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**New Zealand's Response to the Aircraft Hijack Incident
During the 1987 Coup d'État in Fiji:
A Study of Civil-Military Relations in Crisis**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of Master of Arts in History at Massey University

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PRONUNCIATIONS

The following will assist in the pronunciation of Fijian words and syllables.¹

When the Roman alphabet was adapted to create a written-language version of Fijian, some letters were made to represent consonant sounds quite different from their English-language sounds. Standard Fijian is a phonetic based language with the exception of the following letters:

<u>Letter</u>	<u>Pronounced</u>	<u>Like</u>
B	mb	number
C	th	the
D	nd	lender
J	ch	choose
G	ng	singer
Q	ngg	finger

Vowel sounds are pronounced as are Italian vowels.

Cakaudrove	Tha-kaun-dro-veh
Cakobau	Tha-kom-bau
Jale	Cha-leh
Penaia Ganilau	Pen-eye-a Nga-ni-lau
Timoci Bavadra	Tim-or-the Mba-vahn-dra
Qiqiwaqa	Ngging-gi-wahng-ga

¹ Partly extracted from Rory Ewins's 'Colour, Class and Custom', http://speedysnail.com/pacific/fiji_coup/pronunciations. The paper is dated 1992 and written at the Department of Political and Social Change, Research School of Pacific Studies, The Australian National University. The book version, which develops the paper further, is published as *Changing Their Minds: Tradition, Politics in Contemporary Fiji and Tonga*, Christchurch: Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, Canterbury University, Christchurch, New Zealand.

ABBREVIATIONS

AJHR	Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives
ANZUS	Australia, New Zealand and United States Defence Treaty
ATL	Alexander Turnbull Library
C130	C130 Hercules medium range transport aircraft
CAS	Chief of Air Staff
CDS	Chief of Defence Staff
CGS	Chief of General Staff
CLF	Commander Land Forces
CNS	Chief of Naval Staff
DESC	Domestic and External Security Committee
HQ	Headquarters
MFAT	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
MP	Member of Parliament
NZDF	New Zealand Defence Force
NZDEF	New Zealand Defence Headquarters
NZPD	New Zealand Parliamentary Debates
PM	Prime Minister
RNZAF	Royal New Zealand Air Force
RFMF	Royal Fiji Military Forces
RNZIR	Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment
SAS or NZSAS	New Zealand Special Air Service unit
TEG	Terrorist Emergency Group

INTRODUCTION

On 19 May 1987 an Air New Zealand Boeing 727 passenger aircraft was hijacked on the ground at Nadi en route to Tokyo. The dynamite-carrying hijacker was a disaffected member of the Indo-Fijian community reacting to the overthrow of the recently elected Government in Fiji. The incident occurred at a time of uncertainty five days after the first military coup when the democratically elected Government of Timoci Bavadra was overthrown at gun-point by elements of the Royal Fiji Military Forces (RFMF).

The New Zealand Government, in working out its response to protect New Zealand's interests in the aircraft, its passengers and the crew, was forced to consider more than just the difficult circumstances of the hijacking itself. The Government had to consider the potentially dangerous and tense political environment in which the events were taking place. The hijacking triggered a series of political and military responses, which exacerbated the tensions between the Government and its defence advisers. The events of that day threw into relief the constitutional issues involved in the deployment of forces to foreign countries in emergency situations.

This study of the Government's response to the hijack incident, and the public debate that followed, is the first in-depth analysis of the incident. Until now any extensive comment has been by journalists in the media, although references have been made to the incident in academic articles in the context of discussions about defence or foreign policy. Most of the coverage in the media has focused on the personalities of the two key players in the incident – the then Prime Minister, the Rt Hon David Lange, and Air Marshal David Crooks, who was at that time Chief of Defence Staff. Between them they seem to have provided most of the material for the media articles in defence of their own positions or responding to the others' claims.

Coverage of the events of the hijacking incident was extensive and quite accurate in all the national New Zealand newspapers. For this work the *Evening Post* and the *Dominion* have been used as the main media sources. The *Dominion* ran a three-part series a year after the

hijacking mostly based on material released from Defence Headquarters and probably from Crooks. Many of the newspaper articles were related to the *Dominion* series but there are many others of a more general nature on the actions of the Government's responses to the crisis. They are generally favourable to the concerns of the military chiefs of staff and invariably criticise Lange for the approach he took. Other than a brief discussion of the incident in a New Zealand International Affairs and Victoria University joint publication on world affairs over the decades of the 70s to the 90s,² and in a recently published companion of New Zealand military history,³ there is little else. An article in the in-house *New Zealand Defence Quarterly* was released in 1998, but no new material or insights were included in the article.⁴

In contrast there is a wide selection of published and unpublished material on the first Fiji coup proper and these are fully covered in the bibliography, and in the text when referred to directly. While the first coup, and the hijacking incident, could easily be seen as separate and discrete incidents they are linked and have to be seen in their true relationship. The hijacking happened because of the coup and the Government's responses to the hijacking have to be considered in the circumstances that prevailed in Fiji as a result of the coup. The responses, in their own way, also have to be considered in the context of the fourth Labour Government and its nuclear-free policy, which had led to the tensions between the Government and its defence forces. And in the wider canvas the whole affair has to be seen as part of the on-going civil-military relationship in New Zealand. It is tempting, but not appropriate, to see them as separate events. Indeed most of the commentary to date has tended to consider the crisis in a single dimension.

The inter-related themes provide the linkages for this study and they have dictated the structure and content of this thesis.

This work has benefited from the passing of time in that a number of important senior officials involved in the events are now retired from public service and have felt free to

² Bruce Brown (ed.), *New Zealand in World Affairs: 1972-1990*, Vol. 3, Wellington: Victoria University Press and New Zealand Institute of International Affairs, 1999.

³ Ian McGibbon (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Military History*, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 2000.

⁴ Richard Harman, 'Duel of the Davids', *New Zealand Defence Quarterly*, Wellington: Ministry of Defence, Spring, 1998.

express their views more openly. They have helped to establish the facts surrounding the incident. It would be useful at this point to set out the main contributors of primary source material. Crooks was interviewed on a number of occasions and he provided free access to his personal diary notes where he meticulously recorded the events of the first Fiji coup on a day by day basis. His notes also covered the hijacking incident with details often recorded as events unfolded.

Dr John Henderson who was Head of the Prime Minister's Department was also interviewed; his written articles were also useful and provided an important alternative perspective. Gerald Hensley, who was the official responsible for the country's highest level emergency coordination organisation in the Prime Minister's Department (and later Secretary of Defence), gave me full and frank information during interviews. He took a very balanced view of the events in his comments.

Rod Gates, who was New Zealand High Commissioner in Fiji during the coup and the hijacking, subjected himself to interview and again was prepared to be as frank as he could during the interview. He gave valuable insights of the hijacking incident from the perspective of being in Fiji at the time. He was also able to assist me better understand the situation in Fiji during the coup and on the day of the hijacking. His long involvement and personal dealings with Fijian leaders, including the then Fiji Governor-General, was an unexpected bonus. Air Vice-Marshal Pat Neville, who was the Chief of Air Staff, and Denis McLean, then Secretary of Defence, were also interviewed and offered helpful insights.

Unfortunately, some important participants did not contribute: David Lange has not responded to a number of requests to be interviewed and Major General John Mace, the Chief of General Staff at the time was not prepared to participate. Tim Francis, who was acting Head of Foreign Affairs at the time, also declined to be interviewed. Fortunately, David Lange has set out his views of the event in some detail in his book, *Nuclear Free: The New Zealand Way*, which was a useful primary source and to some degree has offset the fact that he was unable to be interviewed in person.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade records, although not used extensively in this thesis, were valuable in that they corroborated material gained from interviews and other sources. They were most useful in confirming the fact that the Government and the High Commissioner in Suva were working closely with the Fiji Governor-General on handling the hijacking incident and over the proposed use of special force soldiers from New Zealand to resolve the incident. Newspaper sources covered the hijacking in considerable detail and the three-part series run in the *Dominion* newspaper, which triggered the public debate on the incident, gave helpful starting points for research. The subsequent public debate was largely conducted through the press so the editorials and reports of these in various daily newspapers were also valuable.

