



7 January 2019

RSIPF reinforce presence in Shortland Islands following armed robbery incident

Officers of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force, (RSIPF) in Western and Choiseul provinces are currently at Maleai Village, Shortland Islands Western Province since 6 February 2019 to investigate and reassure the community following the alleged armed robbery incident at the Village.

“Reinforcements have been sent from the Gizo and Taro police stations on their respective stabi-crafts to Maleai Village. The officers are now interviewing witnesses and holding community meetings to reassure our people there that the RSIPF is there to assist them,” says RSIPF Commissioner Matthew Varley.

Commissioner Varley adds: “This incident is gravely serious and represents another one of those repeated events where we are seeing dangerous occurrences on our border and I want to assure our people that the RSIPF is taking this incident very seriously.”

It is alleged that a group of 10 men comprising Bougainvilleans and Solomon Islanders carried out the attack on an Asian businessman and locals at Maleai Village in the early hours of 6 February 2019.

“It is also alleged that the armed men covered their faces with balaclavas and travelled in a boat driven by a 15 and 40 Yamaha Horse Power Engines that went ashore at Maleai in the Shortlands and allegedly discharged firearms six times in the air which caused fear to the community there. The type of firearms used is yet to be verified, but the message is firearms were used, as shots were heard and five shell rounds have been collected by police investigators. The firearms that the shells were fired from are yet to be confirmed. Police is working to verify this information,” explains Commissioner Varley.

It is further alleged that the men were armed with bush knives and three of them had firearms, as one local from the Shortlands received an injury to his hand from the alleged discharge of a rubber bullet from a firearm.

The men also allegedly injured the Asian man on the body with a hard object. The Asian is believed to be in the Shortlands to buy bech-der-mer (sea cucumbers). It is alleged the armed men took off with the businessman’s bech-der-mers, a huge sum of money as well as fuel and a number of valuable items that are yet to be verified by police.

“We are looking at whatever we can do to boost our presence and our profile in the western region and to make sure that we do what we can within our limited resources to secure the area,” says Commissioner Varley.

He emphasizes, “We need people’s help on this and it is very important that our communities provide further information about this event, any information that they know that is useful to our investigations and also any information that you know about people

who maybe carrying out other illegal activities in the region. It's very important that the information is passed on to us."

Commissioner Varley adds: "I appeal to people in the Shortlands and Choiseul Province to remain calm as the RSIPF is dealing with this matter. People are encouraged to report to the RSIPF any sightings of boats travelling from neighbouring Bougainville Island into Solomon Islands territory."

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