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Also assisting Veterans of Iraq, Afghanistan and Peacetime Service

Commemorating 20 Years of OPERATION HABITAT 1991.

24th May 2011

The Executive Officer,

Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal,
CP3-7-067,
Locked Bag 7765,
CANBERRA BC, ACT, 2610.

To whom it may concern:

Please find attached to this letter the Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans' Association (APPVA) Submission for the Inquiry into recognition of service with OPERATION LAGOON 1994 (aka South Pacific Peacekeeping Force (SPPKF) Bougainville)

The APPVA Submission focuses on the fact that the SPPKF were withdrawn due to political and national interests at the time, due to a breakdown of the Honiara (Solomon Islands) Agreement of 1994, between the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA), the Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF); and the SPPKF.

The service of ADF members who served on the SPPKF have long been over-seen for recognition. The problematic area that is cited by Defence and Government is that the criterion of 30 days has not been satisfied.

However, what appears to have not been utilised is the powers of the Chief of the Defence Force, The Parliamentary Secretary, The Minister for Defence, or the Prime Minister; to declare the prescribed operation as being eligible for the award within Regulation 3 of the Australian Service Medal Regulations. This is due to the forced withdrawal of the SPPKF.

The Regulations allow for consideration of a prescribed operation to be considered for the award if the operation was terminated due to Defence or Government reasons and/or terminated due to Foreign Government or Foreign Defence Force reasons. The unique circumstances of the SPPKF appear to satisfy this requirement for award of either the AASM or the ASM.

"Looking After Our Own"

The APPVA Submission places a preference for investigation and consideration toward the award of the Australian Active Service Medal (AASM), or failing this, the Australian Service Medal (ASM). The preferred Clasp to specifically recognise those ADF members who served the SPPKF is "SPPKF" and **not** BOUGAINVILLE.

The SPPKF is specifically unique in comparison to the Truce Monitoring Group and the Peace Monitoring Group (TMG and PMG respectively), of which these latter groups were awarded the ASM Clasp "BOUGAINVILLE".

The contention for separate recognition is consistent with previous specific determinations made by Defence and Government for example the Solomon Islands (2 distinctly different Clasps (I & II); and OP QUICKSTEP (S.PACIFIC 2006)).

We look forward to an Inquiry that will apply the full tenors of Independence from Defence and Government, Natural Justice, Procedural Fairness, the right to access Government Evidence and the Right of Reply prior to any decision-making by the Tribunal Panel.

The APPVA will provide a witness if requested to attend a Hearing either in person or by Teleconference.

Please do not hesitate in contacting me, should you wish to discuss this matter further.

Yours Sincerely,



P.A. Copeland, OAM, JP,
Immediate Past National President,
Australian Peacekeeper & Peacemaker Veterans' Association.



The Australian Peacekeeper & Peacemaker Veterans' Association

Submission for

The Inquiry into recognition of service with OPERATION LAGOON 1994.

1. Background.

1.1 The Australian Peacekeeper & Peacemaker Veterans' Association (APPVA) has for over eight years lobbied successive Governments to recognise Australian Defence Force (ADF) service of OPERATION LAGOON aka the South Pacific Peacekeeping Force (SPPKF), Bougainville in 1994.

1.2 From the comprehensive submission placed to the Defence Honours Awards & Appeals Tribunal (DHAAT) Inquiry into ADF recognition into Peacekeeping Operations from 14th September 1947 onward (2009); the APPVA submitted the contention for the recognition of service through the Australian Service Medal for the SPPKF.

1.3 The APPVA also provided the proposition for the recognition of service for the SPPKF in the Submission for the recognition of ADF service in Papua New Guinea (PNG) from September 1975 onward. This proposition was unsuccessful.

1.4 The matter above was unfortunately not addressed, however the matter was mentioned by the Panel in the Report was that service was too short for eligibility purposes.

1.5 As it was noted in the APPVA Submission into Peacekeeping Service, the Government has the power to nominate shorter eligibility periods of 30 days within the Commonwealth of Australia Gazette (CAG) for AASM and ASM.

1.6 The SPPKF deployed to Bougainville during the period 4-22 October 1994 (19 days).

1.7 Further to the APPVA submissions for Peacekeeping Operations and ADF service in PNG from September 1975 onward, the RSL National Conference in November 2008 accepted by vote that the matter should be resolved for those veterans of OP LAGOON, in the form of recognition by the awarding of the ASM.