A number of other people associated with events were interviewed and they are acknowledged in the bibliography. Their contributions, while not always large, were nevertheless valuable in piecing together the sequence of events; they were also a useful source of background material.

The author has been cognisant of the political overtones of the events and that personalities were involved. Given this it has been important to look beyond the rhetoric in the research. As it turned out personalities were part of the reason why there were problems, so it is hard to avoid making judgements on the relative merits of the actions of those involved. It is inevitably, therefore, that some people will take issue with the findings.

The hijacking took place when the implications of the military coup in Fiji were being worked through by the New Zealand Government. The first coup caught New Zealand's political, foreign affairs, intelligence and military establishments by surprise.⁵ Although New Zealand's intelligence assessment staff thought that the Bavadra Government was unlikely to see out its full term, they did not foresee elements of the Fiji military forces forcibly assuming power.⁶ This has to be regarded as a significant intelligence failure by a country claiming to know and understand the region. The events of 14 May were also to change irrevocably the way New Zealand saw the Pacific, and its place in it. Ramesh Thakur has argued that the coup presented 'the most complex challenge ever to New

⁵ John Henderson, 'New Zealand and Oceania' in Brown, *New Zealand in World Affairs*, p.284.

⁶ Interview with Gerald Hensley, 17 October 2001. See Annex D for biographical notes on Hensley.

Zealand foreign policy in the South Pacific'.⁷ Old assumptions were now under challenge. According to Malcolm McKinnon, the coups 'transformed the framework of New Zealand-Pacific relations'.⁸ There were also to be wide implications for the New Zealand defence forces including relations with the Government and, concomitantly, the New Zealand Defence Force's relationship with the Royal Fiji Military Forces (RFMF).

The fourth Labour Government 'marked a crucial turning point in the style, character, and content of the politics of the post-war era...'⁹ In this context the coup d'état came at a time when the Labour Government was actively prosecuting its anti-nuclear policy. As a result, its relationship with the New Zealand Defence Force was at best strained – even quietly hostile. Certainly morale in the forces was at a low ebb. The Prime Minister, David Lange, harboured deep suspicions about the motives and activities of the defence establishment. The breakdown in the relationship collapsed a long history of bi-partisan policies on defence issues by successive Governments that earlier had seen the need to act in the common interests of New Zealand's security. The issue of civil-military relationships in New Zealand - the way the two entities interact and relate in constitutional, legal, and historical terms – has always been one of great consequence.

The media have made much of the actions of the Prime Minister and the Chief of Defence Staff, and the controversy carried on for some years, culminating in the *Dominion's* series in 1992. Editorials in national newspapers called for a Commission of Inquiry to 'reveal the full details of the Fiji crisis of 1987...to what could have developed into a shooting war on a Pacific island.'¹⁰ Others called for a Royal Commission. Also, in 1992, the National Government commissioned a report on the events surrounding the events that day, which has not been made public.

This paper argues that the problems over the management of the incident arose from a number of complex factors that have not yet been considered. There were four overarching reasons and these relate to personalities, the nuclear-free legacy and the political background of senior members of the Government, command and constitutional issues,

⁷ Quoted in Henderson, 'New Zealand and Oceania', p.283.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.282.

⁹ Jonathan Boston and Martin Holland, (eds.), *The Fourth Labour Government: Radical Politics in New Zealand*, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1987, p.1.

and procedural shortcomings. Also, some of the facts identified from the research have not been disclosed before and these may explain why particular decisions were made by the Prime Minister. Further, it will be asserted that although the event was over in a short period of time there was the potential for a serious international incident. There was the possibility of loss of lives, had the deployment of special forces or other armed troops proceeded. There were also the long-term implications in a number of areas as a result of this breakdown in a critical government relationship. The problems which became evident during the emergency, if repeated, could jeopardise the management of future responses to emergencies in New Zealand when the involvement of the armed forces might have been necessary.

It is contended in this study that during the crisis civil-military relations were strained to an extent that was unprecedented in New Zealand's history. The consequences of these tensions went well beyond the events of the hijacking incident itself. The problems that day led to one of the few civil-military disputes in the history of New Zealand, they exacerbated an already tense relationship and left a residue of distrust. They were also a factor in changes to the 1971 Defence Act and the restructuring of the higher echelons of the defence department. Operational procedures were also changed as a result of the experiences of that day.

Chapter One looks at the historical experience of the civil-military relationship in New Zealand and argues that there had been a history of good civil-military relations. It discusses the constitutional basis of the relationship and where the power and authority lies in respect of armed services in New Zealand. It contends that the role of the Governor-General as Commander-in-Chief had no separate authority or reserve powers in respect of the armed forces, but that some officers in the services may still have relied on them. Finally, it analyses why the relationship between defence officials and the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence was so strained and how this was to set the scene for later problems.

Chapter Two covers the events in Fiji before, during and after the first coup, including a discussion on the RFMF. It shows that when considering their responses to the hijacking

¹⁰ *Dominion*, 27 May 1992.

the New Zealand Government could not ignore the coup that was playing out in Fiji, including the role and authority of the Governor-General of Fiji and the coup leader. Further, it considers the effectiveness of the RFMF as a military body and how their direct involvement in the coup was critical to the coup's success. It assesses that any New Zealand deployment of troops into Fiji at that time would have been dangerous without the full support of the RFMF. It confirms that the unstable situation in Fiji was of concern to New Zealand's military leaders as they contemplated their Government's direction to deploy troops operationally to the Islands.

Chapter Three takes a detailed look at the events and the New Zealand reaction that unfolded in Wellington immediately after the coup and explains the context in which the later hijacking incident occurred. It establishes that a senior Fiji Labour government official and key political figure, known to Lange, was being protected by the High Commissioner in Suva and was then covertly extracted. The chapter explains why the initial reaction to the coup by the New Zealand Government was not accepted in Fiji. The chapter provides the political and operational context within which New Zealand would face difficult decisions when it had to deal with the aircraft incident.

Chapter Four analyses the period when an operational deployment of New Zealand troops to Fiji was contemplated in response to the hijacking of the Air New Zealand aircraft. It argues that the Prime Minister's responses to the hijacking were deficient in a number of areas including the way the operation was managed. In particular the chapter concludes that the decision-making process was flawed, established procedures were not followed, and senior defence officials were inappropriately excluded at the critical initial planning stages. The chapter highlights the different recollections of what transpired and explains why certain decisions might have been made.

Chapter Five explains the crisis in terms of the civil-military relationship and why things went wrong. It identifies four over-arching reasons why the problems arose and notes that they were complex and inter-related. It establishes that the problems were not just an issue of personalities. It concludes that this incident represented a significant and serious breakdown in the civil-military relationship in New Zealand.

The events that surround this period, and the issues that arise from them, are worth investigating given the implications for future political and defence relationships, and for a better understanding of the formal and informal civil-military authority relationship. Equally, a better understanding of the issues is important for the security of New Zealand as the country decides its post Cold War force structure and deployment options. Finally, the complexity of the political, legal, constitutional and military issues surrounding New Zealand's military response to the Fiji coups demands a more detailed analysis than it has received up until now. This thesis sets out to redress that deficiency.

CHAPTER ONE: A BACKGROUND OF CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONSHIPS

Practical co-operation is the lifeblood of any defence association.

1987 New Zealand Defence Review.¹¹

The coercive forces of New Zealand, as for other states' armed forces, require special codes of behaviour. The need for special rules is recognised in a separate legal code under which they operate. This is necessary because at the extreme end of their operational spectrum they are the ultimate protector of the state against any external aggressor. To meet this threat they are permitted to organise, train, and use arms and equipment. In the hands of corrupt leaders these could easily be turned against the legitimate elected representatives and the state. Indeed the events in Fiji provide a graphic example of this in what was regarded, despite internal racial tensions, as a stable country of the British Commonwealth and one which was operating a Westminster style of Government.

