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Briefing on Bougainville

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1. Introduction

When an advance party from the New Zealand Defence Force arrived on the island of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea in late November, 1997, it might have been assumed that this fell into the pattern of contribution to peace-keeping New Zealand has followed since the end of the Cold war and before that to UN operations. New Zealanders had become used to the participation of New Zealand troops in such activities. However, the Bougainville operation, and the developments which preceded it, had the potential to affect New Zealand far more profoundly than other peace-keeping efforts. Significant and direct New Zealand interests were at stake.

That theme will be returned to. First, this paper will deal with some background on the conflict in Bougainville, the parties to the conflict, and the course of events over the last few years. Then it will give an account of the role New Zealand has played in trying to resolve the conflict and at the end seek to show how much is at stake for New Zealand.

2. Bougainville and the Dispute

Bougainville is a large island -- 200 kilometres long and varying between 60 km and 100 km wide -- to the east of Papua New Guinea. A small island called Buka, at the northern tip, is also considered part of Bougainville. The capital is Arawa, on the eastern coast. It is close to the Shortland Islands, which are part of the Solomons. The people are mostly Melanesian but some identify more with the Solomon Islanders than they do with mainland Papua New Guineans. Several languages are spoken. The population numbers about 140,000. The island is rich in natural resources. A copper mine was the mainstay of the Papua New Guinea Government for many years and proved to be the focus of the conflict that eventually developed.

Constitutionally, Bougainville is part of Papua New Guinea. Other large islands are New Britain and New Ireland. Papua New Guinea also has a huge number of small islands. About 800 languages are spoken in Papua New Guinea.

Papua New Guinea is a Constitutional Monarchy with General Elections held every five years. The country gained its independence from Australia in 1975 and almost immediately faced secessionist demands from particular areas. There were strong separatist demands from Bougainville in 1976 but these were partly mollified when Bougainville was given a measure of internal self-government. The Panguna copper mine, run by Bougainville Copper Ltd, a subsidiary of CRA, became the centre of dispute. It was subjected to sabotage and in 1988 a sporadic guerrilla war broke out.

The causes of the dispute were several:

- The landowners believed that they were not being adequately compensated for the use of their land for mining and that they were not getting sufficient royalties. Some believed that the compensation was not being distributed appropriately.
- Environmental factors played a part. The local people considered that the land was being alienated from them, that there was physical destruction of the land, and that there was other environmental damage.
- Another was cultural. Some believed that traditional cultural practices and lifestyles were being disrupted by outside influences.
- A further cause was the ethnic differences. Many Bougainvilleans felt that there were significant differences between them and the rest of PNG. However, Bougainvilleans themselves are far from homogeneous.

3. How the Dispute Developed

The sabotage and the growing guerrilla war led to the closing of the Panguna mine in 1989. PNG sent in police and eventually the PNG Defence Force. At one time there were 2000 security forces there. They failed to stop the violence and PNG was forced to withdraw its security forces in early 1990 and it blockaded the island. The withdrawal of the PNG Defence

Force led to a sense of outrage in the force itself and this probably accounted for some of the excessive violence in the years which followed.

After the withdrawal, the island remained under the effective control of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army, a guerrilla group which aimed at complete independence. After 1992, however, the failure of the BRA to gain any international recognition, the brutality of some of the BRA forces, and the failure of the BRA to provide services, led to the chiefs in various areas to invite the central government back to restore order.

During the 1990s the conflict continued. The occasional incident involved an attack by the PNG Defence Force on the Solomons, which were considered to be sympathetic to the Bougainvillean rebels, to give sanctuary to rebel Bougainvilleans, and to be a staging post for arms. The blockade continued, causing some severe privation, including medicines and food. Bougainvillean people were unable to get their children educated. The PNGDF tried unsuccessfully to re-establish order. Various acts of extreme violence were committed by both sides. Some news reports suggested that individual commanders of PNGDF units acted without authority, including making attacks on the Solomons. It is improbable that Port Moresby would have authorised such actions.

4. Parties to the Dispute

All this led to the establishment of a number of groups who have been parties to the conflict and who were represented at the Burnham talks New Zealand hosted. The groups are:

- The Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA). This was formed in 1988. The military commander is Sam Kauona.
- The Bougainville Interim Government (BIG). This was formed in May of 1990 after a unilateral declaration of independence. The BRA is often grouped with the BIG. Therefore, one may roughly be regarded as the military wing, the other as the political wing. Both the BRA and the Bougainville Interim Government have sought autonomy for Bougainville.

