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[STATE SEAL]
Action Office: POL, ECON, AID, PAS, ICE, LEGAT, POL_MIL
Info Office: ECON_LES_INFO

MRN: 22 PORT MORESBY 372<<http://repository.state.gov/searchcenter/Results.aspx?k=mrn%3a%2222%20PORT%20MORESBY%20372%22>>
Date/DTG: Apr 08, 2022 / 080251Z APR 22
From: AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY
Action: WASHDC, SECSTATE ROUTINE
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, SOCI, MOPS, ECON, EAID, EINT, SB, CN, PG, AU, NZ, FJ
Captions: SENSITIVE
Reference: A) 22 Port Moresby 310<<http://repository.state.gov/searchcenter/Results.aspx?k=mrn%3a%2222%20Port%20Moresby%20310%22>>
B) 22 Port Moresby 370<<http://repository.state.gov/searchcenter/Results.aspx?k=mrn%3a%2222%20Port%20Moresby%20370%22>>
Subject: Solomon Islands: Sogavare Credibility on PRC Security Agreement Evaporates with A Resurfaced Leaked PRC Document

1. (SBU) SUMMARY AND COMMENT: Prime Minister (PM) Sogavare has no choice but to cleave to the People's Republic of China (PRC) for his political survival and legacy but not all Solomon Islanders support the Sogavare-PRC symbiotic relationship. Sogavare attracted renewed criticism this week as a document that was leaked last year resurfaced (attached). The document showed the PRC's intent to construct a naval base on Isabel Province dated back to at least September 2020, but a former PM asserted that Sogavare's intent to establish the PRC as Solomon Islands' preferred partner was heralded in Parliament as early as 2019. Opposition politicians and social media posters question Sogavare's focus on security deals to handle domestic threats rather than addressing real domestic priorities. Detractors argue that diversifying the economy is a higher priority, and struggle with the formerly unknown concept of diversifying security relationships. Sogavare is politically vulnerable. His own party's support for Sogavare's plan to extend the current Parliamentary term through 2024 is thinning, with the possibility of an early dissolution of Parliament and 2023 national general elections increasing, but the governing elite will do everything possible to retain all glory for hosting the 2023 Pacific Games, even if it means changing the country's constitution. Solomon Islanders are afraid of being caught in the middle of another great power conflict on their shores. Despite discomfort with the PRC, the United States is not the logical PRC-alternative for all Solomon Islanders and a message of "PRC bad" will not automatically lead to a "USA good" conclusion. Solomon Islanders yearn for partners that will elevate their nation by empowering and equipping the people and they are frustrated with much of the aid being siphoned off by corrupt politicians or diverted into PRC-owned businesses without reaching the targeted (Solomon Islander) beneficiaries. (b)(5)

(b)(5)

(b)(5) END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

2. (SBU) PM Sogavare's mirage that there are no plans for a PRC base in Solomon Islands (Ref. A) evaporated on April 7 when a letter that was dismissed when it was first leaked in 2021 resurfaced. The September 2020 document is a letter of intent (attached) from AVIC International General Manager Qian Rong, though presenting himself as the AVIC International Project Engineering Company General Manager, to Isabel Province Premier Leslie Kikolo "to study the opportunity to develop naval and infrastructure projects on leased land for the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy in Isabel Province with exclusive rights for 75 years." (Note: AVIC International Project Engineering Co (中航国际成套设备有限公司) is a subordinate company to AVIC International (中国航空技术国际控股有限公司), which is under AVIC (中国航空工业集团公司), a PLA-tied company sanctioned by the U.S. Government in June 2021. End Note.) The letter re-emerged the day after Sogavare assured visiting Australian intelligence chiefs (Ref. B) that the Solomon Islands-PRC security agreement would go ahead but that it would not lead to a PRC base in the country, according to a Prime Minister's Office press release. The statement also said, "Australia remains our partner of choice," but not his only partner of choice. On April 3, Opposition MP and former PM Rick Houenipwela said the secret undertakings on the Solomon Islands-PRC security agreement started in 2019 when the police minister indicated in Parliament that "if the government had its way, they would have China as the preferred security partner." (COMMENT: Sources speculate that the PRC forced the security agreement on Sogavare in exchange for additional development aid, but Sogavare's actions are consistent with his long-stated goal of replacing Australia with the PRC and though Solomon Islands may change policies with a change in PM, Sogavare is well past the point of no return. END COMMENT.)

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PM Sogavare and Former PM Houenipela exhibit the chasm between public messaging and political intent.

3. (SBU) Prime Minister (PM) Sogavare declared to Parliament recently that his security deal with the People's Republic of China was to defend against domestic threats. Respected academic and statesman Dr. Transform Aqorau asked in an editorial this week, "Is security created through arming the police or should we instead focus on an approach where the community is recognized as a partner in building and maintaining peace?" The Solomon Islands social networking community laments being disenfranchised by their political leaders: "PM is a liar and only serves his own pocket. PM, your cabinet, and backbenchers are gravely putting the lives of the innocent people of Solomon Islands in danger." "Too much of him. Enough is enough." "Chinese came 50 years ago to sell tobacco. Today they own every business in Honiara. Now they sign a security treaty under peace. Where will our security be in the next 40 years?" Aqorau also wrote, "Unless a more pluralistic society is promoted where people's views are welcomed, and there are more inclusive political and economic institutions, the government will be forced to depend on regional troops to support it. At some stage, regional partners must hold Solomon Islands politicians to account for the economic and political situation they have created and the resulting violence."

Draft Agreement on Deployment of PNG Security Personnel to Solomon Islands Initialed...

4. (SBU) PM Sogavare continues to craft his newfound policy of broadening security partner relationships by negotiating heretofore unnecessary security agreements to legitimize his goal of broadening the security partnership relationship with the PRC. Similar to the PRC deal, Solomon Star newspaper reported the March 28 Solomon Islands-PNG exchange of an initialed draft bilateral security agreement on Deployment of PNG Security Personnel to Solomon Islands. The draft agreement came six days after the second deployment of PNG security forces.

[A picture containing text, newspaper Description automatically generated] [A group of men wearing masks and holding flags Description automatically generated with low confidence]

Solomon Islands MFA Permanent Secretary Collin Beck exchanges initialed draft bilateral security agreements with (left) Papua New Guinea on March 28 and (right) People's Republic of China on March 30

...After their Second Deployment to Honiara

5. (SBU) On March 22, 30 members of the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary flew from Port Moresby to Honiara under the Sogavare guise of assisting the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) to protect Parliament. Solomon Islands High Commissioner to Papua New Guinea William Soaki said the PNG contingent was traveling to Solomon Islands to assist the RSIPF with law-and-order issues. RSIPF Commissioner Mostyn Mangau touted he would assign armed police and foreign troops to protect Parliament when it sat to extend the state of emergency, vote on a 2022 budget, and considered Sogavare's controversial constitutional amendment to extend his government's term in office. Mangau and Sogavare's plan to have a large armed contingent of RSIPF and international forces to warn off any would-be protesters was reportedly thwarted when the Parliamentary House Committee rejected the Mangau's request for armed officers on the Parliament precinct. Parliamentary House Committee Chairman Rick Houenipwela said Mangau's request was "ill informed, ill advised, and based on poor intelligence." Mangau later attempted to justify the request, stating that arms for the members of the Solomon International Assistance Force (SIAF) are simply part of their uniform. Mangau's explanation swayed no one. Solomon Islanders did not stage protests during Parliament's passage of the four-month extension to the health state of emergency.

Rumors of Early Elections Premature

6. (SBU) Support for Sogavare's planned constitutional amendment to extend his government by an extra year and kick elections from 2023 to 2024 may be waning but the Sogavare government is loath to pass on the glory of holding the 2023 Pacific Games to a successor government. Press reported on April 6 that "public outcry against the proposed 12-month extension forced Sogavare's government to take up the option for an early dissolution and election." According to the report, Caucus would provide details later this week. The government will face a major hurdle funding elections in 2022 or 2023, which will cost an estimated USD 19 million. The government has yet to pass a budget for 2022. Sogavare was so confident that his plans to hold onto power for an extra year would be successful that his 2022 draft budget, and planned 2023 budget, do not allow for national elections in either 2022 or 2023. An April 8 article said the extension of Parliament was still on the table as the government "regards the 2023 Pacific Games as its flagship policy outcome and it is not prepared to be deprived of the opportunity to deliver it to the people of Solomon Islands."