Discipline, an ethical tradition, a loyal and intelligent officer corps and a commitment to the rule of law under-pin the special responsibilities of the armed force to their society. As part of the commitment of service to their country members of the armed forces forfeit a number of the rights and freedoms enjoyed by other New Zealand citizens. These range from less favourable employment rights and conditions to additional legal constraints. Members of the armed forces are also subject to a separate disciplinary and judicial system established under armed forces law, which provides its leaders with relatively sweeping and arbitrary powers in the interests of maintaining good order and military discipline. These special powers are necessary to ensure that in any emergency disciplined and trained men and women can be deployed efficiently in potentially dangerous situations both at home and abroad.

The manner in which the armed forces are deployed therefore is just as critical as the special internal arrangements within the armed forces. While it is important to ensure that there are safeguards to prevent the military leaders themselves assuming power, it is just as critical that leaders of an elected Government have control over the application and deployment of the armed forces under their control.

Two conventions apply in the civil-military relationship. One is of silence and the other obedience, requiring that the military follow the overall directions of the political authority.¹² In 1992 an article in the *Dominion* on the topic prepared with assistance from defence officials, reported that: 'There is in addition a similarly important pervasive third principle. It turns upon the concept of proper national duty. Among other things it touches upon the exercise of command and the codes of military discipline...'¹³ Further, the paper went on to say: 'It follows, therefore, that commanders have an inescapable obligation of duty to ensure that any orders they issue are well founded in all aspects. Not to do so could place them, or more importantly their subordinates, in subsequent jeopardy of the law.'¹⁴

In 1987 internal arrangements in the defence forces also reflected the civil-military split of responsibilities with the separation of policy advice and command. The Secretary of Defence advised the Government on policy and equipment needs and controlled the civil staff while the Chief of Defence Staff was the Government's adviser on military and operational matters. This meant that the Chief of Defence Staff was both the advisor and the executive in military operational matters, though to be effective the incumbent had to work closely with the Secretary. They had equal status. The Secretary of Defence, the principal civilian advisor to the minister, prepared policy advice in consultation with the Chief of Defence Staff. The Chief of Defence Staff commanded the armed forces in the name of the Crown, but he was under the control of ministers. He had a statutory obligation not only to command but also to advise the Government on military matters. The important point from all this is that the constitutional conventions which separate the Crown from Government stand in the way of the military becoming politicised or becoming active in politics in its own right, provided that they are observed.

In a democracy tensions can occur when accommodating military and civil requirements. Theoretically the use of coercive power could be seen as a last resort in politics but even if this is so, as a profession, the military must not become politicised, nor turn on its own people. As a result, careful and deliberate constitutional safeguards are important. Derived

¹¹ *Defence of New Zealand: Review of Defence Policy 1987*, Wellington: New Zealand Government Printer, p.16.

¹² *Dominion*, 20 May 1992, p.7.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.7.

from long experience over history they provide for military commanders to be separate from the political bodies and take their formal authority from the Crown, even though this is to some extent an abstract concept. All these arrangements are clearly visible in the role of the Commander-in-Chief; the Governor-General in Council vests command (but not control) in the defence force. No minister of the Crown can, therefore, put himself in command. However, the military are required to respond to the lawful directions of the ruling Government, as is of course, the Governor-General.¹⁵

Constitutionally the Governor-General is also the Commander-in-Chief, who is required to act in accordance with Letters Patent 1983, which constitute the office.¹⁶ The Letters Patent do not specify the particular powers of either the Governor-General as Governor-General, or as Commander-in-Chief. Instead, the incumbent's powers are only reserve powers established by long-standing convention. Constitutionally the Governor-General cannot act on his or her own cognizance but only on the advice of ministers. Command of the armed forces is vested in the Crown by virtue of the royal prerogative exercised through the Governor-General.

The Letters Patent require ministers to inform the Governor-General of the Government's business and allow the Governor-General to ask any questions relating to the Government of New Zealand. Likewise the Governor-General can only act on advice received from ministers. This advice is normally tendered within the Executive Council, or directly to the Governor-General by the Prime Minister or another minister. 'Only in a very few cases may the Governor-General exercise a degree of personal discretion (and even then convention usually dictates what decision should be taken).'¹⁷ At what point the Governor-General could exercise personal discretion in respect of his or her role as the Commander-in-Chief is less clear, and often misunderstood, even by senior members of

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Information in this section was taken from unpublished and undated notes provided by Defence Headquarters legal staff and headed 'The Constitution, the Military and the Fiji Hijack'. It may have been the material provided to the *Dominion*, referred to above and referenced in footnote 10.

¹⁶ *Letters Patent Constituting the Office of Governor-General of New Zealand (1983)* in which the Governor-General was appointed the Commander-in-Chief at Clause II. The original Letters Patent 1917, were revoked and reconstituted in October 1883.

¹⁷ Mai Chen and Geoffrey Palmer, *Public Law in New Zealand*, Auckland: Oxford University Press, p.254.

the armed forces. This misunderstanding was also evident in a recent inquiry into defence staff's behaviour over the inappropriate use of information.¹⁸

The Defence Act 1971 at section four, states that '...the Governor-General by virtue of being Commander-in-Chief of New Zealand, shall have powers and may exercise and discharge such duties and obligations relating to any armed forces raised and maintained under... this Act as pertain to the office of Commander-in-Chief.'¹⁹ The Act also prescribed the purposes for which the Governor-General may raise and maintain armed forces. The inference is that there are special powers held by the Governor-General in respect of the 'Commander-in-Chief' title. This view is apparently still not fully accepted by everyone in defence circles. The Director of Defence Legal Services, who advised on the role during the last review of the Defence Act successfully sought to retain the provisions of section four and the title Commander-in-Chief, and argues that there was no absolute certainty as to the reserve powers of that role.²⁰

Alison Quentin-Baxter in reviewing the 1917 *Letters Patent* for the Cabinet Office in 1980 concluded that the Governor-General's powers as Commander-in-Chief added nothing to the prerogative powers in respect of the armed forces delegated in his or her capacity as Governor-General (with all the attendant constitutional constraints). Any reference to the Commander-in-Chief in the Defence Act 1971 did not add any other powers to those that the Governor-General had as Governor-General. Quentin-Baxter further suggested that 'When opportunity offers, it might be therefore be omitted from the statute book as an obsolete and potentially confusing remnant of New Zealand constitutional history.'²¹ She did add, however, that there was nothing constitutionally inappropriate in continuing to describe the office as 'Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief'. However it is certain enough that there are no special powers inherent in the separate title of Commander-in-Chief of the armed services. Indeed, in the report on the disclosure of inappropriate information in the Defence Force in 2001 the reviewers concurred with this view and

¹⁸ Douglas White QC and Graham Ansell, 'Review of the Performance of the Defence Force in Relation to Expected Standards of Behaviour and in Particular the Leaking and Inappropriate Use of Information by Defence Force Personnel', Report to the State Services Commissioner, 20 December 2001, pp.28-29.

¹⁹ Philip A. Joseph, *Constitutional and Administrative Law in New Zealand*, North Ryde: The Law Book Company, 1993, p.563.

²⁰ Interview, Graeme Law, 15 December 2001.

²¹ Alison Quentin-Baxter, *Review of the Letters Patent 1917 Constituting the Office of Governor-General of New Zealand*, Cabinet Office, Wellington, 1980, p.25.

suggested that the reference to the Governor-General as Commander-in-Chief in the Defence Act 1990, which was unchanged from the previous 1971 Defence Act, be clarified to remove any residual doubt among defence personnel.²²

Constitutional issues involving the vice-regal head of state head in the Commander-in-Chief role have been rare, and conventions have usually been accepted. One occurred in 1894 when the Premier, Richard Seddon, was incensed by public criticism from the Governor, Lord Glasgow, over the Government's decisions on defence spending. Seddon claimed that Glasgow had made 'an attack on the Defence policy of the Government.'²³ Later the Colonial Office reprimanded the Governor for his comments.²⁴ Another occurred in 1914, soon after the outbreak of the First World War, as New Zealand was preparing to despatch its main expeditionary force to Europe. Admiral Graf Spee's East Asiatic Squadron, including the powerful ships *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, were known to be operating somewhere in the Pacific. The British Admiralty was responsible for protection of the transports to carry the New Zealand expeditionary force but were not heeding the concerns of the New Zealand Government over the safety of the transports and the inadequacy of the escort ships that were designated to protect them on the journey. In what may have been an attempt to circumvent Prime Minister Massey's political difficulties or perhaps to press the Prime Minister to act, the Governor of New Zealand, Lord Liverpool, suggested that he personally be responsible for despatching the force as Commander-in-Chief.²⁵ Massey indicated that this was not acceptable and that he would immediately resign if Liverpool attempted to act in this way. 'Liverpool desisted and informed the British Government of the position'.²⁶ The convoy eventually sailed once suitable escort ships had been allocated for protection duties.

