

## 25. The 'Tension' and RAMSI Years

After a long period of civil unrest between 1998 and 2003 (known as the 'Tension'), at the request of the Solomon Islands Government, the Pacific Islands Forum nations created the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands, a military and civil intervention. The central state apparatus was failing and law and order was declining, although in most of the country rural life continued much as normal. The problem was largely on two major islands: around the capital and on the weather coast of Guadalcanal, and on neighbouring Malaita. In essence it was a struggle over adapting introduced concepts and practices to robust indigenous cultures, and a struggle over control and distribution of natural resources. Governance and development issues were at the core of the crisis: the manner in which the Parliament and public service operated; inequalities in development of human and economic infrastructure, in the distribution of the profits from development; and issues surrounding internal migration and urbanisation.

RAMSI operated between 2003 and 2017, with a gradual scaling down over the final years of this period. Most of the troops were withdrawn by 2004, leaving a police contingent to rebuild law and order. After initial success in disarming the dissidents on both sides, the intervention force developed around what were called the 'three pillars': repair and reform to the machinery of government; improvements to economic governance and rebuilding the economy and sustainable broad-based growth; and building strong and contented communities. RAMSI was never intended to replace the government, merely to strengthen the national government's ability to operate. The Royal Solomon Islands Police Force was rebuilt, and the Court system, the Treasury and other government departments were strengthened.

Aside from a crisis in 2006, when there was a major riot in Honiara after opposition to the election of a new prime minister, the RAMSI years successfully restored peace and good governance. Over several years RAMSI was scaled down and withdrew in mid-2017.



24.1. The first RAMSI Special Coordinator, Nick Warner, shaking hands with local women, 2003. (Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands Collection)





24.2. RAMSI troops outside the Central Magistrate's Court in Honiara, 2006. (Clive Moore Collection)



24.3. RAMSI had bases outside of Honiara. This is a RAMSI boat and 120 hp engine, at Makira, 2010. (Christopher Chevalier Collection)





24.4. Sometimes the RAMSI police and military personnel took time off to get wet. This scene is at Avu Avu, Guadalcanal. (Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands Collection)



24.5. RAMSI police officer and Solomon Islands children. (Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands Collection)





24.6. RAMSI soldiers and police visit a school. (Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands Collection)



24.7. RAMSI Participating Police Force Adviser and Royal Solomon Islands Police Force Assistant Commissioner. (Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands Collection)





24.8. Solomon Islanders were relieved when the guns were collected and confiscated. (Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands Collection)



24.9. RAMSI Participating Police Force with the flags of their nations. (Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands Collection)





24.10. A newly graduated officer in the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force, 2012. (Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands Collection)



24.11 The new RAMSI memorial in Honiara on the day of its opening in June 2017, marking the departure of RAMSI. (Clive Moore Collection)