

# Masalai i tokaut

Number Four: 18 June 2002

## Guns, Logs and the Election.

While everyone must hope and pray that this election will be free of violence, PNG Transparency is worried about the situation in Southern Highlands. There are now several substantiated reports that some candidates have heavily armed their electorates with the aim of intimidating their opposition or playing with events during the polling period.

On Friday June 14, the Post Courier reported that many candidates have provided people with weaponry ranging from 'AK47s, M16, M202 and SLRs'.

The Prime Minister himself has admitted that it is 'an open secret' that guns are being freely smuggled by politicians in the Highlands region and other provinces (*Post Courier, May 24*).

The business community in the Provincial Capital Mendi is so worried by the situation that they have called for the army to be deployed during the election period and they have sent a petition to the Prime Minister (*The National, June 13<sup>th</sup>*).

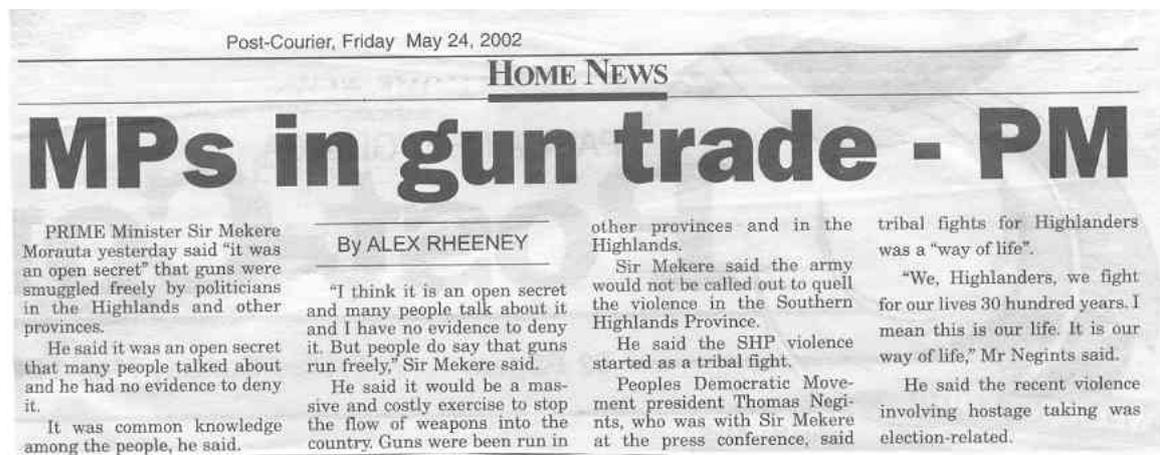
Meanwhile some areas of the Highlands have been declared 'no fly zones' because of the threat of aircraft being shot down as a result of candidates stockpiling weapons for use during the election (*Post Courier, June 14<sup>th</sup>*).

According to the Tari Police Force, many of these weapons are new – they are not ex-PNG Defense Force, and are unlikely to have been sourced from Australia given the recent tightening of the cross-border arms trade. Where are they coming from?

Earlier this year Acting Police Commander in North Fly, Senior Inspector Hariba Mamaea claimed that people are travelling from the highlands through Nomad River to the Concord Pacific Binge log camp to trade for high-powered firearms (*Independent, January 3<sup>rd</sup>*). He went on to state that the guns are being brought up the Fly River on empty log barges. Since then there have been several unofficial reports of politicians flying into these logging camps to acquire firearms.

The link between illegal logging and the trade in high-powered weaponry now demands attention.

- Is it true that these guns are coming from SE Asia on empty log ships?
- Who are the Highlands politicians that are involved, and who will bring them and the logging companies to justice?
- As AusAID pumps millions of kina into the support of the police force, are they going to ensure that there is an urgent and high-level investigation into guns and logs?



## Drugs for guns trade links found between SHP and North Fly

**NORTH Fly police in the Western province are concerned about drug trade links between the Komo area of the Southern Highlands province (SHP) and a logging camp near Kiunga.**

Acting North Fly police commander Senior Inspector Hariba Mamaea said that people are travelling from Komo through Nomad River to the logging camp to trade marijuana for high powered firearms brought in from Australia via Daru. The logging camp is about 150 kilometres down the Fly River from Kiunga.

Mr Mamaea said the police believe that firearms are smuggled in from Australia via Daru on the empty barges returning to the Binge river camp.

He said that about a month ago Kiunga police arrested a man from Komo who had travelled all the way from Southern Highlands to sell drugs for money or firearms but the man had escaped from police custody and is now believed to be in Tabubil.

Mr Mamaea also said that earlier this year, the police arrested a Central province man who was a sailor on one of the barges on drug possession charges.

The man served a five-month jail sentence and was recently released. The senior inspector said because the river camp is right on the Papua New Guinea-Indonesian border and because of smuggling activities carried by some of the people residing there, Kiunga police call the camp a "free trade zone".