Rebuilding Trust in the United States Will Take Time and Effort

7. (SBU) Many Americans and Solomon Islanders reflect on the first land defeat of the Japanese Imperial Army and a successful naval campaign in World War II with pride but not all Solomon Islanders share this view. In a Solomon Times article on April 6, former PM (2010-2011) and current MP Danny Philip wrote: "In 1939-45, the USA and Japan waged a vicious war in our islands leaving many innocent people dead. They never cared about our sovereignty...." A sizeable portion of Solomon Islanders do not see themselves as being on either side of the struggles of WWII. They see themselves as victims of a foreign war. In response to an April 6 Island Sun article titled, "U.S. Admiral Lashes out at SI-Sino Security Pact," which covered Commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet Admiral Samuel Paparo's concerns over the PRC security agreement, social media commenters wrote: "Just leave us alone. Let us do things our own way, for better or worse." "USA come and remove your warships and other WWII remains that not only pollute Solomon Islands waters but also take citizens' lives." "Please, we need your bomb disposal team here now...ASAP!!!" "How well did you show Solomon Islands that you are helping us to develop? How many scholarships did we receive so far? What other development fundings did we hear, see, and feel is directly USA in all Solomon Islands provinces? It is better to show us your development funding assistance, otherwise let us alone striving for our future destiny."

High-Level PRC Delegation Planning Mid-May Trip to Honiara

8. (SBU) On April 1, a business contact in Honiara told EmbOff that PRC Ambassador Li Ming had made inquiries about reserving 20 rooms in mid-May for a high-level PRC delegation. While no additional details are available, Post anticipates this could be the appropriate timing and delegation level for the respective foreign ministers to sign the security agreement.

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

Signature: MCKEE

Drafted By: PORT MORESBY (b)(6)

Cleared By: EXEC (b)(6) (Honiara)

EXEC:Zadrozny, Joseph E (Port Moresby)

Approved By: EXEC:McKee, Erin E (Port Moresby)

Released By: PORT MORESBY (b)(6) (Port Moresby)

Info: NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC ROUTINE; CIA WASHINGTON DC ROUTINE; DIA WASHINGTON DC ROUTINE; SECDEF WASHINGTON DC ROUTINE; OSD WASHINGTON DC ROUTINE; JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC ROUTINE; PACOM IDHS HONOLULU HI ROUTINE; FBI WASHINGTON DC ROUTINE; DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC ROUTINE; DEPT OF INTERIOR WASHINGTON DC ROUTINE; DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC ROUTINE; DNI WASHINGTON DC ROUTINE; WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC ROUTINE; CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE ROUTINE

XMT: CHENGDU, AMCONSUL

Attachments: PRC Planned Naval Base in Solomon Islands Letter 2022-04-07 05_51_09.pdf

Action Post: NONE

Dissemination Rule: POL, ECON, AID, PAS, ECON_LES_INFO, DHS ICE, LEGAT, POL_MIL

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8 attachments



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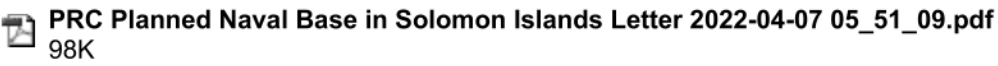
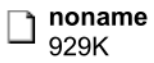
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MRN: 22 PORT MORESBY 326<<http://repository.state.gov/searchcenter/Results.aspx?k=mrn%3a%2222%20PORT%20MORESBY%20326%22>>
Date/DTG: Mar 30, 2022 / 300548Z MAR 22
From: AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY
Action: WASHDC, SECSTATE ROUTINE
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, MOPS, PARM, ETRD, CN, SB
Captions: SENSITIVE
Reference: 22 PORT MORESBY 310<<http://repository.state.gov/searchcenter/Results.aspx?k=mrn%3a%2222%20PORT%20MORESBY%20310%22>>
Subject: Solomon Islands: PM Sogavare Doubles Down on PRC Security Agreement in Fiery Remarks to Parliament

1. (U) During his March 29 address to Parliament on national security, Prime Minister (PM) Sogavare told the nation that the draft security agreement with the People's Republic of China (PRC), which he called a treaty, was ready for signatures (full remarks attached). He said the agreement fell under Solomon Islands' national strategy of being friends to all members of the United Nations and enemies to none. Sogavare said he was willing to "work with all partners willing to work with us in the spirit of diplomacy and friend to all." He added that he would "welcome any country willing to join in our security space" but "if a partner was not willing to protect the people, we must have an alternate agreement in place." Sogavare said it was time for nation states to acknowledge the failure of liberal hegemony and liberal democracies that put undue pressure on countries to pursue regime change. He criticized Western powers who claim Pacific countries are in their back yard and who do nothing to combat climate change, the single greatest threat facing the region. Sogavare said that the notion that Pacific security is threatened by the PRC presence in the region is "utter nonsense." He added that Solomon Islands was not going to ask the PRC to build a military base in Solomon Islands, stating "we know our boundaries." Sogavare called opponents of the "treaty" "self-centered and immature" while he termed social media critics - "lunatics."
2. (~~SBU~~) Social media critics were not enamored with Sogavare's PRC security policy. One asked, "If Solomon Islands is a friend to all and an enemy to none, then why do we need this military base?" "The reason behind calling security forces from every country is because he is guilty and wants to continue his corruption under the safety of these forces." "The current government is full of corrupt leaders and practice dictator type of leadership, which will only lead us to problems."

"I find it difficult to align and link the secret security deal with climate change." "Please stop it. Don't mention national interest...just mention your interest."

R-2022-00137 A-00000523453 "UNCLASSIFIED" 8/9/2023

3. (SBU) Comment: (b)(5)
(b)(5)
(b)(5) This week, Sogavare will extend the COVID-19 State of Emergency (SOE) by four months and attempt to extend parliament and push the 2023 national general elections to 2024. The public are resigned to the SOE extension but strongly oppose delaying elections. (b)(5)
(b)(5)

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Signature: MCKEE

Drafted By: Solomon Islands (b)(6) (Solomon Islands)

Cleared By: EXEC (b)(6) (b)(6) (Solomon Islands)

EXEC:Zadrozny, Joseph E (Port Moresby)

Approved By: EXEC:McKee, Erin E (Port Moresby)

Released By: PORT MORESBY (b)(6) (Port Moresby)

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XMT: CHENGDU, AMCONSUL

Attachments: Prime-Minister-Statement-to-Parliament.pdf

Action Post: NONE

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3 attachments



StateSeal.gif
4K

noname
269K

Prime-Minister-Statement-to-Parliament.pdf
196K

Fwd: FW: Minister Payne and Minister Seselja: Joint statement on Solomon Islands [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

Sean Callahan <secallahan@usaid.gov>
To: Brandon Miller <bmillier@usaid.gov>

Fri, May 13, 2022 at 12:02 PM

re FOIA

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **David Hatch** <dhatch@usaid.gov>

Date: Mon, Mar 28, 2022 at 12:39 PM

Subject: Fwd: FW: Minister Payne and Minister Seselja: Joint statement on Solomon Islands [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

To: Sean Callahan <secallahan@usaid.gov>, William Pryor <wpryor@usaid.gov>, Regina Burns Mackenzie <rmackenzie@usaid.gov>, Stacey Warren <swarren@usaid.gov>, Marisol Perez <mperez@usaid.gov>, Philippines, Pacific Islands, Mongolia Desk <phl.pics.mong.desk@usaid.gov>, Ryan Washburn <rwashburn@usaid.gov>

Cc: Lesli Davis <ledavis@usaid.gov>, Mai Huang <mhuang@usaid.gov>

Warm greetings. FYSA -

Best -

David Hatch

USAID Sr. Development Advisor for Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu

USAID/Philippines, Pacific Islands & Mongolia

dhatch@usaid.gov

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<https://www.usaid.gov/pacific-islands>

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From: **Zadrozny, Joseph E (Port Moresby)** <(b)(6)@state.gov>

Date: Mon, Mar 28, 2022 at 1:16 PM

Subject: FW: Minister Payne and Minister Seselja: Joint statement on Solomon Islands [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

To: Hatch, David J. (Pacific Islands) <dhatch@usaid.gov>, (b)(6) Port Moresby <(b)(6)@state.gov>

Cc: Zadrozny, Joseph E (Port Moresby) <(b)(6)@state.gov>

FYI for you both to be aware of...