- The Bougainville Transitional Government (BTG). This was established in 1995 under the Papua New Guinea Government to carry out the functions of a provincial Government. The Premier is Gerard Sinato. This group has the authority of the PNG Government behind it.
- The Resistance groups. These are armed militias opposed to the BRA. They often fight alongside the PNGDF. So this is armed resistance to the separatists and brought about partly as a reaction to the BRA and its methods. The Resistance groups are led by individual commanders and their activities do not come under any central command. This has led to some widespread and unco-ordinated outbreaks of fighting. One observer has described it as similar to gang warfare.

Some members of the Resistance groups have close links with members of the Bougainville Transitional Government. When the Truce was signed at the second round of Burnham talks the Resistance leaders signed individually as did individual BRA commanders.

- The Bougainville Members of Parliament. There are four members of Parliament from Bougainville in the national PNG Parliament. The best known is John Momis, a former Catholic priest and a leading PNG politician since independence in 1975. The PNG Government itself is a party to the dispute but was not represented at the first round of Burnham talks.

5. Peace Efforts

There have been various efforts to resolve the conflict through talks. New Zealand hosted one in 1990 aboard the RNZN ship Endeavour. In 1991 talks were held about the merchant ship Huris, which was registered in Rabaul, New Britain. Talks were conducted at Arawa in 1994 and at Cairns in 1995. None ended satisfactorily or the terms of any agreement were broken soon afterwards. On the way home from the Cairns talks, the Bougainvillean rebel groups were attacked by PNG forces. (The possibility that there would be attacks on the Bougainvillean representatives after the first Burnham talks was one of the factors to be weighed by the New Zealand Government).

The sense of frustration became evident in February, 1997, when it was disclosed that Sir Julius Chan, the Prime Minister, had contracted Sandline International, a subsidiary of Executive Outcomes, a firm which describes itself as a security consultancy but which others describe as a firm of mercenaries, to deal with Bougainville dispute.¹ The contract deal was leaked and international and domestic pressure caused the PNG Government to suspend it. In May of this year a draft new peace plan was approved by the PNG Government. Events took a very dramatic turn when the commander of the PNGDF, Brigadier-General Jerry Singirok, demanded that Sir Julius Chan resign. This created the most significant Constitutional crisis since Papua New Guinea became independent. The crisis continued for 10 days. Sir Julius Chan then said that he would stand aside while there was an inquiry into the Sandline contract. Although the inquiry cleared Sir Julius Chan of any wrongdoing, the whole incident affected Papua New Guineans profoundly and, in the election which followed, he was defeated and replaced by Bill Skate.

The Bougainville conflict has resulted in the deaths of several thousand people. It has imposed great privations on many Bougainvilleans and, at one stage, there were between 30,000 and 40,000 displaced people in government care centres on Bougainville.

6. New Zealand's Intervention

Although there had been a slightly improved access for humanitarian supplies, the above was the position when New Zealand hosted the first Burnham meeting from 3 to 18 July. The talks were among the Bougainville parties. There were representatives of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army, of the Bougainville Interim Government, and of the Bougainville Transitional Government, that is the group set up by Papua New Guinea. No-one was there from the central government of PNG. However the central government knew of the talks and gave its approval. New Zealand brought the Bougainville parties to New Zealand using the Royal New Zealand

¹ The contract between Papua New Guinea and Sandline says: "The State, engulfed in a state of conflict with the illegal and unrecognised Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) requires such external military expertise to support its Armed Forces in the protection of its Sovereign Territory and regain control over important national assets, specifically the Panguna mine. In particular, Sandline is contracted to provide personnel and related services and equipment to: conduct offensive operations in Bougainville in conjunction with PNG defence forces to render the BRA militarily ineffective and repossess the Panguna mine;"

Air Force. The talks ended in a document called the Burnham Declaration. This committed the parties to seek unity and reconciliation among the

Bougainvillean people, and to work with the Government of PNG to set up a process of negotiations between the leaders of Bougainville and PNG.