²² White, 'Review of the Performance of the Defence Force in Relation to Expected Standards of Behaviour and in Particular the Leaking and Inappropriate Use of Information by Defence Force Personnel', p.29.

²³ Ian McGibbon, *The Path to Gallipoli: Defending New Zealand 1840-1915*, Wellington: GOP Publications, 1991, p.97.

²⁴ Ian McGibbon, *Companion*, p.92.

²⁵ Ian McGibbon, *Blue-Water Rationale: The Naval Defence of New Zealand, 1914-1942*, Wellington: Government Printer, Wellington, 1981, p.25.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

Finally, the views of a former Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia on the role of the Commander-in-Chief are informative.²⁷ Sir Ninian Stephen, concluded that there were many different views to be found in respect of the position of the Governor-General as Commander-in-Chief. He noted that they ranged from a type of patron to one who holds the ultimate command function. Sir Ninian regarded his role as Commander-in-Chief as reflecting the special relationship he had between his office as Governor-General and the armed forces of the Commonwealth of Australia. He said: 'it is a close relationship of sentiment based not on control nor command, but in our democratic society expresses the nation's pride and respect for its armed services and on the other hand the willing subordination of the members of those forces to the civil power.'²⁸ This puts the relationship in perspective and helpfully describes the role.

In statutory terms the New Zealand Defence Act of the time of the coup made it quite clear what the chain of command was from the political authority to the soldier. The Defence Act 1971 vested command of the armed forces in the Defence Council. In section twenty-one it stipulated *inter alia* that the Council 'shall have the following functions: (a). Through officers appointed for the purposes to command the Armed Forces.' The Defence Council consisted of six permanent members who were: the Minister of Defence (Chairman), the Chief of Defence Staff, the Secretary of Defence, the Chief of Naval Staff, the Chief of General Staff and the Chief of Air Staff.²⁹ The Chief of Defence Staff, although the senior military officer, had restricted authority as he commanded the three services (the Army, Navy and the Air Force) through the chiefs of their respective services. However, the Chief of Defence Staff was the principal military advisor to the Government, through the Minister.

The statute gave the Defence Council the functions of both command and administration. The Minister was not in command but the Defence Council, which he chaired, was. Only the Defence Council could issue a command to the Chief of Defence Staff. These safeguards were deliberate, they were set out in law and their compliance was not optional.

²⁷ Sir Ninian Stephen, 'The Role of the Governor-General as Commander-in-Chief of the Australian Defence Forces', *Defence Force Journal*, No: 43, Nov-Dec 1983, pp. 3-9.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.9.

²⁹ The Act, at s.21, stipulates that no business can be transacted by the Council unless all permanent members, other than the Minister who can be absent, are present. S.22., which follows, then states that the Minister has to be party to all important decisions.

The New Zealand response to the Fiji coup has to be considered in the light of these legal requirements. At the level above the Defence Council the lines of authority were not as well defined.

Like so many aspects of the Westminster constitution, the power and authority of Cabinet is clear, although it is not covered by statute. Cabinet operates as a convention. The Cabinet Manual set out clearly the principles of Cabinet decision-making and required all significant financial policies, legislation or regulations, responses to select committees, controversial matters and public appointments are sent to Cabinet for consideration and agreement. Cabinet also set up a number of Cabinet committees that had the power to act and to make final decisions. The Cabinet Committee on Domestic and External Security was one of those.

The role of ministers is important. Ministers direct the executive arm of Government. They take significant decisions and collectively determine Government policy, through the Cabinet. Individually, ministers are responsible for exercising the relevant statutory power within their portfolios and they are individually responsible to Parliament for their activities. Their power is derived from common law, the royal prerogative and statute. The Minister of Defence for example had statutory powers in his responsibility to chair the Defence Council.

The role of the Prime Minister is more problematic. He, or she, is appointed by the Governor-General as the one who commands the political majority in the House. However, there is no statute that establishes the office of Prime Minister or defines the role. The Prime Minister is clearly head of the executive Government and forms and maintains the Government. As Chair of Cabinet the Prime Minister approves the agenda, leads the meeting and is the final arbiter of cabinet procedure. The Prime Minister also has an important role in co-ordinating the Government by overseeing the Government's general policy direction. The Prime Minister may hold a ministerial office in his own right, as did David Lange as Minister of Foreign Affairs, in 1987. Interestingly there are few scholarly

works yet on the Executive in New Zealand and no books on the office of Prime Minister or Cabinet.³⁰

Historically, the relationship between the defence forces of New Zealand and the Government has been good. Incidents have been infrequent. A protracted and politically charged incident arose involving the Army as the Second World War loomed. In 1938, four senior Territorial Force colonels, two of whom were prominent lawyers, issued a manifesto in the national press criticising the Labour Government, led by Prime Minister Savage. They criticised the inadequacy of the Government's defence policies given the growing threat of war in Europe. They had earlier made a number of unsuccessful representations to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defence and the Chief of General Staff over their concerns, but they were not satisfied with the various responses. The colonels' 'revolt' angered the Chief of General Staff, which resulted in the four colonels being taken from active duty and compulsorily posted to the Retired List. A fierce public debate followed and serving officers met throughout New Zealand to organise support for the colonels.³¹ Opposition Members of Parliament quickly picked up the colonels' cause. The colonels appealed to the Governor-General, but without success. When the international situation worsened the Government's realisation that their prophecies were only too accurate did not help the colonels. However, later, two of them were reinstated on active service and took part in the war. Even though they were regarded as heroes by many New Zealanders at the time, the Government and army authorities considered they had seriously breached the convention of political involvement and committed a premeditated breach of the code of conduct expected of serving officers.³²

According to McGibbon, tension between ministers and military advisers has been quite rare in the New Zealand civil-military relationship. Seddon disagreed with Colonel Fox over the state of the volunteer forces in 1893. In 1950, Major General Keith Stewart, the Chief of General Staff, argued with Prime Minister Sidney Holland over the newly elected National Government's response to the agreement to despatch troops to the Middle East as

³⁰ Jonathan Boston, 'Cabinet and Policy Making Under the Fourth Labour Government', Martin Holland and Jonathan Boston (ed.), *The Fourth Labour Government: Politics and Policy in New Zealand*, (2nd Ed) Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1990, p.81.

³¹ L.H. Barber, 'The New Zealand Colonels' 'Revolt', 1938', *The New Zealand Law Journal*, 6 December, 1977, p.500.