Joseph Zadrozny

Deputy Chief of Mission

U.S. Embassy Port Moresby

Serving Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu

Tel: (b)(6)

Subject: *FYI Media Alert* Minister Payne and Minister Seselja: Joint statement on Solomon Islands

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SENATOR THE HON MARISE PAYNE

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Minister for Women

SENATOR THE HON ZED SESELJA

Minister for International Development and the Pacific

STATEMENT ON SOLOMON ISLANDS

Through COVID, tropical cyclones and volcanic eruptions, Australia has shown we will stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our Pacific family, through good times and bad.

Solomon Islands will always be a valued member of our Pacific family. At Solomon Islands' request, Australia and other Pacific countries responded swiftly to help restore calm after civil unrest in Honiara last year. In doing so, Australia activated our 2017 Bilateral Security Treaty with Solomon Islands for the first time.

This collective effort builds on a long history of Australian support to Solomon Islands through the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) from 2003 to 2017, and the current Solomons International Assistance Force.

When members of the Pacific family work together, we can respond to the security challenges in our region. The Pacific family is best placed to provide security assistance to Solomon Islands and stands ready to assist further if needed.

Australia is aware of the proposed draft Security Cooperation agreement between China and Solomon Islands. We respect the right of every Pacific country to make sovereign decisions. We have regularly and respectfully raised our concerns with the Solomon Islands Government and will continue to do so. We would be particularly concerned by any

actions that undermine the stability and security of our region, including the establishment of a permanent presence such as a military base.

Yesterday, Australia announced jointly with Solomon Islands Prime Minister Sogavare that, in response to a request from the Solomon Islands Government, Australia will extend the Solomons International Assistance Force until December 2023.

We will also build an integrated police, health and disaster management radio network across Solomon Islands.

Australia will construct a second patrol boat outpost on Solomon Islands' eastern border, in addition to the Western Border and Patrol Boat Outpost in the Shortland Islands.

We are also providing A\$22 million in budget support, which will help the Government of Solomon Islands fund salaries for essential workers and mitigate the damaging fiscal impact of the November 2021 civil unrest and COVID economic impacts.

Australia will continue working with our Pacific family, consistent with our values and the Pacific way. Last year, Australia spent a record \$1.7 billion in development assistance and will continue responding to our Pacific partners' priorities such as climate change, COVID-19 recovery and economic and security challenges.

Australia will be transparent and show respect as a reliable partner as we seek to build unity across the Pacific. We will continue supporting peace, economic prosperity, stability and democratic values across our region.

Media Contacts

David Wroe: (b)(6)

Melanie Ruiz: +(b)(6)

Cassandra Choake: (b)(6)

Authorised by Senator the Hon Marise Payne, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Women, Australia.

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Fwd: PRC-Solomon Islands Security Framework Agreement Leaked Under a Fog of Faux Weapons

Ryan Washburn <rwashburn@usaid.gov>
To: Brandon Miller <bmillier@usaid.gov>

Fri, May 6, 2022 at 2:35 PM

11 of 16

Ryan Washburn

Mission Director
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From: **Ryan Washburn** <rwashburn@usaid.gov>
Date: Mon, Mar 28, 2022 at 7:30 AM
Subject: Fwd: PRC-Solomon Islands Security Framework Agreement Leaked Under a Fog of Faux Weapons
To: Sean Callahan <secallahan@usaid.gov>, Regina Mackenzie <rmackenzie@usaid.gov>, Marisol Perez <mperez@usaid.gov>, David Hatch <dhatch@usaid.gov>, William Pryor <wpryor@usaid.gov>, Erin Nicholson <enicholson@usaid.gov>, Philippines-Manila-Office Directors <manilaofficechiefs@usaid.gov>

Cable verifying the NYT article Sean sent on Friday.

Ryan Washburn

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Date: Thu, Mar 24, 2022 at 4:46 PM
Subject: PRC-Solomon Islands Security Framework Agreement Leaked Under a Fog of Faux Weapons
To: (b)(6)@state.gov, (b)(6)@state.gov, Warren, Stacey (Philippines/PRM) <swarren@usaid.gov>, (b)(6)@state.gov, (b)(6) (Manila)
(b)(6)@state.gov, (b)(6) (Manila), (b)(6)@state.gov, (b)(6)
(b)(6)@state.gov, (b)(6) (Manila), (b)(6)@state.gov, (b)(6) (Manila)
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(b)(6) @state.gov, Washburn, Ryan (Philippines/OD) <rwashburn@usaid.gov>, (b)(6)
(b)(6) @state.gov, (b)(6) (Manila) (b)(6) @state.gov, (b)(6)
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<secallah@usaid.gov>, (b)(6) (Manila) (b)(6) @state.gov, (b)(6) (Manila)
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(b)(6) (Manila) (b)(6) @state.gov, Edgar, John (Philippines/OEM) <jedgar@usaid.gov>, (b)(6)
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Dansoko, Mohamed (Philippines/D) <mdansoko@usaid.gov>, (b)(6) @state.gov,
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(b)(6) @state.gov, Lang-Alli, Michelle <mlang-alli@usaid.gov>, (b)(6) @state.gov,
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(Philippines/ROAA) <sbright@usaid.gov>, Tilout, Katherine (PHIL/OPHN) <ktilout@usaid.gov> (b)(6)
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<mperez@usaid.gov>, Bui, K. Hoang (PHIL/OH) <kbui@usaid.gov>, Takahashi, Ethan N. <etakahashi@usaid.gov>,
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PuczekP@state.gov (b)(6) @state.gov, (b)(6) (Manila) (b)(6) @state.gov, (b)(6)
(b)(6) @state.gov, (b)(6) (Manila) (b)(6) @state.gov, (b)(6) (Manila)
(b)(6) @state.gov, (b)(6) (Manila) (b)(6) @state.gov, (b)(6) (Manila)
(b)(6) @state.gov, Maloney, Courtney <cmaloney@usaid.gov>, (b)(6) (Manila)
(b)(6) @state.gov, (b)(6) (Manila) (b)(6) @state.gov, (b)(6) (Manila)
(b)(6) @state.gov
Cc: (b)(6) (Manila) (b)(6) @state.gov, (b)(6) (Manila) (b)(6) @state.gov, (b)(6)
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SBU

[STATE SEAL]
Action Office: POL, ECON, AID, PAS, ICE, LEGAT, POL_MIL
Info Office: ECON_LES_INFO

MRN: 22 PORT MORESBY 310<<http://repository.state.gov/searchcenter/Results.aspx?k=mrn%3a%2222%20PORT%20MORESBY%20310%22>>

Date/DTG: Mar 24, 2022 / 240843Z MAR 22

From: AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY

Action: WASHDC, SECSTATE ROUTINE

R-2022-00137

A-00000523453

"UNCLASSIFIED"

8/9/2023

E.O.: 13526

TAGS: PGOV, PREL, MOPS, SOCI, SB, CN, PARM, ETRD

Captions: SENSITIVE

Reference: A) 22 Port Moresby 258<<http://repository.state.gov/searchcenter/Results.aspx?k=mrn%3a%2222%20Port%20Moresby%20258%22>>

B) 22 Port Moresby 294<<http://repository.state.gov/searchcenter/Results.aspx?k=mrn%3a%2222%20Port%20Moresby%20294%22>>

C) 21 Port Moresby 1224<<http://repository.state.gov/searchcenter/Results.aspx?k=mrn%3a%2221%20Port%20Moresby%201224%22>>

