective.

While recognizing the continuing importance of its relations with Australia, the PNG government desires to diversify developmental assistance, including security support. For example, other countries in the region have had similar internal security problems, and could provide venues for specialized training of PNG forces. PNG has an interest in developing its own defense capabilities, based on its own assessment of internal and external threats. Diversification of sources of assistance has been, and will continue to be, a major focus of PNG efforts to strengthen its national security.

Other Issues. The combined land, sea, and air PNGDF manpower ceiling is currently set at 5,200 troops. Recruitment of personnel is sought from the country's four regions—Papuan (Southern), Momase, New Guinea Islands and Highland provinces—in order to reflect the socio-cultural diversity of the country. The Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary (RPNGC) has a manpower strength of about 5,100, with an approved ceiling of 6,000. The RPNGC maintains a paramilitary capability for riot control and is able to be rapidly deployed in the event that law and order problems escalate, as they did in the case of the Bougainville crisis. In such situations, the RPNGC would work in conjunction with national defense forces. The government has developed a plan to merge the police paramilitary capability with the PGNDF to respond more effectively to insurgencies in the future.

The Bougainville crisis demonstrated deficiencies in training, equipment, support, and coordination needed to deal with open rebellion. Joint operational procedures to deal with counter-insurgency operations and joint training between relevant security forces are being considered. A common logistical support and administrative system is also needed.

Low morale among PNG's security forces personnel is another important defense issue. Severe housing shortages exist, especially for married members of the police force and the Corrective Institution Service (CIS). Morale problems have also been addressed in Bougainville in part by offering generous operational allowances to the security forces personnel operating there. Ex-gratia payments are also being made for those killed and wounded in action. In addition, the departments responsible for the country's security forces have instituted insurance programs for their members.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO REGIONAL AND GLOBAL SECURITY

Papua New Guinea contributes to regional and global security through its relations with neighboring countries and involvement in regional economic and security activities. Papua New Guinea's foreign policy of Selective Engagement aims to diversify economic relations. Consistent with this approach, PNG has strengthened its relations with the ASEAN group (in which it has observer status), became a member of APEC, and continues to participate actively as a leading country in the South Pacific Forum and other Pacific Island nation organizations.

In particular, PNG's "Look North" policy resulted in its becoming a signatory to the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation and ASEAN's Declaration of Concord in July 1989. Since then, PNG has expanded its relations with all the members of ASEAN and has defense relations with most of them. Closer military-to-military ties are likely to result from these exchanges. The PNG Defence Department also is contemplating using Asian manufacturers as sources for procurement of military hardware.

Papua New Guinea believes the South Pacific Forum (SPF) is useful in developing effective positions on regional issues. The SPF also contributes to regional security interests through its programs to promote economic growth and environmental protection. The SPF's Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) provides an example. The FFA has been responsible for monitoring, maintaining price controls, and producing information on its member countries' valuable maritime resources, including the expanding tuna industry.

PNG is also a member of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), a subregional grouping within the SPF, consisting of the three Melanesian countries—The Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and PNG—and Fiji, effective 1996. MSG was established primarily to influence the decolonization process in the region, focusing on New Caledonia, a Melanesian colony of France.

In sum, PNG's foreign policy emphasizes development and expansion of its economic, political, and defense relations with its neighbors. It has sought to achieve its objectives through both bilateral arrangements and involvement with regional institutions. These efforts have thus far proven to be beneficial to its security concerns.