³² Ibid.

part of the post-war arrangement with Britain.³³ In general though, New Zealand's armed forces have enjoyed excellent public support, particularly after the sacrifices and successes by a largely citizen-based contribution in two world wars. The deployment to the Korean conflict and later the forces that took part in the Malayan Emergency were also fully supported by the public. The New Zealand involvement in the conflict in South Vietnam was the first time there were concerns, resulting in growing negative attitudes by at least a significant minority towards the Army in particular. The use of troops to assist the police during the 1981 Springbok rugby tour probably further aggravated these negative perceptions.³⁴

Lange, and a number of others in his Cabinet, were the first post-war generation not to have undergone some form of military or national service training. The Minister of Defence, Frank O'Flynn, saw South Pacific war service in the RNZAF and so was a notable exception. Also relevant to this study was the fact that many of those in the fourth Labour Government in 1987 were directly involved, or were sympathetic to, the issues of the anti-Vietnam war movement. For many in the movement their involvement was synonymous with opposition to the New Zealand military if only because of its involvement in the war. They would not have had much in common with the armed services - nor perhaps did they understand the way professional service officers were trained and were required to operate. Lange in particular was heavily involved in the Vietnam War protest movement in the 60s and conducted the legal defence of a number of prominent demonstrators. As a result he was refused a visa to enter the United States in 1967. Lange believed that it was 'an affront ... that New Zealand's soldiers were sent to Vietnam, as it were at the beck and call of a great ally'.³⁵

The relationship between the armed services and the Government which came to power in 1984 was always going to be potentially difficult. Labour had won the election on an election manifesto that included a policy to prohibit visits of nuclear armed and nuclear powered ships.³⁶ The Government's policies on the nuclear-free issue were diametrically opposed to the views of the Government's military advisers. Cabinet fundamentally

³³ McGibbon, *Companion*, p.92.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Lange, *Nuclear Free*, p.37.

disagreed with the defence establishment over the need for support from the United States to maintain an effective defence strategy for New Zealand. Tension was almost inevitable. As a result of the anti-nuclear policy, and in particular Cabinet's refusal to grant port access to the USS *Buchanan* in January 1985, the United States suspended military cooperation with New Zealand. One consequence for the armed forces was that their professionalism and capability were significantly affected.³⁷ Prior to 1984 the United States' and New Zealand's relationship in defence matters was:

second only to the ANZAC relationship in terms of its close and comprehensive nature. Arguably it was more important to New Zealanders than the Australian link because of the access it gave them to high quality intelligence, equipment and logistic supply arrangements as well as exercise and training programmes conducted according to current operational procedures and military doctrine.³⁸

This relationship had been developed over time since 1966 when the United Kingdom had decided to reduce its commitment to South East Asia, which forced New Zealand to look to a closer relationship with the United States. By the time the Labour Government came to power in 1984 there were extensive bilateral and multilateral agreements, linking all aspects of New Zealand's defence strategy and activities. Despite claims of self-reliance, New Zealand's defence strategies were inextricably structured in a collective security posture within the ANZUS alliance.³⁹ New Zealand also enjoyed defence relations with the United States 'more intimate than with many NATO countries'.⁴⁰ Jennings concludes that the breakdown in United States and New Zealand military cooperation had adverse consequences in the following areas: combined military exercises; training and personnel exchanges; operational, planning and technical exchanges; scientific cooperation; logistic

³⁶ Richard Mulgan, 'The Changing Electoral Mandate', Martin Holland and Jonathan Boston, *The Fourth Labour Government*, p.12.

³⁷ For a full analysis of the impact on the New Zealand armed forces see: Peter Jennings, *The Armed Forces of New Zealand and the ANZUS Split: Costs and Consequences*, Wellington: New Zealand Institute of International Affairs, Occasional Paper No.4, 1988. For a view of a previous Chief of Defence Staff and the Government's chief defence adviser in 1984-1986 see: Ewan Jamieson, *Friend or Ally: New Zealand at Odds with its Past*, Rushcutters Bay, NSW: Brasseys Australia, 1990.

³⁸ Jennings, p.3.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.4.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

supply; intelligence and maritime surveillance; manpower retention; Government/military relations and finally, the status of the ANZUS Treaty.⁴¹

The breaking of defence ties with the United States could probably not have come at a worse time for the armed services. New Zealand was reliant on US support to help overcome the financial stresses that had recently affected the New Zealand defence forces. These included the block obsolescence of the frigates and air combat aircraft as well as shortages in equipment needed to acquire an air defence capability for the land forces. The favourable terms of the 1982 Memorandum of Understanding of Logistic Support meant that in a time of stress, or in an emergency, New Zealand could at least rely to some extent on this agreement for assistance in obtaining critical equipment. The US allowed the agreement to lapse in 1987 as a result of the nuclear-free policy.⁴²

Even if there is disagreement over the impact in all or some of these areas of the policy there is little argument that the views of the Government and the senior staff of the defence forces were poles apart on the nuclear-free issue. The Government saw its nuclear-free policy as a key initiative and either miscalculated or were not concerned over any negative United States response. Many on the left of the Labour Party saw the ANZUS relationship as dangerous because it risked the country becoming a nuclear target. They also saw it as anachronistic and under-mining New Zealand's independence in foreign and defence policies.⁴³ The more moderate elements of the Labour Party did argue for staying in ANZUS, but ultimately the policy adopted was to give their parliamentary members the mandate to implement a ban on all nuclear powered and armed ships. This was put in to effect with the specific refusal by Cabinet to approve the visit of the USS *Buchanan*.⁴⁴

On the other hand the Government's defence advisers, and all of the retired chiefs of staff, held strongly to the view that by following this path New Zealand was giving up the security guarantee of the most powerful nation in the world. Further, it would jeopardise a

⁴¹ Ibid., p.8.

⁴² Thomas-Durrell Young 'New Zealand' in Desmond Ball and Cathy Downes, *Security and Defence: Pacific and Global Perspectives*, Wellington: Allen & Unwin, 1990, p.368.

⁴³ Report of the New Zealand Labour Party Council on Foreign Affairs and Security, Wellington, September 1988. Quoted in Jamieson, *Friend or Ally*, p.27.

⁴⁴ Kevin Clements, 'The Defence Committee of Enquiry: A Unique Opportunity for Public Participation', in Boston and Holland, *The Fourth Labour Government*, p. 215.

long and close relationship ‘as intimate as that enjoyed by any other Western Government’⁴⁵. Those who were serving military officers at the time, in particular the Chief of Defence Staff, could not publicly criticise the Government, but their opposing views were well known to those in Government and to political commentators.

In addition the relationship between the defence minister Frank O’Flynn and his ministry was strained, at times to breaking point. This was not helped by the fact that O’Flynn did not seem to want the job as Minister of Defence and that his relationship with Lange was not good. ‘During the period as Prime Minister, David Lange kept a tight rein on his Defence Minister, Frank O’Flynn.’⁴⁶ That O’Flynn did not have the confidence of his defence chiefs was revealed when the Chief of General Staff, Major General John Mace, used a rarely exercised statutory right of each service chief to appeal directly to the Prime Minister over the head of his Minister on an issue regarding an officer’s attendance at an



Eric Heath, *Dominion*, 1987.

⁴⁵ Jamieson, p.33.

⁴⁶ John Henderson, ‘Foreign Policy Decision Making in New Zealand: An Insiders View’, Richard Kennaway (ed.), *Beyond New Zealand II: Foreign Policy into the 1990s*, Auckland: Longman Paul, 1991, p.216.

overseas course. In this case Mace successfully argued that the posting was one for military judgement and not political direction.⁴⁷ O'Flynn's relationship with his officials in defence was so bad that he complained that they 'wouldn't tell me anything'.⁴⁸ Further, O'Flynn's poor relationship with his defence ministry was such that Lange had to become involved with routine defence issues, which annoyed him, according to Henderson, the head of his advisory group.⁴⁹

The Prime Minister's relationship with retired senior defence officials was no better. The most public manifestation was the 'geriatric-generals' incident, as it is commonly known. In October 1985, sixteen retired chiefs of staff, including four who had held the most senior defence position as Chief of Defence Staff, wrote to Lange setting out their collective concerns with the Government's policy on nuclear ships and ANZUS.⁵⁰ A series of exchanges and requests for meetings did not resolve matters and the letter was then made public by the signatories. As a result of this Lange 'savagely dismissed them as "geriatric generals"'.⁵¹ Later he called them 'unreconstructed military neanderthals'.⁵²

In *Nuclear Free*, Lange also makes it clear what he felt about the services and defence officials at the time. For example, his description of his Secretary of Defence, Denis McLean, was as 'a tall, lugubrious, large-footed individual, patrician in appearance, stamped with all the niceties of scholarship and manners. His distaste for the nuclear-free policy he scarcely took the trouble to conceal. I did everything I could think of to get McLean out of his job...'⁵³ In another example he concluded that: 'Professional soldiering wasn't an occupation with a lot of status. Although the armed forces had polished bureaucratic skills when it came to defending their perks and privileges, as a political lobby group they didn't have a lot of clout.'⁵⁴

⁴⁷ James Rolfe, *Defending New Zealand: A Study of Structures, Processes and Relationships*, Wellington: Institute of Policy Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, 1993, p.25.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Interview, John Henderson, 30 October 2001.