# The National

Thursday, June 13, 2002

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Election Special

# Mendi's SOS for soldiers



# Subject: Urgent Appeal to Deploy PNGDF Troops in Mendi

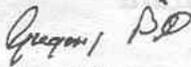
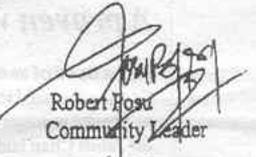
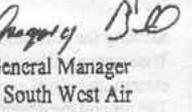
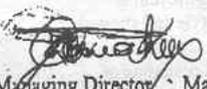
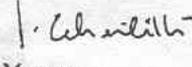
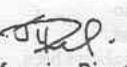
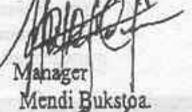
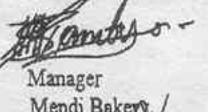
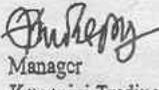
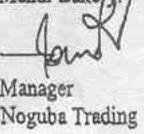
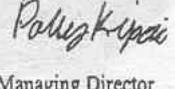
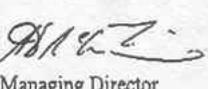
...le of Mendi and the Business Community make  
 ... appeal to the Government of the Day and espe-  
 ... the Prime Minister, the Hon. Sir Mekere Morauta.  
 ... deal due to the lack of serious concern by the  
 ... s to utilize the Defence Force in some parts of  
 ... during the National Election, especially during  
 ... counting to declaring of winners.

...w exactly what will happen and ask the govern-  
 ...efense Force to assist police, especially in Mendi  
 ... Koroba-Lake Kopiago.

...d "body language" of our leaders for a major flare  
 ... the elections is so overwhelming. It is impossi-  
 ... bility to ignore. Before the last fighting in Mendi  
 ... sentations were made to the authorities in this  
 ... apply contingency and other strategic measures  
 ... the looming disaster. It's all history now. They  
 ... d we the community paid a heavy price. The  
 ... here, it has not evaporated overnight.

...erience, the communities wish to appeal for the  
 ... s "as special constables" in Mendi. We appeal  
 ... eployed before polling and retain them for an  
 ... r the polling. A strength of 2x platoons would be  
 ... ievie that the presence of troops will provide the  
 ... and more so allow the recently signed peace  
 ... between the Unjamps and Tugujups to gain  
 ... rity.

...nment is not conducive for the Acting Governor  
 ... o argue over internal matters. They should put  
 ... s and get their priorities right, like honouring the  
 ... ts made at Memei oval to the warring clans for  
 ... ms and other pressing issues. They are still learn-  
 ... ed enough. We pray from the bottom of our  
 ... the Prime Minister and his NEC take this public  
 ... most seriousness.

 Manager Best Buy	 General Manager Carson Pratt Services	 Robert Hosa Community Leader
 Manager Kiburu Lodge	 Manager Panindo	 General Manager South West Air
 Manager Paradise Hardware	 Managing Director Local Trading	 Manager Highlands Traders.
 Manager M.S.S. Trading	 Managing Director Pabson Trading.	 Manager Mendi Bukstoa.
 Manager Air Niugini	 Manager Mendi Stationaries	 Manager Mendi Bakery
 General Manager Menduli Ltd	 Manager Kawapini Trading	 Manager Noguba Trading
 Managing Director Aisi Holding	 Managing Director No 1 Builders	 Managing Director Kutubu Fuel

...AL IS SPONSORED BY THE PEOPLE AND THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY OF MENDI TOWN

# Aircraft warned of 'no-go' areas

ANY aircraft that flies into the Koroba/Kopiago electorate during the polling period will be shot down, District Administrator of Koroba/Kopiago, Stanley Kotange warned.

Mr Kotange sent the warning in a letter to various airline companies in the country, urging them not to allow their planes into his district.

"I formally would like to advice your company against hiring your aircraft out to any of the 19 candidates in the above electorate, including the current sitting member . . . during the voting period commencing 15-29 June, 2002," his letter read.

He said this was because he had reports that the 19 candidates from the area had stock-

By THEO THOMAS

piled high powered firearms which they intended to use during the elections.

The firearms he described as ranging from AK47s, M16, M202, AK47, SLR and .303s will be used to keep a look out on individuals and supporters of other candidates.

He said the people from the area have stated publicly that they would shoot at any aircraft that flies in and around Koroba/Lake Kopiago.

Hevi Lift in Mt Hagen said they were aware of the warning.

But they said they do not have much operations in the

province. Hevi Lift suffered from election-related violence in the Western Highlands last year when one of its helicopters had its windscreens broken and its pilot assaulted.

Airlink, which conducts flights into the province from Mt Hagen, said they were not aware of the warning letter.

But a staff member said they did receive a letter of warning from Miria Ume from the Office of Civil Aviation with regard to flights during election times.

MAF, which also conducts flights into Tari, said they were aware of the warning.

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