Besides the Burnham Declaration, an important second agreement was reached on 18 July when the Bougainville Interim Government and the Bougainville Revolutionary Army announced that they would release five PNG soldiers they had been holding as prisoners of war for nearly a year. The hostages were handed over to a New Zealand representative by the BRA at Laguai in south Bougainville and then boarded a New Zealand frigate, the HMNZS Canterbury. As it happened the new PNG Government had just been formed. The first official function engaged in by the new Prime Minister, Bill Skate, was to welcome back the hostages at Jackson Airport in Port Moresby. As a token of good will and as a confidence-building measure, the release was highly significant. It must have been a pleasant duty for Bill Skate and that was auspicious for his attitude towards the Bougainville problem.

The process instituted at the first round of Burnham talks had neither Australian involvement, nor the participation of the PNG Government, nor a role for the Solomons. The next major step was to involve all three. Before considering that, the Australian concerns are worth examining.

Australia considers that it has vital interests at stake over Papua New Guinea. In the first place, as the former administering authority, it has a special relationship with PNG. This is not simply a paternalistic interest, but a profound conviction for the welfare of PNG. It contributes aid of about \$320 million a year to PNG (New Zealand's aid to PNG is about \$6 million a year). It also has major security concerns about the fragmentation of PNG and about the establishment of any small -- probably non-viable State -- close to the northern coast of Australia lest that became dominated by a power unfriendly to Australia. As well as those factors, Australian foreign policy has long been preoccupied with Indonesia and Indonesia has interests in the stability of Papua New Guinea with which it shares a border. Australia was opposed to proliferation of small states immediately to its north. The 1975 Indonesian take-over of East Timor was a clear demonstration of Indonesia's unwillingness to tolerate the possibly disruptive effects of a small entity in the region - a factor no doubt weighed by both New Zealand and Australia.

Yet Australia was not really in a position to play a major role in the Bougainville dispute. Its commercial interests were manifest. The Panguna mine, which was at the centre of the conflict, was owned by an Australian company. Australia is also a major arms supplier to PNG and there were public suspicions, in Australia as well as in Bougainville, that PNG had used Australian-supplied helicopters against the Bougainvillean rebels. For these reasons, Australian motives were regarded warily by some Bougainvillean parties.

Australian concerns were understood widely but mainly expressed privately. They were expressed publicly by John Howard, the Australian Prime Minister, at the South Pacific Forum, which was held in Rarotonga from 17 to 19 September, 1997. His remarks threatened to derail progress. They were unacceptable to those who supported total independence for Bougainville because they ruled out the possibility of independence altogether.² Alexander Downer, the Australian Foreign Minister, toned down the Prime Minister's statement³ and progress was again possible.

7. The Second Round

The second round of talks got under way on 1 October, 1997. This time Australia provided the transport for the Bougainville participants. An Australian Department of Foreign Affairs official was present at Burnham all during the talks though he, like the New Zealand officials, was not an active participant in the talks. This time representatives of the Papua New Guinea Government, including the Deputy Commissioner of Police and the Commander of the PNG Defence Force, were at the talks. A group also came from the Solomons. This presented an interesting logistics problem because the Solomons delegation, which included a former Governor-General, was not formally part of the negotiations. The Government resolved this by accommodating the Solomons delegation in Christchurch while the PNG officials and the Bougainvilleans were at Burnham. In the end the Solomons Home Affairs Minister, Leslie Boseto, chaired the Burnham talks and a subsequent meeting in Cairns.

² What Mr Howard said was that the New Zealand proposal for a peacekeeping force made a lot of sense "but it had to be based on a recognition that the only solution is one that involves resorting to things other than military processes and also keeps Bougainville within Papua New Guinea. That is fundamental, in my view to the proper resolution of this dispute." *The Australian*, 19 September 1997, page 5.

³ Radio Australia external service 29 September 1997.

Burnham 2, as the second round of talks became known, ended in a truce -- the Burnham Truce.

The text is short enough to be reprinted in full:

RE-AFFIRMING the principles contained in the Burnham Declaration, July 5th-18th-1997.