D) 21 Port Moresby 1234<<http://repository.state.gov/searchcenter/Results.aspx?k=mrn%3a%2221%20Port%20Moresby%201234%22>>

E) 22 Port Moresby 176<<http://repository.state.gov/searchcenter/Results.aspx?k=mrn%3a%2222%20Port%20Moresby%20176%22>>

F) 22 Port Moresby 296<<http://repository.state.gov/searchcenter/Results.aspx?k=mrn%3a%2222%20Port%20Moresby%20296%22>>

Subject: PRC-Solomon Islands Security Framework Agreement Leaked Under a Fog of Faux Weapons

1. (SBU) SUMMARY AND COMMENT: The People's Republic of China (PRC) now appears to be the de facto security guarantor for the Sogavare government in Solomon Islands. On March 24, a "ministry employee" leaked an unsigned version of a PRC-Solomon Islands Security Framework (attached) that would allow the PRC to send police, armed police, military personnel and other law enforcement and armed forces to Solomon Islands to help maintain public security but also to protect the safety of Chinese personnel and major projects in Solomon Islands. On March 18, the PRC and Solomon Islands government (SIG) inked what the PRC Embassy in Honiara termed "A Police Cooperation Agreement" that would "actively promote the pragmatic cooperation in police affairs and law enforcement between the two sides, and constantly push the China-Solomon Islands relationship to a higher level."

2. (SBU) This comes on the back of the SIG attempting to recategorize an illicit arms shipment (Ref. A) as an authorized shipment of "replica" firearms which the government kept secret for national security reasons. Solomon Islanders are not buying the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) Commissioner's explanations, nor those of the Prime Minister's Office Chief of Staff (PM Sogavare's nephew), or the Customs Comptroller who signed a new salary contract, worth more than twenty times the listed salary, while the weapons were still under his control. (b)(6); (b)(7)(E)

(b)(6); (b)(7)(E) The weapons in the photo were packed in wooden crates, appeared real, and had unique serial numbers. The weapons in the crate (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) were not the same as the ones the RSIPF displayed in their press releases. (b)(5)

(b)(5)

PRC and Solomon Islands Negotiating (or already signed) Security Framework Agreement

3. (SBU) On March 24, a government employee reportedly leaked a draft framework agreement between the PRC and SIG "on security cooperation." The agreement allows the PRC to use all military assets to protect its interests in Solomon Islands. Article One says, "Solomon Islands may...request China to send police, armed police, military personnel and other law enforcement and armed forces to Solomon Islands to assist in maintaining social order, providing humanitarian assistance, carrying out disaster response, or providing assistance on other tasks agreed upon by the Parties; China may, according to its own needs and with the consent of Solomon Islands, make ship visits to, carry out logistical replenishments in, and have stopover and transition in Solomon Islands, and the relevant forces of China can be used to protect the safety of Chinese personnel and major projects in Solomon Islands." In addition, Article Four says, "If China agrees to perform the relevant mission, Solomon Islands shall provide all necessary facilities and assistance, including but not limited to the border entry of personnel and weaponry, intelligence and information support, and legal status and judicial immunity of the relevant personnel." Post is unaware if the PRC and SIG have already signed this deal, but on March 18 the PRC and SIG did sign a similar sounding "police cooperation agreement," that was only reported on the PRC Embassy to Solomon Islands Mandarin webpage. (Note: Post raised the alarm that the PRC and SIG were headed towards a bilateral security agreement that would displace the traditional Australian-led model (Refs. C, D, E.) End Note)

PRC and Solomon Islands Ink Police Cooperation Agreement

4. (SBU) On March 18 PRC Party Secretary of the CPC Committee and Executive Vice Minister in Charge of Daily Work of the Ministry of Public Security Wang Xiaohong and Solomon Islands Minister for Police, National Security, and Correctional Services Anthony Veke held a DVC where they signed a memorandum of understanding on police cooperation between the PRC and Solomon Islands. According to a press release on the PRC Embassy to Solomon Islands Mandarin website, Wang said, "The Chinese side is willing to work with the Solomon Islands side to...actively

promote the pragmatic cooperation in police affairs and law enforcement between the two sides, and constantly push the China-Solomon Islands relationship to a higher level.” Other DYC participants were: PRC Ambassador to Solomon Islands Li Ming, Deputy Secretary of China Development Cooperation Agency Deng Boqing, Solomon Islands Police, National Security, and Corrections Permanent Secretary Karen Galokale, and RSIPF Commissioner Mangau.

The Weapons Are Not Fake

5. (SBU) (b)(6); (b)(7)(E)

(b)(6); (b)(7)(E)

(b)(6); (b)(7)(E) (b)(6); (b)(7)(B)

(b)(6); (b)(7)(E) (b)(6); (b)(7)(B)

(b)(6); (b)(7)(B)

(b)(6); (b)(7)(B) (b)(6); (b)(7)(B) (b)(6); (b)(7)(B)

6. (SBU) A (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) that spoke to EmbOff was concerned because the weapons appeared real in every way, including in weight and mechanics. (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) old a reliable contact that the crates were addressed to the PRC Embassy in Honiara. (b)(6) told EmbOff that (b)(6); (b)(7)(E) the customs officers at the suffrage port to open the boxes because there was no manifest and nothing to indicate the shipment was protected under standard diplomatic protocols. The head of customs, James Sutton, made a public statement that the shipment did not contain any firearms and released the shipment to the RSIPF, not the PRC Embassy. While the illicit shipment was in a customs warehouse, Sutton signed a three-year employment contract worth more than SBD 5 million (USD 622,247), which is more than twenty times the normal salary for the Comptroller of Customs. In addition, under the contract Sutton receives a “COVID allowance” of about SBD 1.76 million (USD 219,031). Sutton had worked in the position for three years, paid by the Australian government, but the Australian government terminated the contract. After details of Sutton’s contract became public on March 22, the Public Accounts Committee said they would examine Sutton’s contract during their next meeting with press reporting that the PAC is interested in “what Sutton has contributed to Solomon Islands in the past three years that attracted the government to retain him.” Sutton released the shipment and made the public statement within weeks of receiving the generous payment package.

RSIPF Commissioner’s Replica Weapons Story

7. (SBU) RSIPF Police Commissioner Mangau explained in a two-page statement released on March 23 that the government frequently by-passes laws and regulations in the name of national security when importing dangerous items. Mangau clarified that it was normal practice to by-pass Solomon Ports, a state-owned enterprise (SOE), operated ports in favor of unregulated, PRC and Malaysian-controlled suffrage ports. He would have Solomon Islanders believe that offloading cargo from logging vessels onto barges that float into the capital at 3 a.m. is standard practice. According to Mangau’s explanation, it was not unusual for the government to import four large crates of weapons without listing items on a manifest, notifying customs officers, or informing the public. Social media response to the news that the SIG was importing weapons from the PRC was swift and critical: “Training to shoot Solomon Islands citizens. What a shame.” “Use any of those weapons to bully and intimidate any of our people in Central Honiara and we will bring down the hammer on the RSIPF. Police commissioner, you have been warned. Any intimidation tactics and bullying in Central Honiara City will not be tolerated.” One poster highlighted that the police were not the only ones with access to weapons: “We must take on board that some of the guns used during the ethnic tensions was not totally destroyed, hence they are still in the hands of militants. Thus, such a move by the government will trigger them to retrieve their weapons. Why don’t we call on the government to ship those guns back before it’s too late....” he concluded.

PRC Ambassador Li Ming Uncharacteristically Quiet

8. (SBU) COMMENT: (b)(5)

(b)(5)

9. (SBU) PRC Ambassador Li Ming has not made any public statements about the purported replica weapons donations. The Solomon Islands Government heralds every donation any development partner makes in Solomon Islands with speeches, photo opportunities, and expansive press coverage but the SIG and PRC attempted to silently slip through what Mangau characterized as a “quite huge” consignment of riot gear. The Prime Minister’s Chief of Staff Robson Djokovic (Sogavare’s nephew) implored Solomon Islanders not to worry about questions regarding conventions and movements of weapons because the real point was that the ones the RSIPF presented were not real. Ambassador Li’s relative low profile when the PRC is making such a huge donation does not support Djokovic, Mangau, Sutton’s assertions that “there’s nothing to see here.” END COMMENT.