1.8 On 13th May 2011, the APPVA received an invitation by the DHAAT, to lodge a submission into the Review into recognition of service with the SPPKF.

2. Aim.

2.1. The aim of this submission is to convince the DHAAT that it is necessary to recognise the ADF service of the SPPKF (OP LAGOON), with the Australian Active Service Medal 1975- (AASM) Clasp SPPKF; or alternatively with the Australian Service Medal 1975- (ASM) Clasp SPPKF.

3. General.

3.1 The APPVA has canvassed a number of veterans of the SPPKF, who have been concerned for many years that their service has not been recognised within the Australian Honours & Awards System.

3.2 The veterans of SPPKF or their units were issued with a Certificate of “Participation” as the only recognition available at that time. It is strongly felt by the veterans of the SPPKF that this Certificate in no way fully recognises the service, courage and sacrifice made under very hazardous, dangerous and difficult conditions in Bougainville.

3.3 The veterans of SPPKF contend that their service should be recognised commensurate with the precarious and delicate situation of bringing peace to Bougainville at a time when the Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF) was embroiled in controversy over a number of claims, including the use of Australian donated Iroquois (UH-1H) helicopters that were configured into Gun-ships.

3.4 The PNGDF used the Australian donated UH-1H Gun-ships against the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) and the people of Bougainville. The PNGDF also purposefully attempted to disrupt the Peace Process and even attempted a linear ambush for BRA delegates to meet in Arawa.

3.5 As a result of distrust by the BRA toward the Australians and the PNGDF, the mission was subsequently aborted at the call of the Australian Government.

4. Contention.

4.1 Whilst the Operation was short lived due to hostilities and the refusal of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) to disarm, elements of the ADF were exposed to what has been described by veterans as warlike conditions. See Attachment 1.

4.2 Although the operation was meant to be a peacekeeping force per se, the operation was a failure before the required 30-day period to qualify for the ASM. Subsequently the contributing South Pacific Infantry and Australian contribution withdrew from the Operation.

4.3 OPERATION LAGOON was led by Australian Brigadier Peter Abigail. Up to 200 ADF members were involved providing Logistics and Communications Support; including the crews of HMA Ships TOBRUK and SUCCESS, who were stationed in the waters within the AO of Bougainville. The SPPKF mission was to “*Provide a secure environment for the conduct of the Bougainville Peace Conference and to provide security and movement of the selected delegates.*”¹

¹ On the SPPKF, B. Breen, *Giving Peace a Chance: Operation Lagoon, Bougainville, 1994: a case of military action and diplomacy*, Canberra papers on strategy and Defence, 142: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, ANU, 2001, p. 53.

4.4 The Rules of Engagement (ROE) of the Operation was to use lethal force to defend the members and SPPKF or Conference Delegates. The SPPKF could not secure the Arawa zone until the day before proceedings began. Small ADF detachments were posted in other zones. The process was also being rushed by the PNG Prime Minister Sir Julius Chan.

4.5 The incurred danger to the ADF was that the BRA did not trust the Australians within the SPPKF. This was due to the interests that Australia had on Bougainville in the form of a number of resource mining industries. The BRA was also suspicious of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF) and of the Australians.

4.6 The BRA were armed with a range of lethal weaponry, including spears, arrows, blow darts and a range of small arms including M-16 weapons. The BRA was not disarmed during the SPPKF Operation and this presented a military threat and risk to the ADF members serving on the operation.

4.7 The Operation was hampered by plain clothed members of the PNGDF who infiltrated the Arawa site of the Conference. The PNGDF also set-up an ambush site using Claymore mines on the main route into Arawa, in order to ambush the Bougainville delegates. SPPKF troops also came under attack, including a RAN Sea King Helicopter from HMAS TOBRUK taking ground fire, which is believed to be the first RAN battle damage since the Viet Nam war.²

4.8 The SPPKF was not large enough for the role and was consequently abandoned by the BRA. The SPPKF withdrew on the insistence of Australia on 22 October 1994.

4.9 Under Schedule 3/23 of the VEA, The SPPKF is listed as non-warlike service (NWLS) from 21 September 1994. Therefore, the ADF members who served with the SPPKF are covered by Veteran Entitlements under the auspices of the Veteran Entitlement Act 1986 (VEA) and should therefore be recognised for this service.

4.10 Many SPPKF veterans feel that this should be sought as the award of the ASM, with Clasp "SPPKF", in order to recognise the particular Operation. Others contend that the award of the AASM Clasp SPPKF should be the award due to the high level of threat and early withdrawal of Australian Forces from Bougainville (SPPKF).