REPRESENTATIVES of the National Government of Papua New Guinea, the Bougainville Transitional Government, the Resistance, the Bougainville Interim Government, and the Bougainville Revolutionary Army, having met at Burnham military camp, New Zealand from October 1-10th 1997, recognise the desirability of taking immediate positive measures -

- to cease armed conflict
- for peace and reconciliation, and
- for the return of normalcy and restoration of services by all parties

PENDING a formal meeting of the leaders, desirably by 31st January 1998,
HAVE AGREED, as immediate interim measures, to the following:-

1. to respect and promote basic human rights and fundamental freedoms;
2. to refrain from all acts of intimidation and armed confrontation;
3. to promote peace and reconciliation in the community;
4. to lift all restrictions, so as to restore freedom of movement and delivery of services to the people of Bougainville subject to appropriate clearances;
5. that Field Commanders of the PNG Security Forces, the Resistance and BRA and Village Chiefs, to meet on a regular basis to consult, review and monitor the implementation of this commitment as well as to consult as required, and resolve any incidents which may threaten or breach these understandings as well as to promote the aspirations expressed herein;
6. recommend to the National Government and leaders on Bougainville to immediately invite a neutral regional group to monitor the terms of this agreement.

This agreement shall take effect as of the date of signature.

The truce was not a formal cease-fire, which was something to be concluded at the most senior levels of government, though it did commit the signatories to cease armed conflict. The recommendation about the monitoring force and the establishment of a process among the field commanders to meet regularly to consult and to deal with any incidents which might threaten the understandings was an important move.

To someone who observed both signing ceremonies, there was a marked difference. Although some of the participants were the same people, there were more women at the first set of talks, and at the second many of the participants were much younger. Some were very lean and athletic looking. These were actually the leaders of the guerrillas on both sides and it was clearly considered necessary to have their individual signatures on the truce document. So the signatures on the Burnham Truce include those of the Secretary for the Prime Minister of Papua, who was leading the PNG delegation, Brigadier-General Leo Nuiia, Commander of the PNG Defence Force, two very senior officials from the Royal PNG Constabulary, senior commanders from the PNG Defence Force, including the Director of Military Intelligence, those of the leaders of the Bougainville Transitional Government and the Secretary of the Bougainville Interim Government, eight from commanders of the BRA, 28 from BRA company representatives, and 21 from commanders of the Resistance.

Before dealing with the monitoring force in more detail, it is worth while trying to characterise the New Zealand intervention through the Burnham process.

As mediation processes go it was deliberately at the low end of intervention. A more active mediation would have been one which had someone negotiating and presenting positions to both sides and trying to extract concessions for the two sides to arrive at an agreed position. What New Zealand did was provide a secure venue first aboard the Endeavour, then at Burnham military camp and let the two or more sides get on with it. The New Zealand Government received many offers from mediation and conciliation experts from throughout the world but rejected them all, believing that the two sides had to settle their differences themselves.

A second aspect was that it was not a pressured effort. No timetable was initially set for the talks nor any specific outcome aimed for. The idea was to invite the parties, provide for their needs, and let them find their own way.

A third aspect was that apart from the opening and closing ceremonies the media did not have access to the participants. It was perfectly possible to talk to people at the closing ceremonies, but during the negotiations themselves the participants were shielded. This continued to be the case even when the participants visited Christchurch. During the second round of talks, a reporter from The Press in Christchurch, Sinead O'Hanlan, who had covered the press conferences for the first round of Burnham talks, recognised Martin Miriori, delegation leader of the BIG, in a Christchurch street but when he was reluctant to speak was dissuaded by a Ministry official from talking to him.⁴ The Bougainville Interim Government was at times willing to talk but the PNG Government officials were not.

A further aspect is the question of the position of the New Zealand Government towards the dispute. Was New Zealand advocating independence for Bougainville? There was no evidence that it was. It was not, on the other hand, thrusting down the throats of those who wanted total independence that it had ruled out the possibility. Leaving aside the security issue, which was central to Australia's concern and would be weighed by New Zealand as well, the New Zealand Government would consider that in the age of globalisation a country of 140,000 people in Bougainville's circumstances did not make sense. The New Zealand Government also considered that the people who had been living on Bougainville, for a long time under a blockade, needed to have their horizons broadened a little before they understood what was best for their future. Guerrilla wars are often inward-looking affairs and those who engage in them often have to keep their gaze close at hand, not on wider horizons.

A fifth aspect of New Zealand's intervention was personal. It was driven by Don McKinnon, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and, within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, John Hayes, a former High Commissioner to PNG, was particularly active. Mr McKinnon was directly involved in negotiations for the setting up of the talks himself, visiting Bougainvillean leaders on Bougainville. John Hayes was in a helicopter that was shot down in Bougainville.

