



2<sup>nd</sup> November 2022

### **AFP helps boost RSIPF capability to keep communities safe and secure**

The Australian Federal Police (AFP) has delivered specialist training and donated vehicles and weapons with a combined investment of over AUD \$1.3 million to the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF), which is continuing to strengthen its operational capability in the lead up to and beyond the Pacific Games 2023.

In a gifting ceremony held in Honiara today (2 November, 2022), the AFP, through the RSIPF and AFP Policing Partnership Program (RAPPP), handed over 13 vehicles and 60 Daniels Defense MK18 rifles.

Four of the vehicles will be used to help establish a Mobile Protection Unit (MPU) for the RSIPF. The MPU will respond to and manage security threats and incidents to critical infrastructure and the four vehicles will provide the RSIPF with a high-visibility presence in the community.

The AFP will offer training to MPU members in the specialist areas of identifying suspicious behaviour and criminal activities to bolster an intelligence-led response capability for protection of diplomatic missions, Solomon Islands High Office Holders and visiting international dignitaries.

The RSIPF will use the other nine vehicles in their Police Response Team (PRT) with two trucks and seven four-wheel drive vehicles designed specifically for the team to respond to high risk incidents and public order management. These vehicles will help the RSIPF update its fleet and provide officers with enhanced operational mobility. The AFP, through the RAPPP can also provide support for vehicle maintenance and training to help ensure the vehicles are effective over the long term.

The Daniels Defense rifles were delivered to the PRT as part of an ongoing limited rearmament program and will provide the RSIPF with enhanced capabilities to counter criminal threats and maintain peace and stability.

AFP Acting Commander RAPPP Clinton Smith said the gifting represented the AFP's ongoing commitment to equip the RSIPF with the best resources to help keep their communities safe and secure.

"The AFP and RSIPF have a deep friendship that is regularly demonstrated through the sharing of resources and capability to ensure current and future security challenges and needs in the region are met," Acting Commander Smith said.

"The AFP is proud to be the Solomon Islands' security partner of choice and will continue to work closely with RSIPF officers to ensure they are trained and equipped to provide the Solomon Islands community with an efficient, modern police force.

AFP Acting Deputy Commissioner Operations Lesa Gale said the AFP's relationship with the RSIPF is only set to strengthen as the region prepares to be on the world stage with the Pacific Games in 2023.

"The AFP, through RAPPP and the Solomons' International Assistance Force (SI AF) is working closely with the RSIPF as they prepare for the important regional events in Honiara, especially the Pacific Games in 2023," Acting Deputy Commissioner Gale said.

"Preparing for milestones like the Pacific Games and National General Elections in 2024 contributes to building a stronger operational partnership between the AFP and RSIPF to combat crime in the region."

RSIPF Commissioner Mostyn Mangau said the donation would help strengthen the RSIPF's capability to protect and serve the Solomon Islands community.

"The RSIPF thanks the AFP through the RAPPP for this generous donation that will help contribute to the security, peace and stability in the Solomon Islands," Commissioner Mangau said.

"The RAPPP program continues to see the AFP help build the capacity and the capability of the RSIPF through various programs based on our needs."

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Australian High Commissioner to Solomon Islands Dr Lachlan Strahan said today's handover represented another landmark in the longstanding security and policing partnership between Solomon Islands and Australia, which has spanned several decades.

"We have been with each other through thick and thin. As Prime Minister Sogavare has said, our partnership is based on our shared duty to ensure that our region remains peaceful, prosperous and stable," Dr Strahan said.

"Australia and Solomon Islands' security cooperation is multifaceted, spanning not just policing, but also Defence, border security, justice and non-traditional security threats. Australia's support is quick, forthright and responsive."

The limited rearmament of the RSIPF commenced in 2013 with the objective to rearm a limited number of officers to ensure the RSIPF is equipped to counter criminal threats and maintain peace and stability.

The governments of Solomon Islands and Australia agreed for the AFP, through the RAPPP, to assist the RSIPF with the introduction of Daniels Defense MK18 rifles for use by the PRT.

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**Media inquiries**

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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.

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Phase two of the rearmament program is now underway with AFP members providing support and training to RSIPF officers, including on the use of force.

The AFP is also advising the RSIPF on infrastructure upgrades to ensure that facilities such as ranges and armouries can accommodate the new weapons.

In January 2022, 10 RSIPF members successfully completed training in Brisbane to become qualified instructors for the new Daniels Defense rifles and prepared them to deliver the training across specialist teams.

The training and tactics provided to the RSIPF is consistent with what is considered international best practice for law enforcement and maintains the underlying principles of negotiation and de-escalation and that lethal force is a last resort option once all other use of force options have been considered. Use of force must be in accordance with Solomon Islands Legislation and Commissioner Orders.

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