Signature: MCKEE

Drafted By: PORT MORESBY (b)(6)

Cleared By: EXEC: (b)(6) (Honiara)

Approved By: EXEC:McKee, Erin E (Port Moresby)

Released By: PORT MORESBY (b)(6) (Port Moresby)

Info: NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC ROUTINE; CIA WASHINGTON DC ROUTINE; DIA WASHINGTON DC ROUTINE; SECDEF WASHINGTON DC ROUTINE; OSD WASHINGTON DC ROUTINE; JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC ROUTINE; PACOM IDHS HONOLULU HI ROUTINE; FBI WASHINGTON DC ROUTINE; DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC ROUTINE; DEPT OF INTERIOR WASHINGTON DC ROUTINE; DNI WASHINGTON DC ROUTINE; WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC ROUTINE; DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC ROUTINE; CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE ROUTINE

XMT: CHENGDU, AMCONSUL

Attachments: PRCSI Sec Agreement.pdf

Action Post: NONE

Dissemination Rule: POL, ECON, AID, PAS, ECON_LES_INFO, DHS ICE, LEGAT, POL_MIL

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3 attachments



StateSeal.gif
4K

noname
869K

PRCSI Sec Agreement.pdf
798K

Fwd: FW: Solomon Islands: PM Sogavare Doubles Down on PRC Security Agreement in Fiery Remarks to Parliament

Ryan Washburn <rwashburn@usaid.gov>
To: Brandon Miller <bmillier@usaid.gov>

Fri, May 6, 2022 at 2:34 PM

8 of 16

Ryan Washburn

Mission Director
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USAID.gov/Pacific-Islands | @USAIDPacificIsl
USAID.gov/Mongolia | @USAID_Mongolia
Note that Manila, Philippines is +12 hours from Washington, DC.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **David Hatch** <dhatch@usaid.gov>
Date: Wed, Mar 30, 2022 at 2:46 PM
Subject: Fwd: FW: Solomon Islands: PM Sogavare Doubles Down on PRC Security Agreement in Fiery Remarks to Parliament
To: Sean Callahan <secallahan@usaid.gov>, Regina Burns Mackenzie <rmackenzie@usaid.gov>, Stacey Warren <swarren@usaid.gov>, Philippines, Pacific Islands, Mongolia Desk <phl.pics.mong.desk@usaid.gov>, Ryan Washburn <rwashburn@usaid.gov>
Cc: William Pryor <wpryor@usaid.gov>, Mai Huang <mhuang@usaid.gov>

Warm greetings. fysa -

Best -

David Hatch
USAID Sr. Development Advisor for Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu
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<https://www.usaid.gov/pacific-islands>

----- Forwarded message -----

From: (b)(6) (Port Moresby) <(b)(6)@state.gov>
Date: Wed, Mar 30, 2022 at 3:58 PM
Subject: FW: Solomon Islands: PM Sogavare Doubles Down on PRC Security Agreement in Fiery Remarks to Parliament
To: (b)(6)@state.gov, (b)(6)@state.gov, (b)(6)@state.gov, (b)(6)@state.gov, (b)(6)@state.gov, (b)(6)@state.gov, (b)(6)@state.gov, Paik, Kathryn H <(b)(6)@state.gov>

Cc: McKee, Erin E (Port Moresby) <(b)(6)@state.gov>, Zadrozny, Joseph E (Port Moresby) <(b)(6)@state.gov>, (b)(6) (Port Moresby) <(b)(6)@state.gov>, (b)(6) (Port Moresby) <(b)(6)@state.gov>, (b)(6) (Port Moresby) <(b)(6)@state.gov>, Hatch, David J. (Pacific Islands) <dhatch@usaid.gov>, Pryor, William (Solomon Islands) <wpryor@usaid.gov>, (b)(6) (Port Moresby) <(b)(6)@state.gov>, (b)(6) (Port Moresby) <(b)(6)@state.gov>, (b)(6) (Port Moresby) <(b)(6)@state.gov>, (b)(6) (Port Moresby) <(b)(6)@state.gov>

Colleagues,

A brief update from Solomon Islands, hope all is well in DC.

Best,

(b)(6)

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

From: SMART Core <svcSmartBtsEwsHPrec@state.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, March 30, 2022 4:49 PM
To: (b)(6) (Port Moresby) <(b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject: Solomon Islands: PM Sogavare Doubles Down on PRC Security Agreement in Fiery Remarks to Parliament

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Action Office: MLO, ECON
Info Office: DCM_INFO, EAC, POL_INFO

MRN: 22 PORT MORESBY 326
Date/DTG: Mar 30, 2022 / 300548Z MAR 22
From: AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY
Action: WASHDC, SECSTATE

E.O.:

13526

R-2022-00137

A-00000523453

"UNCLASSIFIED"

8/9/2023

TAGS:

PGOV, PREL, MOPS, PARM, ETRD, CN, SB

Captions:

SENSITIVE

Reference:

22 PORT MORESBY 310

Subject:

Solomon Islands: PM Sogavare Doubles Down on PRC Security Agreement in Fiery Remarks to Parliament

1. (U) During his March 29 address to Parliament on national security, Prime Minister (PM) Sogavare told the nation that the draft security agreement with the People's Republic of China (PRC), which he called a treaty, was ready for signatures (full remarks attached). He said the agreement fell under Solomon Islands' national strategy of being friends to all members of the United Nations and enemies to none. Sogavare said he was willing to "work with all partners willing to work with us in the spirit of diplomacy and friend to all." He added that he would "welcome any country willing to join in our security space" but "if a partner was not willing to protect the people, we must have an alternate agreement in place." Sogavare said it was time for nation states to acknowledge the failure of liberal hegemony and liberal democracies that put undue pressure on countries to pursue regime change. He criticized Western powers who claim Pacific countries are in their back yard and who do nothing to combat climate change, the single greatest threat facing the region. Sogavare said that the notion that Pacific security is threatened by the PRC presence in the region is "utter nonsense." He added that Solomon Islands was not going to ask the PRC to build a military base in Solomon Islands, stating "we know our boundaries." Sogavare called opponents of the "treaty" "self-centered and immature" while he termed social media critics - "lunatics."

2. ~~(SBU)~~ Social media critics were not enamored with Sogavare's PRC security policy. One asked, "If Solomon Islands is a friend to all and an enemy to none, then why do we need this military base?" "The reason behind calling security forces from every country is because he is guilty and wants to continue his corruption under the safety of these forces." "The current government is full of corrupt leaders and practice dictator type of leadership, which will only lead us to problems." "I find it difficult to align and link the secret security deal with climate change." "Please stop it. Don't mention national interest...just mention your interest."

3. ~~(SBU)~~ Comment:

(b)(5)

(b)(5)

(b)(5)

This week, Sogavare will extend the COVID-19 State of Emergency (SOE) by four months and attempt to extend parliament and push the 2023 national general elections to 2024. The public are resigned to the SOE extension but strongly oppose delaying elections. (b)(5)

(b)(5)

(b)(5)

End Comment.