The hands-off approach in the negotiations themselves did not exclude considerable care in attempting to set the atmosphere. This included having a Ngai Tahu welcome at both sets of talks. It also included arranging for a visit to a farm at the first set of talks. The belief was that the people who came to the talks had been fighting one another and, although many knew

⁴ Personal interview

one another and had known one another in happier circumstances before the outbreak of the conflict nine years previously, they needed to get used to being together again.

The setting up of the talks was a highly active process. Mr McKinnon had been particularly active in ensuring that the talks took place at all and in seeking the agreement of the PNG Government. A secret meeting between Bougainville representatives and New Zealand officials was held in Auckland in June of this year. During the first set of talks New Zealand kept the PNG Government advised of the progress and was also in regular touch with Australia. Whether New Zealand did any of the drafting of either agreement, is not publicly known, though the Government clearly knew of progress.

On board the Endeavour, incidentally, a New Zealander, Mr Tony Browne, was present at the talks because he did the interpreting. He was not there as a conciliator.

Keeping PNG on side was critical, not only because the PNG Government was one of the parties in the conflict, but also because New Zealand's official relationship was with the PNG Government. At the time of the Endeavour talks, New Zealand accepted the PNG position that Bougainville was part of the territory of PNG. That position has not changed officially. In that sense New Zealand was not neutral. This is interesting for two reasons. New Zealand was still perceived not to have an agenda of its own and was still considered impartial enough to be trusted by both sides. Some advocates of mediation believe that New Zealand should declare itself a neutral nation, whatever that now means, and this would enhance its capacity to play mediation roles. In the case of the Bougainville dispute, New Zealand did not need to take any such dramatic action. However Francis Ona, the leader of BIG, refused to take part in the Burnham negotiations and has issued a number of warnings to the effect that New Zealand and Australian troops should not go to Bougainville because neither country was neutral.

Despite the lack of emphasis on any predetermined results considerable progress was made at both Burnham 1 and Burnham 2. The Burnham Truce went further than might have been expected. In the early days of the second round, the two sides would not eat with one another but that changed during the time they spent there. It had been expected that the PNG Government participants would reserve their positions and that any formal announcement would come from Port Moresby. However, it proved otherwise. Either the PNG Government

participants had more authority than they let on at the beginning of the talks, or they were given the authority as the talks developed.

8. The Monitoring Force

The monitoring force was part of the Burnham Truce. A group of New Zealand and Australian officials later toured Bougainville and visited Port Moresby. It may be assumed that the decisions taken later arose out of its investigations.

The sort of issues which needed to be decided were how important it was to have a force large enough to show a presence and whether its composition would enable it to investigate incidents. It would have to report to the participating governments and to the Government of Papua New Guinea and to the parties on Bougainville. Where possible, the Truce Monitoring Group would also be required to facilitate discussion aimed at easing localised tension.

It may be assumed that the proposal for a civilian-military mix came out of this group's investigations. Among the factors considered in the size were that a smaller group could be withdrawn more quickly if the situation broke down and that a larger group would have the disadvantage of not being able to be removed quickly but would be able to show a presence more effectively. A large group would have critical mass. In the end a larger size was favoured. This made it easier for military rather than civilians to be deployed. Presumably the parties involved wanted New Zealand to lead the group. It may also be assumed that the parties wanted the Truce Monitoring Group to be unarmed and that undertakings were sought and given that local communities would guarantee the safety of the Truce Monitoring Group. The Francis Ona statements seemed contrary to the general thrust of what was happening and the weight to be given to them difficult to judge.

9. New Zealand Interests And Motives

It was with the dispatch of the advance party of New Zealanders that this paper began. New Zealand has several interests at stake.⁵ The first is that the conflict in Bougainville represents a threat to the stability of the region. The conflict has already involved the Solomons. If left to fester it might involve other countries including Indonesia. Another possibility is that it might attract unwelcome extra-regional interest.

A second interest is humanitarian. Thousands have died and some of the people on Bougainville have suffered badly.

A third is that New Zealand shares South Pacific Forum and Commonwealth membership with Papua New Guinea and has interests in seeing these organisations upheld.

A fourth is that the conflict came to involve mercenaries and such an organisation might become a significant force in the region and could act against New Zealand's interests.

A fifth is that New Zealand treasures its reputation as a good international citizen and it could be seen as anomalous that New Zealand sought to act in other circumstances but failed to act in the region itself.