⁵⁰ *Evening Post*, 9 October 1985.

⁵¹ McGibbon, *Companion*, p.274.

⁵² Lange, *Nuclear Free*, p. 154 -5.

⁵³ Ibid., p.68.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

In early 1987 the Government ordered a new defence review and this was coordinated by Henderson who, probably reflecting the Government's distrust of many elements of the public service, did not take a traditional inter-departmental approach to its development. Because officials, in the main those from the defence organisation, did not agree with the Government's anti-nuclear stance, it took more than fifty meetings to produce a draft that was acceptable to the Government.⁵⁵ This clearly was a source of frustration to the Government and to Lange and O'Flynn in particular.

Lange also wrote: 'Our military establishment had its own deep-rooted culture. It was bitterly resentful of the challenge presented to its most treasured assumptions by the nuclear-free policy...the armed forces were living with the horror of seeing their *raison d'être* swept away before them'.⁵⁶ Lange admitted 'I never really understood the military',⁵⁷ which given his background was understandable. This lack of appreciation of how defence forces operated was to become manifest during his management of the hijack crisis.

By the time the first Fiji coup took place on 14 May 1987, there was a background of a defence force feeling very concerned and frustrated with the direction the Government was taking in foreign affairs and with the external security of the country. Most serving military officers were dismayed and angry at the breakdown in relations with the United States and the resulting inoperative ANZUS treaty. New Zealand's defence strategy had been inextricably inter-twined with its ANZUS partners since 1952 when the treaty was signed, but effectively since the early 1970s. The Government was about to go into a critical second term election later that year with a fully implemented nuclear-free policy. The Prime Minister and his Minister of Defence were in a dysfunctional relationship. Both of them had a tense and difficult relationship with their defence force advisers over an alliance that defence officials regarded as the linch-pin of their country's safety and security.

⁵⁵ John Henderson, 'Foreign Policy Decision Making in New Zealand', p.223.

⁵⁶ Lange, p.163.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

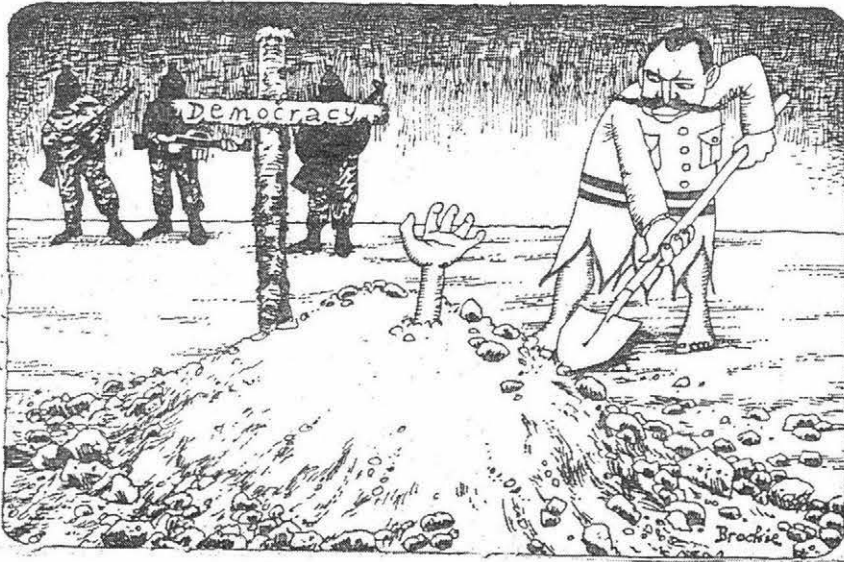
Despite a relatively long history of good civil-military relationships the scene was set for a potential crisis between the Government and defence officials. The hijacking of the Air New Zealand aircraft a week after the coup started provided the spark. It brought in to focus the underlying differences that existed at both personal and professional levels. The long established command and control responsibilities and the constitutional relationship between the Government and the armed forces should have been clear enough to senior Government ministers as well as to the military chiefs of staff. Despite this, there was apparent confusion over the appropriate decision-making procedures during the hijack crisis, which will be evident from the discussion to follow. Personalities, egos and poor communication seemed to get in the way. Members of the executive and those who commanded the country's coercive forces had a responsibility, even a duty, to understand each other in an effort to work together effectively in the best interests of those they represented and commanded. In the normal course of events all these issues might have stayed as internal differences. However, trouble was brewing in part of New Zealand's strategic area of interest in the South Pacific, and in Fiji in particular. It was trouble that New Zealand was blissfully unaware of. The Government and the defence force's responses to the coup would bring into sharp focus all the elements discussed earlier in this chapter. The hijack incident, which occurred a week after the first coup took place, has to be seen in the context of the coup and the events in Fiji in May. It is now appropriate to investigate the events in Fiji leading up to the crisis.

CHAPTER TWO: TROUBLE IN MAY

*Noqu Kalou, Noqu Vanua*⁵⁸

At 11.00 am on Thursday 14 May 1987, Radio Fiji announced that there had been a military takeover of the Fijian Government. Fiji and the world were taken by surprise.

An hour earlier Opposition Alliance Party MP, Taniela Veitata, had been speaking in the debating chamber in the Fiji parliament and was remonstrating with members opposite. The Chiefs were the guardians of peace in Fiji, he insisted. Alluding to Mao Tse Tung, he reminded them that 'political power comes out of the barrel of a gun but in Fiji there was no gun – but the chiefs, which we respect'.⁵⁹ 'Fiji belongs to the Fijians' he said, 'in the same way...India belongs to the Indians.'⁶⁰ He was interrupted by the entry of armed soldiers.



Bob Brockie, *National Business Review*, 29 May, 1987.

⁵⁸ 'Our God, Our Land': a message on a placard presaging the troubled times ahead during a political demonstration in Suva prior to the coup.

⁵⁹ David Robie, 'Why the Fiji plot theory is gaining ground', *Times on Sunday*, 12 July 1987.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

Lieutenant Colonel Rabuka, the third ranking officer in the RFMF, who had been sitting in the gallery dressed in a business suit, stood up and announced: 'This is a military take-over, stay cool, stay down and listen to what we are going to tell you'.⁶¹ At gunpoint he invited the Prime Minister to lead his Government members out to waiting army trucks which then drove them off to detention and for most of them, political obscurity. This violent and illegal act immediately put an end to the Coalition Government formed one month earlier and set Fiji off on a path of undemocratic rule and unstable government which exists to this day. The events in Fiji were also to have consequences far beyond the islands' own shores.

Work ceased in Suva and concerned retailers boarded up their offices in case of looting. Crowds formed and citizens gathered round their radios for news. A world de-sensitized to take-overs and coups was shocked by this unexpected event in a Pacific island nation where the democratic process had been held up as an example, albeit that Fiji had only been independent since 1970. The recent general election had gone smoothly and the advent of the Coalition Government seemed to affirm the widespread belief that democracy was truly 'alive and well in Fiji'.⁶² Indeed Pope John Paul II, when in Fiji in late 1986, had said he saw Fiji as 'a symbol of hope for the world'.⁶³

Detained members of the Coalition Government were taken to Queen Elizabeth Barracks, the main base of the RFMF. Later the politicians were separated into groups of ethnic Fijian and Indo-Fijian members. The Fijians were taken to the Prime Minister's official residence and the Indo-Fijians to Borron House, the Government guesthouse in Samabula. According to the deposed Prime Minister, Dr Timoci Bavadra, before the MPs were split up: 'We linked arms together – all of us – and sat on the floor. As the soldiers gradually pulled us loose, we could see shame in their eyes.'⁶⁴ Both venues holding the detained MPs were then heavily guarded by Fijian soldiers..