Signature: MCKEE

Drafted By: Solomon Islands: (b)(6) (Solomon Islands)

Cleared By: EXEC: (b)(6) (Solomon Islands)

EXEC:Zadrozny, Joseph E (Port Moresby)

Approved By: EXEC:McKee, Erin E (Port Moresby)

Released By: PORT MORESBY: (b)(6) (Port Moresby)

Info: NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE*; CIA WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE*; DIA WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE*; SECDEF WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE*; OSD WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE*; PACOM IDHS HONOLULU HI *ROUTINE*; FBI WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE*; DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE*; JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE*; DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE*; DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE*; DNI WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE*; CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE *ROUTINE*

XMT: CHENGDU, AMCONSUL

Attachments: Prime-Minister-Statement-to-Parliament.pdf

Action Post: NONE

Dissemination Rule: MLO, DAO_INFO, EAC, ECON

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A-00000523453

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8/9/2023



Prime-Minister-Statement-to-Parliament.pdf

196K

Fwd: Embassy Port Moresby - Night Notes - April 7, 2022

Ryan Washburn <rwashburn@usaid.gov>
To: Brandon Miller <bmillier@usaid.gov>

Fri, May 6, 2022 at 2:33 PM

7 of 16

Ryan Washburn

Mission Director
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USAID.gov/Mongolia | @USAID_Mongolia
Note that Manila, Philippines is +12 hours from Washington, DC.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: (b)(6) (Port Moresby) <(b)(6)@state.gov>
Date: Thu, Apr 7, 2022 at 12:16 PM
Subject: Embassy Port Moresby - Night Notes - April 7, 2022
To:

(U) Solomon Islands – Top Australian Intelligence Officials Pay PM Sogavare a Visit: On April 6, PM Sogavare's office released a statement acknowledging a meeting between envoys of Australian PM Scott Morrison and PM Sogavare. The statement noted that the meeting provided a platform for the two countries to better understand each other, particularly "on Solomon Islands' decision on its broadened security partnership with China and other countries." "China remains an important trading partner for both countries," the statement continued. The statement added that PM Sogavare reassured the spy chiefs that his country's "security concerns are domestically focused and compliment" the current bilateral security agreement with Australia. According to the statement, PM Sogavare "assured Australia" that Solomon Islands will continue to uphold its core foreign policy tenant of being "friends to all and enemies to none" and concluded with "Australia remains our partner of choice." While the statement did not name the officials, the PM's office posted a picture of him standing with Paul Symon, head of the Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS), and the Director-General of the Office of National Intelligence Andrew Shearer. (SI-Director: (b)(6))



(U) Solomon Islands – Intense Rains Overwhelm the National Referral Hospital: Video of April 5 flooding at the maternity ward of the National Referral Hospital (NRH) shared with AIDOff demonstrated the impact of changing weather patterns on critical infrastructure in Solomon Islands. NRH is locally called “Number 9” after its designation by U.S. forces during WWII. Contacts in meteorology noted that average monthly rainfall is within normal patterns, but rain has been falling in more concentrated daily deluges, overwhelming the drainage system. Medical staff also recently reported increased flooding of the site due to encroaching sea levels. This has led to calls from some quarters for a new facility located inland. Commercial interests and the international port, also located near the shore, have addressed climate challenges with timely investments in sea walls. The Australian Medical Assistance Team reported in February that the NRH infrastructure, which has been built up through piecemeal investments over the decades, is not well positioned to deliver advanced services. USAID will continue to monitor the impact of climate change on services and look for opportunities to address challenges with partners. (USAID: W. Pryor)



Heavy rains flooded the maternity ward (left) of the National Referral Hospital on April 5, while flooded roads near the NRH demonstrate persistent challenges to make Honiara resilient in spite of major investments over recent decades.

~~(SBU)~~ Key Engagements

Post has reverted to mission critical official travel only due to widespread community transmission of COVID-19. All domestic travel will be considered on a case-by-case basis, with review of this policy at 30-day intervals, in accordance with Department guidance and PNG's revised emergency measures.

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

R-2022-00137

A-00000523453

"UNCLASSIFIED"

8/9/2023

Fwd: FW: Solomon Islands: Sogavare Credibility on PRC Security Agreement Evaporates with A Resurfaced Leaked PRC Document

Ryan Washburn <rwashburn@usaid.gov>
To: Brandon Miller <bmillier@usaid.gov>

Fri, May 6, 2022 at 2:33 PM

6 of 16

Ryan Washburn

Mission Director
USAID/Philippines, Pacific Islands, and Mongolia
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USAID.gov/Mongolia | @USAID_Mongolia
Note that Manila, Philippines is +12 hours from Washington, DC.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **David Hatch** <dhatch@usaid.gov>
Date: Fri, Apr 8, 2022 at 11:09 AM
Subject: Fwd: FW: Solomon Islands: Sogavare Credibility on PRC Security Agreement Evaporates with A Resurfaced Leaked PRC Document
To: Sean Callahan <secallahan@usaid.gov>, Ryan Washburn <rwashburn@usaid.gov>, Philippines, Pacific Islands, Mongolia Desk <phl.pics.mong.desk@usaid.gov>, Regina Burns Mackenzie <rmackenzie@usaid.gov>, Marisol Perez <mperez@usaid.gov>, Stacey Warren <swarren@usaid.gov>
Cc: William Pryor <wpryor@usaid.gov>, Mai Huang <mhuang@usaid.gov>

Warm greetings. FYSA -

Best -

David Hatch
USAID Sr. Development Advisor for Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu
USAID/Philippines, Pacific Islands & Mongolia
dhatch@usaid.gov
Mobile: (b)(6)
<https://www.usaid.gov/pacific-islands>

----- Forwarded message -----

From: (b)(6) (Port Moresby) <(b)(6)@state.gov>
Date: Fri, Apr 8, 2022 at 1:01 PM
Subject: FW: Solomon Islands: Sogavare Credibility on PRC Security Agreement Evaporates with A Resurfaced Leaked PRC Document
To: (b)(6) V <(b)(6)@state.gov>, (b)(6) <(b)(6)@state.gov>, (b)(6) <(b)(6)@state.gov>, (b)(6) <(b)(6)@state.gov>, (b)(6) <(b)(6)@state.gov>, (b)(6) <(b)(6)@state.gov>, (b)(6) <(b)(6)@state.gov>, (b)(6) <(b)(6)@state.gov>, (b)(6) <(b)(6)@state.gov>, (b)(6) <(b)(6)@state.gov>

(b)(6) @state.gov>, Paik, Kathryn H (b)(6)
Cc: (b)(6) (Port Moresby) <(b)(6)@state.gov>, (b)(6) (Port Moresby)
(b)(6) @state.gov>, (b)(6) (Port Moresby) <(b)(6)@state.gov>, (b)(6)
<(b)(6)@state.gov>, (b)(6) (Port Moresby) <(b)(6)@state.gov>, (b)(6)
(Port Moresby) <(b)(6)@state.gov>, (b)(6) (Pacific Islands) <dhatch@usaid.gov>, Pryor, William
(Solomon Islands) <wpryor@usaid.gov>, (b)(6) (Port Moresby) <(b)(6)@state.gov>, (b)(6) (Port
Moresby) <(b)(6)@state.gov>, (b)(6) (Port Moresby) <(b)(6)@state.gov>, (b)(6) (Port
Moresby) <(b)(6)@state.gov>, (b)(6) <(b)(6)@state.gov>

Colleagues,

An update on the current state of play in Solomon Islands.

Do let us know if you have any questions.

Best,

(b)(6)

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

From: SMART Core <svcSmartBtsEwsSPrec@state.gov>

Sent: Friday, April 8, 2022 1:55 PM

To: (b)(6) (Port Moresby) <(b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6) (Port Moresby)
(b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6) (Port Moresby) <(b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)
(b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6) (Port Moresby) <(b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6) (Port Moresby)
(b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6) (Port Moresby) <(b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)
(Port Moresby) <(b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6) (Port Moresby) <(b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)
(b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6) Port Moresby <(b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6) Port
Moresby <(b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6) (Port Moresby) <(b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6) Port
Moresby <SeaburghRJ@state.gov>; (b)(6) (Port Moresby) <(b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6) (Port
(b)(6)@state.gov>; Hatch, David J. (Pacific Islands) <dhatch@usaid.gov>; Price, Rebecca (Pacific
Islands) <reprice@usaid.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6) (Port Moresby)
(b)(6)@state.gov>; Davis, Lesli <ledavis@usaid.gov>; Pryor, William (Solomon Islands) <wpryor@usaid.gov>
Cc: (b)(6) (Port Moresby) <(b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6) (Port Moresby)
(b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6) (Port Moresby) <(b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6) (Port Moresby)
(b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6) (Port Moresby) <(b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6) (b)(6)
(Port Moresby) <(b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>

Subject: Solomon Islands: Sogavare Credibility on PRC Security Agreement Evaporates with A Resurfaced Leaked PRC Document