It needs to be observed at the same time that although the continuation of the conflict makes some of the worst developments more likely, the general interests New Zealand has had in seeing the conflict resolved have been present for the nine years of the war. It may thus be concluded that it has not been a change in New Zealand's interests that has occurred but a change in its intentions. This has been brought about by the emphasis given to the issue by Mr McKinnon. So the question comes down largely to what has motivated him to act at this time.

A number of circumstances seemed to have coincided. For one thing he was by then a highly experienced and confident Foreign Minister. He was on record as saying that the Government

⁵ A background paper issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, under the heading, "Why New Zealand is involved," says: "The war on Bougainville has gone on for nearly a decade and claimed hundreds of lives. The people of the Island have suffered terrible privations. A whole generation of children has grown up without access to basic education or health services. The New Zealand Government believes that as a near neighbour of Papua New Guinea and a good international citizen it should do what it can to help bring the war to an end."

had decided to become involved in the talks after the last election and that it was clear to him that "we should move from being 'willing but passive' to 'willing and active' to assist in seeing an end to the conflict and a sustainable settlement process put in place."⁶

Some political observers and analysts say that Mr McKinnon was motivated by his chances of succeeding Jim Bolger as leader of the party and Prime Minister. It is true that before the Shipley move against Mr Bolger, Mr McKinnon was widely spoken of as a possible successor for the leadership. If that was his chosen way to the leadership, it was risky. It was physically dangerous because he got involved in going around Bougainville itself. There was no guarantee of success. It could have all blown up in his face, especially if any of Bougainville's or PNG's violence were imported into New Zealand. The country was dealing with people who had been involved in violence and was bringing together people who had been fighting one another. Security at Burnham was handled superbly and unobtrusively but was never absent. Mr McKinnon was well aware of the risks. If improvement of his chances to succeed to the leadership of the National Party formed any part of his calculation, it cannot surely have been a compelling part. Without doubt he believed in what he was doing, knew that he had the experience to make a reasonable fist of it, and he had sufficient confidence in his Ministry staff that they could handle any developments which might come out of it.

Some comments were made that New Zealand saw this as a way of scoring at Australia's expense. That interpretation should be rejected. Australia's hands, as discussed earlier, were tied by its commercial interests, by its close historical ties with the PNG Government, and by its supply of arms including helicopters to the PNG Government. Australia might have liked to play a prominent role but was not in a position to do so. A perception developed in some quarters that this was little New Zealand doing what Australia should be doing, but the more informed observers, and the Australian Government, understood the constraints. New Zealand understood the constraints on Australia, but was not seeking to take advantage of them.

⁶ Media release from Don McKinnon 18 July, 1997.

10. New Zealand's Position

To return to the point at which this paper began. The assertion was made that the dispatch of the troops to Bougainville had the potential to affect this country more profoundly than other peace-keeping efforts in which New Zealand has been engaged.

Five aspects stand out. In the first place, by its intervention in a regional dispute, New Zealand has heightened and internationalised the issue. The conflict cannot now be seen as simmering violence over a separatist issue. Had the intervention failed it would have been one more attempt to bring about a solution to a seemingly intractable problem. However, the very success of the New Zealand intervention has raised regional hopes and the New Zealand troops and leadership of the monitoring group will be watched carefully.

Secondly, considerable advances have been made on Bougainville itself and in PNG's approach to the issue. After the first round of talks tensions eased on Bougainville. Roads that had been closed reopened. Supplies, including medical supplies, got through. As confidence grew, more and more humanitarian needs were met. The maintenance of that momentum depends heavily on New Zealand.

Thirdly, New Zealand is leading the Truce Monitoring Group. New Zealand troops have frequently served usefully in United Nations and other operations. They have usually been tacked on to other groups. In Bougainville, New Zealand is the leader with considerable responsibility and the reputation risks that go with that.

Fourthly, any wavering of New Zealand's purpose, or ineptitude on its part, will have severe implications for New Zealand's reputation internationally.

Fifthly, New Zealand is playing a major role in a sphere of influence that has traditionally been Australia's and one in which vital Australian interests are at stake. Australia has had some misgivings. So, as far as New Zealand is concerned, the relationship with Australia - a fundamental one to New Zealand - is involved and New Zealand cannot afford to make mistakes.

All in all, the dispatch of the troops comes about as the result of actions initiated by New Zealand and which New Zealand now has to see through. The actions were serious. They were worth attempting. There is now no going back.