A short time later Radio Fiji announced the news of the military actions. Rabuka, the station reported, had gone to Government House to seek recognition of his illegal actions

⁶¹ Brij V. Lal, *Power and Prejudice: The Making of the Fiji Crisis*, Wellington: New Zealand Institute of International Affairs, 1988, p.1.

⁶² Lal, *Power and Prejudice*, p.3.

⁶³ Robertson, Robert T. and Akosita Tamanisau, *Fiji: Shattered Coups*, Leichhardt: Pluto Press, 1988, p.xvii.

from the Governor-General, Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau. The public was advised to remain calm and to continue working. Back in New Zealand, around 10.35 am the New Zealand Prime Minister, David Lange, was informed by his convenor of the Domestic and External Security Committee, Gerald Hensley, that a coup might have taken place in Fiji.⁶⁵ Hensley had been contacted by the Government's electronic listening service, the Communications Security Bureau which had picked up information that there was a possibility. Eventually the details were confirmed and the New Zealand Government reviewed its options. The New Zealand frigate HMNZS *Wellington* was *en route* to Fiji on a routine visit and, after a re-assessment of the situation in Wellington, was allowed to continue on to Suva.⁶⁶

The coup had its roots in Fiji's communal and political situation. The Coalition Government of Timoci Bavadra, consisting of the National Federation Party (NFP) and the Fiji Labour Party, came to power in April 1987 by defeating the Alliance Party of Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara. The NFP element of the coalition received the basis of its support from the country's Indo-Fijian⁶⁷ community, which comprised approximately 49% of the population but had been weakened over the years by factionalism. NFP support was also eroded with the formation of the Fiji Labour Party in July 1985. However, by May 1986, under the leadership of Harish Sharma the NFP had improved its standing – and prospects.

The dominant partner in the coalition was the newly formed Labour Party, led by Dr Timoci Bavadra. The Labour Party was supported by the Fiji Trades Union Congress. The party sought multiracial support but its main supporters were the Indo-Fijian community and working class people of all of the racial groups. The party's support also reflected the changed nature of the rural and urban mix, and those more highly educated people in business and the public service. Traditional political allegiances based on tribe and families were breaking down with the emergence of an educated middle class. The party policies, as announced at its first convention in 1986, were in outline: to pursue a non-

⁶⁴ Timoci Bavadra in Kenneth Bain, *Treason at 10*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1989, p. x.

⁶⁵ Interview, Hensley, 17 October 2001.

⁶⁶ Ian McGibbon, 'New Zealand Defence Policy from Vietnam to the Gulf War' in Brown, *New Zealand in World Affairs*, p.128.

⁶⁷ To avoid confusion, in the context of this thesis, the term 'Indo-Fijian' refers to Fijian citizens of Indian descent while the term 'Fijian' or 'ethnic Fijian' refers to the indigenous Fijians. The distinction is not in any way intended to be pejorative or suggesting that Fijians of Indian heritage are any lesser citizens of Fiji. Lal makes the point that these terms do not in practice exist but that Fijian communities are divided as much along class and regional lines (Lal, '*Power and Prejudice*', p.64)

aligned foreign policy; to increase social service in the areas of health, education, housing and employment; to nationalise transport, the gold and tuna industries, and, significantly, to achieve a more equitable system of land distribution. The new policy on land was to involve the establishment of a body to supervise the Native Land Trust Board which administered Fijian communal land (83% of the total land area).⁶⁸ The Labour Party had its first MPs in the house in 1986 as the result of defections from other Opposition parties, including three from the NFP.

The Alliance Party of Ratu Mara had been in power since the 1970 Constitution established Fiji as an independent state following British colonial rule which commenced with the Deed of Cession in 1874. In April 1987 the Governor-General dissolved Parliament at the request of the Prime Minister, Ratu Mara. This was to be the fourth general election since independence in 1970.

The Fijian voting system, which was complicated and not well understood by the electorate, allowed each voter to cast four votes.⁶⁹ One was for the candidate on the three communal rolls (Indian, ethnic Fijian and General). The remaining three votes were for voting in the three national seats.⁷⁰ What this translated to in the Fiji House of Representatives was that the 52 seats were divided into 22 each for ethnic Fijians and Indo-Fijians. Of these 12 were voted in on a communal basis and the final 10 were national seats with ethnic reservation. People of mixed and European descent held three communal and five national seats.⁷¹ The purpose of this complicated voting system was to avoid domination by any one of the two main groups.⁷²

The elections were not without problems and there were fire-bombings of two opposition candidates' homes and general outbreaks of violence. The NFP campaigned strongly on the land reform issues, Government corruption and improving welfare including increasing benefits. The result of the election was that Mara's Alliance Party managed to win only 24 seats to the 28 of the opposition coalition (Labour and NFP), nineteen of which were held by Indo-Fijians. In the subsequent Cabinet, five of the portfolios were held by members of

⁶⁸ Keesing's Archives, Vol. XXXIII, July 1987, p.35251.

⁶⁹ Lal, *Power and Prejudice*, p.11.

⁷⁰ Keesing's, p. 35252.

⁷¹ Lal, p.11.

ethnic Fijian birth and seven by Indo-Fijians. In addition three non-Cabinet ministers were appointed, two ethnic Fijians, the other a European. Despite Alliance Party hopes that the coalition would break up into factions, the Government surprised their opponents with the effective way it assumed power. The new Government began to move quickly on its promises, particularly in the health area and on transport for the poor.⁷³ ‘Unhappily for its opponents, it did not self-destruct’.⁷⁴ Clearly the *Taukei* and Alliance Party would have to move in others ways if they wanted to regain power. They planned accordingly.

On 24 April 1987 over 3000 people protested in what was one of Fiji’s largest ever political demonstrations, claiming that the new Government was unconstitutional and that the Government must contain a majority of indigenous Fijians. The protest was organised by the *Taukei*.⁷⁵ The *Taukei* movement ‘the world heard, were an oppressed indigenous minority, facing the same desperate situation as the Aborigines and the Maoris, who were exercising their right to independence in their own land’.⁷⁶ The *Taukei* (from the long form, *Taukei ni Qele* meaning owner of the soil) was a movement formed by a group of Fijian landowners after the election defeat of the Alliance and a diverse group of Alliance party supporters, including ethnic civil servants, prominent members of the Methodist church, and some academics. Their aim was to overthrow the democratically elected new Labour coalition Government. Many had somewhat dubious political careers. It was radical and extreme in all its demands.⁷⁷

The *Taukei* petitioned the Governor-General to demand that constitutional change be made to this effect. Bavadra was seen as a figurehead for an Indian dominated Government. The strength of Fijian, and *Taukei* in particular feeling, can be seen from the following comment published in the *New York Times* after an interview with an academic, who subsequently became a Cabinet minister:

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., p.76.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p.74.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

How do you compete with a race that has thousands of years of what we call civilisation. When the first Indians arrived in Fiji in 1879, my grandparents were just ten years from eating each other. This is not their country. They still eat curry. They are not Christian.⁷⁸

Less than a month later coup leader Rabuka suspended the constitution and declared himself chief minister of an interim ruling council. Eleven of the seventeen member council were from the old ruling Alliance Party; the others, not surprisingly, were leaders of the *Taukei* movement. 'Most surprising of all was the presence on Council of Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara himself'.⁷⁹ Ever since his presence on the Council there have been questions whether or not Mara was involved in some way, despite the assertions of Rabuka that he acted alone in leading the coup.⁸⁰ Indeed the New Zealand Prime Minister, in a press conference on 18 May, regarded Mara's speedy alignment with Rabuka as 'treachery' in terms of the Fiji Constitution.⁸¹ A respected and senior local commentator and journalist (although an earlier Alliance Party supporter), Sir Leonard Usher, believes that Mara's role had been deliberately distorted and considers that Mara did not have any part in the conspiracy to organise the coup. He also notes that Mara would have been very aware of Rabuka's inability to assemble and lead a Government.⁸²

A perspective from a New Zealander which reinforces the view that Mara was not directly involved came from the Hon Brian Talboys, who was meeting informally with Malcolm Fraser and Mara at a hotel in Sigatoka on the morning of the coup. Talboys recalled that Mara went to the telephone during their talks and came back ashen-faced and quite distraught. He had just been informed that the coup had taken place. He required some comforting by the party.⁸³

⁷⁸ Lal, p 75. From an interview with Nicholas D. Kristoff, by Adi Finau Tabakaucoro, an academic at the University of the South Pacific, reported in the Honolulu Star -Bulletin, 5 April 1987. She later joined Mara's republican cabinet.