4.11 After the failure of SPPKF, and some 6 years later after civil war, the BRA came to the table to discuss peace. The Truce Monitoring Group (TMG) headed by New Zealand (OP BEL ISI I), was established and in 1997, the Australians took command of the operation with the re-named Operation known as the Peace Monitoring Group (PMG) in Bougainville (OP BEL ISI II) in 1998.

4.12 The specific recognition for the unique and special nature of the SPPKF in the form of a Clasp to the ASM or AASM, as such would particularly identify the operation, rather than be classed with the TMG or PMG Bougainville in the form of the ASM Clasp BOUGAINVILLE.

² *Other People's Wars: A History of Australian Peacekeeping*; Peter Londey, 2004, p. 218.

5. AASM Clasp SPPKF.

5.1 The Australian Active Service Medal service eligibility Post 1975 in most cases dictate that eligibility for the AASM is normally one day or one operational sortie (per day), within the Area of Operations (AO), Force Assigned or Posted to participating units. The only exception to this rule is Diego Garcia for the AASM Clasp ICAT (30 days) and NAMIBIA (30 days).

5.2 It is contended that The Minister or Parliamentary Secretary may be able to determine OP LAGOON as a prescribed Operation for the purposes of Regulation 3 of the AASM Regulations contained in the Schedule of the Letters Patent dated 13 September 1988 (“The Regulations”).

5.3 Therefore, the Parliamentary Secretary, on the recommendation of the Chief of the Defence Force, has special powers to acknowledge that the service in Bougainville during OP LAGOON, is eligible for one day or one sortie, and hence awarded the AASM Clasp “SPPKF”.

6. ASM Clasp SPPKF.

6.1 In most cases, eligibility for the ASM is normally 30 days or 30 sorties (one sortie per day), for a prescribed operation. There are a number exceptions to this rule of which seven days has been previously an eligible period (OP POLLARD & OP ASTUTE), 60 days for CT/SR, or not less than the minimum qualifying period specified by the Chief of Defence Force in relation to the Operation (SPECIAL OPS).

6.2 Therefore, there is a degree of flexibility that can be exercised by the Chief of Defence Force and/or the Parliamentary Secretary, in terms of the determination of eligible service periods for recognition, in particular toward OP LAGOON.

6.3 Failing the recognition of service for OP LAGOON with the AASM, it is noted that under the Australian Service Medal Regulations Declaration under:

“Regulation 3, Determination under Sub Regulation 4(2); set out in the Schedule to Letters Patent dated 13 September 1988, (“the Regulations”), that:

*(v) the qualifying period of service as described as 30 Days for a Defence Member, **may be deemed by the Chief of the Defence Force or his delegate to have been established notwithstanding that the member has not met the qualifying periods described;** and*

*(vi) the Chief of the Defence Force or his delegate in exercising his discretion to **deem** under subparagraph (c)(v) shall take into account whether service in relation to the prescribed operation:*

(A) was terminated owing to the death, evacuation due to illness or injury or other disability due to service, of a member as described above;

(B) was terminated due to Government or Defence Force reasons; or

(C) was terminated due to foreign Government or foreign Defence Force reasons”.

6.4 Given the ASM Regulations above, it would be therefore prudent to seek the CDF or his delegate to exercise his discretion to deem that the service rendered with the SPPKF would satisfy the requirements for the premature withdrawal of the ADF Contingent from SPPKF due to Government, foreign Government and Defence Force reasons as explained in this case.

7. Conclusion.

7.1 This paper has discussed the special and unique service of the ADF Force to the SPPKF (OP LAGOON). The Force was withdrawn at the insistence of the Australian Government. This is not the fault of the members who served in the SPPKF, as it was the Political drivers and dangers that caused such an early withdrawal from Bougainville at the time.

7.2 The veterans of the SPPKF have indicated that they feel that they have yet to be recognised by the Australian Government and contend that the preferred recognition is through the AASM Clasp SPPKF. This is possible through the discretionary powers of the Chief of Defence Force and/or the Parliamentary Secretary for one day or one sortie, force assigned or posted to OP LAGOON and within the nominated Area of Operations.

7.3 Failing the above for recognition of the AASM and given the special nature of service on OP LAGOON, it is strongly suggested that there are specific discretionary powers available to the Chief of Defence Force and/or the Parliamentary Secretary to nominate a period of seven days service within the ASM Regulations.