UNCLASSIFIED

~~SBU~~



Action Office: ECON, MLO, PAS, AID

Info Office: EAC, POL_INFO, DCM_INFO

MRN: 22 PORT MORESBY 372

Date/DTG: Apr 08, 2022 / 080251Z APR 22

From: AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY

Action: WASHDC, SECSTATE *ROUTINE*

E.O.: 13526

TAGS: PGOV, PREL, SOCI, MOPS, ECON, EAID, EINT, SB, CN, PG, AU, NZ, FJ

Captions: SENSITIVE

Reference: A) 22 Port Moresby 310
B) 22 Port Moresby 370

Subject: Solomon Islands: Sogavare Credibility on PRC Security Agreement Evaporates with A Resurfaced Leaked PRC Document

1. ~~(SBU)~~ **SUMMARY AND COMMENT:** Prime Minister (PM) Sogavare has no choice but to cleave to the People's Republic of China (PRC) for his political survival and legacy but not all Solomon Islanders support the Sogavare-PRC symbiotic relationship. Sogavare attracted renewed criticism this week as a document that was leaked last year resurfaced (attached). The document showed the PRC's intent to construct a naval base on Isabel Provence dated back to at least September 2020, but a former PM asserted that Sogavare's intent to establish the PRC as Solomon Islands' preferred partner was heralded in Parliament as early as 2019. Opposition politicians and social media posters question Sogavare's focus on security deals to handle domestic threats rather than addressing real domestic priorities. Detractors argue that diversifying the economy is a higher priority, and struggle with the formerly unknown concept of diversifying security relationships. Sogavare is politically vulnerable. His own party's support for Sogavare's plan to extend the current Parliamentary term through 2024 is thinning, with the possibility of an early dissolution of Parliament and 2023 national general elections increasing, but the governing elite will do everything possible to retain all glory for hosting the 2023 Pacific Games, even if it means changing the country's constitution. Solomon Islanders are afraid of being caught in the middle of another great power conflict on their shores. Despite discomfort with the PRC, the United States is not the logical PRC-

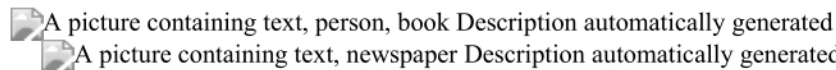
alternative for all Solomon Islanders and a message of “PRC bad” will not automatically lead to a “USA good” conclusion. Solomon Islanders yearn for partners that will elevate their nation by empowering and equipping the people and they are frustrated with much of the aid being siphoned off by corrupt politicians or diverted into PRC-owned businesses without reaching the targeted (Solomon Islander) beneficiaries. (b)(5)

(b)(5)

(b)(5)

END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

2. (SBU) PM Sogavare’s mirage that there are no plans for a PRC base in Solomon Islands (Ref. A) evaporated on April 7 when a letter that was dismissed when it was first leaked in 2021 resurfaced. The September 2020 document is a letter of intent (attached) from AVIC International General Manager Qian Rong, though presenting himself as the AVIC International Project Engineering Company General Manager, to Isabel Province Premier Leslie Kikolo “to study the opportunity to develop naval and infrastructure projects on leased land for the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Navy in Isabel Province with exclusive rights for 75 years.” (Note: AVIC International Project Engineering Co (中航国际成套设备有限公司) is a subordinate company to AVIC International (中国航空技术国际控股有限公司), which is under AVIC (中国航空工业集团公司), a PLA-tied company sanctioned by the U.S. Government in June 2021. **End Note.**) The letter re-emerged the day after Sogavare assured visiting Australian intelligence chiefs (Ref. B) that the Solomon Islands-PRC security agreement would go ahead but that it would not lead to a PRC base in the country, according to a Prime Minister’s Office press release. The statement also said, “Australia remains our partner of choice,” but not his only partner of choice. On April 3, Opposition MP and former PM Rick Houenipwela said the secret undertakings on the Solomon Islands-PRC security agreement started in 2019 when the police minister indicated in Parliament that “if the government had its way, they would have China as the preferred security partner.” (COMMENT: Sources speculate that the PRC forced the security agreement on Sogavare in exchange for additional development aid, but Sogavare’s actions are consistent with his long-stated goal of replacing Australia with the PRC and though Solomon Islands may change policies with a change in PM, Sogavare is well past the point of no return. **END COMMENT.**)



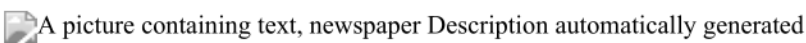

PM Sogavare and Former PM Houenipwela exhibit the chasm between public messaging and political intent.

3. (SBU) Prime Minister (PM) Sogavare declared to Parliament recently that his security deal with the People’s Republic of China was to defend against domestic threats. Respected academic and statesman Dr. Transform Aqorau asked in an editorial this week, “Is security created through arming the police or should we instead focus on an approach where the community is recognized as a partner in building and maintaining peace?” The Solomon Islands social networking community laments being disenfranchised by their political leaders: “PM is a liar and only serves his own pocket. PM, your cabinet, and backbenchers are gravely putting the lives of the innocent people of Solomon Islands in danger.” “Too much of him. Enough is enough.” “Chinese came 50 years ago to sell tobacco. Today they own every business in Honiara. Now they sign a security treaty under peace. Where will our security be in the next 40 years?” Aqorau also wrote, “Unless a more pluralistic society is promoted where people’s views are welcomed, and there are more inclusive political and economic institutions, the government will be forced to depend on

regional troops to support it. At some stage, regional partners must hold Solomon Islands politicians to account for the economic and political situation they have created and the resulting violence.”

Draft Agreement on Deployment of PNG Security Personnel to Solomon Islands Initialed...

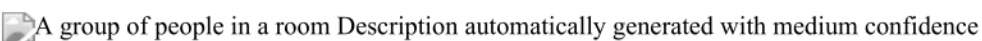
4. (SBU) PM Sogavare continues to craft his newfound policy of broadening security partner relationships by negotiating heretofore unnecessary security agreements to legitimize his goal of broadening the security partnership relationship with the PRC. Similar to the PRC deal, Solomon Star newspaper reported the March 28 Solomon Islands-PNG exchange of an initialed draft bilateral security agreement on Deployment of PNG Security Personnel to Solomon Islands. The draft agreement came six days after the second deployment of PNG security forces.

Solomon Islands MFA Permanent Secretary Collin Beck exchanges initialed draft bilateral security agreements with (left) Papua New Guinea on March 28 and (right) People's Republic of China on March 30

...After their Second Deployment to Honiara

5. (SBU) On March 22, 30 members of the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary flew from Port Moresby to Honiara under the Sogavare guise of assisting the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) to protect Parliament. Solomon Islands High Commissioner to Papua New Guinea William Soaki said the PNG contingent was traveling to Solomon Islands to assist the RSIPF with law-and-order issues. RSIPF Commissioner Mostyn Mangau touted he would assign armed police and foreign troops to protect Parliament when it sat to extend the state of emergency, vote on a 2022 budget, and considered Sogavare's controversial constitutional amendment to extend his government's term in office. Mangau and Sogavare's plan to have a large armed contingent of RSIPF and international forces to warn off any would-be protesters was reportedly thwarted when the Parliamentary House Committee rejected the Mangau's request for armed officers on the Parliament precinct. Parliamentary House Committee Chairman Rick Houenipwela said Mangau's request was "ill informed, ill advised, and based on poor intelligence." Mangau later attempted to justify the request, stating that arms for the members of the Solomon International Assistance Force (SIAF) are simply part of their uniform. Mangau's explanation swayed no one. Solomon Islanders did not stage protests during Parliament's passage of the four-month extension to the health state of emergency.



PNG forces depart Port Moresby on March 22

Rumors of Early Elections Premature

6. (SBU) Support for Sogavare's planned constitutional amendment to extend his government by an extra year and kick elections from 2023 to 2024 may be waning but the Sogavare government is loath to pass on the glory of holding the 2023 Pacific Games to a successor government. Press reported on April 6 that "public outcry against the proposed 12-month extension forced Sogavare's government to take up the option for an early dissolution and election." According to the report, Caucus would provide details later this week. The government will face a major hurdle funding elections in 2022 or 2023, which will cost an estimated USD 19 million. The government has yet to pass a budget for 2022. Sogavare was so confident that his plans to hold onto power for an extra year would be successful that his 2022 draft budget, and planned 2023 budget, do not allow for national elections in either 2022 or 2023. An April 8 article said the extension of Parliament was still on the table as the government "regards the 2023 Pacific Games as its flagship policy outcome and it is not prepared to be deprived of the opportunity to deliver it to the people of Solomon Islands."

