



15th April 2020

RSIPF engages with communities in common border region with PNG to fight COVID-19

The Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) is engaging with communities in the Solomon Islands side of the common border with Papua New Guinea to assist in the fight to prevent the COVID-19 virus from entering Solomon Islands.

“We are working with communities to bring back the Coastwatchers,” says RSIPF Assistant Commissioner (AC) Provincial Policing Joseph Manelugu. “The security of our borders against this virus is the responsibility of all Solomon Islanders.”

“By asking the communities to assist the RSIPF by watching out for boats or canoes coming into our waters, we are building on the finest tradition of previous Solomon Islands generations in protecting our nation,” says AC Manelugu.

COVID-19 is a threat to Solomon Islands. The Solomon Islands Government has declared a State of Public Emergency, and its borders closed.

Coastwatchers were a significant part of the battle to protect Solomon Islands the last time the nation was under threat during the Second World War.

Police are aware that there is a potential for continued movement between Bougainville and the Shortland Islands, Choiseul and the Malaita Outer Islands.

“We need to be very clear that the border is closed,” says AC Manelugu.

“And we need the continued cooperation of the local communities to ensure that Solomon Islands stays COVID-19 free. The *Coastwatchers 20/20* project is an acknowledgement of their assistance and service to the nation, by reporting to police boats and vessels seen coming to Solomon Islands, in order that RSIPF can intercept them.”

The concept of Coastwatchers is not new to Solomon Islands, but this time it will be known as “*Coastwatchers 20/20*”. This alludes, not only to the year we face this threat, but also to 20/20 vision, which is the definition of perfect eyesight – a key attribute for a Coastwatcher.

New Zealand, who also have a strong history in the Shortland Islands border, have advisors working with RSIPF on *Coastwatchers 20/20*.

It is the intention of the RSIPF to roll out this program throughout Solomon Islands. Coastal security is a problem ALL Solomon Islands communities need to be involved with.

“Together with our local ‘Coastwatchers’, I am confident that we will maintain security along our border with PNG in the face of this global threat,” says AC Manelugu.

//End//

Media inquiries

RSIPF Media Unit:
24016 or 23800 Ext 239

Email:
rsipf.media@rsipf.gov.sb

The Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) was established in 1954. Its mission is 'To provide a safe and peaceful Solomon Islands by strengthening relationships with the community'. The RSIPF strive to provide efficient and effective policing services for the Solomon Islands and expect RSIPF officers to adhere to the RSIPF values.

For ongoing news and information, please go to www.rsipf.gov.sb

Follow us on Facebook Page: www.facebook.com/rsipf

Media inquiries

RSIPF Media Unit:
24016 or 23800 Ext 239

Email:
rsipf.media@rsipf.gov.sb

The Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) was established in 1954. It's mission is 'To provide a safe and peaceful Solomon Islands by strengthening relationships with the community'. The RSIPF strive to provide efficient and effective policing services for the Solomon Islands and expect RSIPF officers to adhere to the RSIPF values.

For ongoing news and information, please go to www.rsipf.gov.sb