7.4 Therefore, it is contended that the AASM or ASM Clasp “SPPKF” would be appropriate recognition for those ADF elements that deployed on OPERATION LAGOON between 21 September to 22 October 1994, however essentially from 4-22 October 1994, when the main body deployed to Bougainville.

Prepared by:

P.A. Copeland OAM, JP.

14 May 2011.

Attachment 1:

Submission by 117375 SGT (retired) Stuart Matthew Johnstone.

As an Operator Information Systems, Radio and Cipher Specialist (OISRC) Corporal posted to 103 Sig Sqn ODF, it fell on myself to compile all Signal Operating Instructions (SOI) and allocate all frequencies for inter service use for the deployment of the South Pacific Peace Keeping Force (SPPKF), in October 1994. We were informed at the time that our service was required to ensure a safe and peaceful environment for the peace talks and following truce period, between the Bougainville Republican Army (BRA) and the Papuan New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF), who had been in conflict since 1989.

Due to my duties it fell on me to reproduce above mentioned SOI and frequency allocation whilst sailing to Bougainville on the HMAS Tobruk. The reason for this was due to navy procedures regarding frequencies that were unknown to me at the time. During the voyage to Honiara, I was admitted to the sick bay for heat exhaustion, due to the extensive time I spent working in the hot unventilated conditions in the tank deck.

After docking at Honiara the members from Tonga, Fiji and Vanuatu embarked along with additional members of the Australian contingent embarked for the final leg to Bougainville. Due to the over-crowding on the HMAS Tobruk, the Australian contingent was forced to sleep in the open air on the vehicle and flight decks, whilst members of the SPPKF, from other nations, were crammed into the troop decks.

On the 4th of October 1994, we conducted an amphibious landing at Arawa with members of the SPPKF securing a beachhead, before light equipment and personnel entered and secured the SPPKF HQ area, which was based at Arawa, east of the High school. The HMAS Tobruk then proceeded to Loloho wharf which was secured before unloading heavy equipment and trucks. Armed convoys of trucks then proceeded to ferry supplies and equipment backward and forward to the HQ area at Arawa. The Loloho wharf was cleared for possible threats by naval divers before we disembarked and commenced unloading.

After establishing the HQ area and starting to establish a safe area for negotiations in Arawa town-ship, support and infantry components were deployed to Buin, Panguna Mine, and Wakunai. In addition a forward supply base was established on Buka Island.

I was the night shift commander of the Communications Centre at Arawa where we established communications with all other safe areas, HMAS Tobruk, Forward Support Base at Buka and the Defence Integrated Secure Communications Network (DISCON) in Australia. During our time in Arawa members were required to carry weapons at all times and on leaving the HQ Area went to the load condition. Members carried front line ammunition at all times. The safe areas were guarded by checkpoints manned 24/7 and equipped with sandbagged vehicle constriction points and F-89 Minimi (5.56mm Machine Gun). Transport into and out of remote safe areas for contingent members was by Black Hawk which were armed with MAG 58 (aka L7 – 7.62 mm Machine Guns), in the load condition. During our time in Arawa engineer members of the contingent conducted daily

booby trap and mine clearance as the PNGDF were not honouring the truce and conducted aggressive patrols outside the safe area. Engineers found and disarmed an automated ambush comprising of 5 claymore mines linked together at the cross roads between Arawa and Loloho wharf just north of the manned checkpoint there.

There were also two incidents of gunfire involving the PNGDF whilst we were in Arawa. The first was when a PNGDF marksman aiming at the head of the BRA contingent to attend talks in Arawa. The marksman missed and hit a young man in the BRA contingent in the arm. The young man was taken medically evacuated to HMAS Tobruk for treatment. On return to Arawa he was abused by loyalists in the safe area for being BRA.

The second incident occurred on the morning we were evacuating Arawa after being ordered to withdraw following the failure of the peace talks. The PNGDF were moving into our HQ area as we were leaving. A PNGDF machine gunner fired into the safe area at a supposed BRA gunman. The incident was dealt with by the Fiji Lt Colonel in charge of the ground troops and the PNGDF Captain in charge of the company moving into our position.

At all times during our deployment especially when in convoys travelling to Loloho wharf and elsewhere, there was a feeling of aggression and everyone was on alert and holding their weapons. No one treated the deployment as anything other than an operation in a war-torn area.

S.M. Johnstone

16th May 2011