Rebuilding Trust in the United States Will Take Time and Effort

7. (SBU) Many Americans and Solomon Islanders reflect on the first land defeat of the Japanese Imperial Army and a successful naval campaign in World War II with pride but not all Solomon Islanders share this view. In a Solomon Times article on April 6, former PM (2010-2011) and current MP Danny Philip wrote: "In 1939-45, the USA and Japan waged a vicious war in our islands leaving many innocent people dead. They never cared about our sovereignty...." A sizeable portion of Solomon Islanders do not see themselves as being on either side of the struggles of WWII. They see themselves as victims of a foreign war. In response to an April 6 Island Sun article titled, "U.S. Admiral Lashes out at SI-Sino Security Pact," which covered Commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet Admiral Samuel Paparo's concerns over the PRC security agreement, social media commenters wrote: "Just leave us alone. Let us do things our own way, for better or worse." "USA come and remove your warships and other WWII remains that not only pollute Solomon Islands waters but also take citizens' lives." "Please, we need your bomb disposal team here now... ASAP!!!" "How well did you show Solomon Islands that you are helping us to develop? How many scholarships did we receive so far? What other development fundings did we hear, see, and feel is directly USA in all Solomon Islands provinces? It is better to show us your development funding assistance, otherwise let us alone striving for our future destiny."

High-Level PRC Delegation Planning Mid-May Trip to Honiara

8. (SBU) On April 1, a business contact in Honiara told EmbOff that PRC Ambassador Li Ming had made inquiries about reserving 20 rooms in mid-May for a high-level PRC delegation. While no additional details are available, Post anticipates this could be the appropriate timing and delegation level for the respective foreign ministers to sign the security agreement.

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

Signature:

MCKEE

Drafted By: PORT MORESBY: R-2022-00137 A-00000523453 "UNCLASSIFIED" 8/9/2023
(b)(6) (Honiara)

Cleared By: EXEC:(b)(6) (Honiara)

EXEC:Zadrozny, Joseph E (Port Moresby)

Approved By: EXEC:McKee, Erin E (Port Moresby)

Released By: PORT MORESBY:(b)(6) (Port Moresby)

Info: NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE*; CIA WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE*; DIA WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE*; SECDEF WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE*; OSD WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE*; JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE*; PACOM IDHS HONOLULU HI *ROUTINE*; FBI WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE*; DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE*; DEPT OF INTERIOR WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE*; DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE*; DNI WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE*; WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE*; CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE *ROUTINE*

XMT: CHENGDU, AMCONSUL

Attachments: PRC Planned Naval Base in Solomon Islands Letter 2022-04-07 05_51_09.pdf

Action Post: NONE

Dissemination Rule: ECON, MLO, EAC, PAS, DAO_INFO, AID

UNCLASSIFIED

~~SBU~~

7 attachments

image001.jpg
389K



image002.jpg
250K



image005.jpg
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image006.jpg
71K



image007.jpg
14K



StateSeal.gif
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(b)(5)

R-2022-00137 A-00000523453 "UNCLASSIFIED" 8/9/2023

Withheld pursuant to exemption

(b)(5)

SCA/RA: (b)(6)

Approved By: EAP: (b)(6)

R-2022-00137

A-00000523453

"UNCLASSIFIED"

8/9/2023

Released By: EAP: (b)(6)

XMT: KABUL, AMEMBASSY; CHENGDU, AMCONSUL

Action Post: AMEMBASSY MANILA

Dissemination Rule: DAO_ACTION, ECON, AID, POL, RSO, POL_MIL

UNCLASSIFIED


~~SBU~~

2 attachments



StateSeal.gif

4K

 **noname**
96K

(b)(5)

Ryan Washburn <rwashburn@usaid.gov>
To: Brandon Miller <bmillier@usaid.gov>

Fri, May 6, 2022 at 2:33 PM

4 of 16

Ryan Washburn
Mission Director
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1000 Ermita, Manila, Philippines
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USAID.gov/Pacific-Islands | @USAIDPacificIsl
USAID.gov/Mongolia | @USAID_Mongolia
Note that Manila, Philippines is +12 hours from Washington, DC.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: (b)(6) <(b)(6)@state.gov>
Date: Tue, Apr 12, 2022 at 5:55 AM
Subject: EAP/MLA Official Informal (O-I) for Monday, April 11, 2022
To: EAP-MLA-Office-DL <EAPMLAOffice-DL@state.gov>

(b)(5)

Withheld pursuant to exemption

(b)(5)

(b)(5)

R-2022-00137 A-00000523453 "UNCLASSIFIED" 8/9/2023

Fwd: Suva: End of Day April 12, 2022

Ryan Washburn <rwashburn@usaid.gov>
To: Brandon Miller <bmillier@usaid.gov>

Fri, May 6, 2022 at 2:32 PM

3 of 16

Ryan Washburn
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USAID.gov/Mongolia | @USAID_Mongolia
Note that Manila, Philippines is +12 hours from Washington, DC.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Date: Tue, Apr 12, 2022 at 1:22 PM
Subject: Suva: End of Day April 12, 2022
To:
Cc: (U) USINDOPACOM.POLADS (b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6)@state.gov>, SUVA Chancery Americans <(b)(6)@state.gov>, SUVA Peace Corps Americans (b)(6)
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(b)(6)@state.gov>, Cobham, Kury C <Kcobham@peacecorps.gov>, Cervantes, Josephina (Philippines/PRM) <jcervantes@usaid.gov>, (b)(6)@state.gov>, Huerta, Alexandria I. <ahuerta@usaid.gov>, (b)(6)@state.gov>, PACOM.J53.ALL (b)(6)
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1. (U) **PRC Ambassador Pens Op-Ed Defending Solomon Islands Security Co-Operation:** The Fiji Sun daily newspaper printed an Op-Ed drafted by PRC Ambassador to Fiji Qian Bo defending the PRC-Solomon Islands security co-operation agreement and insisted it is conducive to regional peace and stability. **He stated the PRC Ambassador to the Solomon Islands and the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs initialed the framework agreement on March 30th.** Ambassador Bo claimed the agreement has been twisted and misinterpreted by other countries and media. He then said as Ambassador to Fiji he wanted to make it clear the agreement is based on equality and mutual respect; is beneficial to the Solomon Islands; it is no different from its cooperation with other countries; and the agreement has no military undertones. He wrapped up by stating western powers bullied and interfered China in the past; therefore, China values the sovereignty and independence of developing countries.

2. (U) **Fiji Attorney-General Tests Positive for COVID-19 at Oceans Conference:** Attorney-General and Minister for Economy Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, presently at the Oceans conference in Palau, tested positive for COVID-19. Contacts reported he was to be a part of a PIF panel discussion April 12 however will now join the panel virtually instead.

3. (U) **CDA Meets with Tourism Fiji:** CDA Greubel discussed expectations for the recovery of the sector with Tourism Fiji CEO Brent Hill. According to the latest projections, Fiji’s 2022 total tourist arrivals may meet 45 percent of its 2019 record of 894,000, with U.S. citizens the third largest cohort of tourists after Australians and New Zealanders and expected cruise ships to return to Fiji in late 2022 or 2023. He highlighted potential for U.S. investment, pointing to the former Pullman Hotel in Nadi which will soon be operated as an IHG Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza.

4. (U) **Notes for EAP/ANP:**

Pending Requests	Due Date	POC at Post	Status/Document Link
Demarche Request - Invitation to Endorse the Declaration For the Future of the Internet	4/15	PE	22 STATE 30104
Annual Data Call on Accreditation of Same-Sex Spouses	4/29	MGT	

(b)(6)

Acting Political-Economic Section Chief
U.S. Embassy Suva (Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Tonga, and Tuvalu)

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(b)(6)