⁷⁹ Lal, p. 79.

⁸⁰ Ratu Mara has been often accused of being involved in the coup, or at least being aware of it happening. He has denied this and there is no firm evidence that he was involved. What is clear, however, is his sympathy for the *Taukei* cause. He was also clearly unhappy about losing power.

⁸¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Wellington. Press Statements dated 2 June, 1987, p 7.

⁸² Sir Leonard Usher, *Letters from Fiji, 1987-1990*, Suva: Fiji Times Ltd, 1992, p.208. Usher wrote almost daily letters to the Queen's Private Secretary which clearly found their way to the Queen, Heselstine reports in his foreword, who was so well informed on details, she surprised her officials.

⁸³ Hensley, 17 October 2001.

However, there was information circulating that Mara was seen on the golf course with Rabuka some days before the coup on 10 May 1987 and, from one account, during the round of golf Rabuka may have indicated to Mara what he was planning. Rabuka was apparently seen to have gone down on his knees before Mara in the tradition of a commoner seeking approval for a request to a chief.⁸⁴ Two Samoan visitors playing golf with them were also reported as saying that ‘from the conversations they had heard there was going to be a coup’.⁸⁵ Ewins concludes that it is likely that Mara knew that the coup was imminent and that if so his silence made him an accessory.⁸⁶

Initially the Governor-General, Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau, refused to recognise Rabuka’s regime. He condemned the unlawful seizure of power, relying heavily on support from the judiciary, from Sonny Ramphal the Commonwealth Secretary-General, the Governments of New Zealand, Australia and India and Sir William Heseltine, the Queen’s Private Secretary. As part of New Zealand’s response the Prime Minister, David Lange, sent a message of support for the Fiji Governor-General to the Queen as Queen of New Zealand, advising her that: ‘It is the advice of Her Majesty’s Ministers in New Zealand that the Governor-General in Fiji remains her representative and we acknowledge him as the constitutional authority in that Commonwealth country.’⁸⁷ These expressions of support seemed to strengthen the Governor-Generals resolve. Negotiations between Rabuka and Ganilau broke down over Rabuka’s insistence that his regime be formally recognised by the Governor-General and that there be unilateral constitutional change to give effect to Fijian dominance and control.

A period of confusion followed after the Governor-General appeared to relent and agreed to swear in Rabuka as the military head of a Fijian Government and a Council of Ministers to advise him.⁸⁸ After pressure from the judiciary he resiled from this earlier decision and refused to officiate at the planned swearing-in ceremony. On 18 May he announced on public radio that he alone intended to exercise executive authority but with a council of

⁸⁴ Henderson, 30 October 2001.

⁸⁵ Ewins, Section 5, p.12.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Text of message of 14 May 1987 from the Rt Hon David Lange, Prime Minister, to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of New Zealand, released in a press statement bulletin from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Wellington dated 2 June 1987, p.1.

⁸⁸ Lal, p.83.

advisers that he would personally appoint. That day Dr Bavadra and his fellow members were released from detention. Bavadra then insisted on his legitimacy as Prime Minister and questioned the actions of the Governor-General – he also implicated Mara in the coup. Court proceedings were also filed by the former coalition.

In an attempt to keep the support of Fijians, the Governor-General met with the Great Council of Chiefs, an influential group that had no constitutional authority or legitimacy but retained significant traditional respect among ethnic Fijians. It was clear to Ganilau that any interim arrangements would not succeed without the Council of Chiefs' support. The Council was a body that Ganilau trusted; he had also been its head for a long period.⁸⁹ Increasingly concerned about the danger of civil unrest, Ganilau was anxious to stabilise the political situation in the country. During this period groups of youths rampaged through Suva, causing both Ganilau and Rabuka to call for calm through the media.

The Great Council of Chiefs offered their general support to the Governor-General on the condition that Rabuka was made head of any council advising the head of state. Overcome by the overwhelming support for the coup, the Governor-General bowed to pressure and on 22 May announced an Advisory Council. It included Rabuka, who was to have responsibility for home affairs and defence. The Council included one Indo-Fijian and one European. Bavadra and Sharma were invited to join but refused on the grounds the group had no constitutional legitimacy. The New Zealand Government had earlier issued a press statement that the Governor-General's authority was paramount. 'That means that the Council of Ministers is illegal. New Zealand cannot and will not recognise it as having any legitimacy', said the Prime Minister.⁹⁰ This and other representations made little impact in Fiji, which saw New Zealand as out of touch with what was needed in Fiji. The Governor-General was to rule Fiji under these arrangements until a second coup in September of the same year.

Rabuka and the *Taukei* were not prepared to accept an arrangement (known as the Deuba Accords) drawn up between Bavadra, Mara and the Governor-General as a multi party arrangement to guide Fiji to a new democracy and constitutional rule. The accords were

⁸⁹ Lal, p.85.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p.9.

seen to be an Indo-Fijian come-back. The Governor-General had over-estimated his influence over Rabuka who, using the RFMF again, took unilateral control of Fiji on 25 September 1987. Interestingly, Canberra had assessed that another coup was likely, but that it would occur a week later than it did.⁹¹ Rabuka was promoted to the rank of brigadier and made commander of the RFMF and head of the Interim Military Government. By decree from Rabuka, Fiji became a republic five days later. Fiji's links to the Crown were finally severed at midnight on 7 October, 1987.⁹²

Eventually Ganilau and Mara accepted the positions of President and Prime Minister respectively. All in all it went quite smoothly for Rabuka, who in the end seemed to get what he, or others, had wanted. And if the Alliance Party was implicated, it was now Rabuka in charge and not the Party. One consequence of the second coup (and possibly one of the reasons for it), was a reduction in the influence of some of the more troublesome *Taukei* leaders, who were by now showing how difficult they could be to control and, in a number of cases, how ineffective they were.

Rabuka now needed to rely more heavily on the leaders he knew – Ganilau and Mara. Rabuka was, if nothing else, a political pragmatist. Indeed he was more than that: he later demonstrated that he was an able and level-headed person, who by taking charge of hot-heads in the subsequent coups prevented bloodshed. Clearly both Ganilau and Mara were sympathetic to the Fiji ethnic cause and there is little doubt of their sense of duty to Fiji to do what they could for their country. In particular Mara's apparent haste to accept the position of Prime Minister in the new arrangement was interpreted by many as involvement at a more sinister level.

Subsequently, in 1990, with help from New Zealand's Sir Paul Reeves and others, a new Constitution was drawn up and agreed to by the military Government and the Governor-General. In 2000 a further coup occurred when George Speight overthrew Mahendra Chaudry's Government. Again, this illegal act was carried out with support from elements of the RFMF. Speight was subsequently tried and convicted of treason, but the Chaudry Government was not restored.

⁹¹ Deryck Scarr, *Fiji: The Politics of Illusion. The Military Coups in Fiji*, Kensington: New South Wales University Press, 1988, p.129.

The causes of the first coup are complex. Lal suggests that the 'crisis raises many complex moral and ideological questions which touch upon some of the most fundamental issues over our time'.⁹³ He concludes that these include immigrant and indigenous rights issues, traditional values, political institutions and the use of force. Lal does lean to the view that the coup was more about frustrated politicians recapturing power than issues of race though he admits that the race issue cannot be dismissed lightly. Neither can the dynamics of local history and politics nor the specific actions of individuals. He sees nothing inevitable or predetermined about the coup, however,⁹⁴ 'In the ultimate analysis, the Fijian crisis was caused by a complex combination of incipient class conflicts, provincial tensions among the indigenous Fijians and deep-seated racial antagonisms long embedded in the very structure of Fiji's society and politics'.⁹⁵ Lal does give some weight to the actions of individuals in his arguments, whereas another assessment by Ewins is that the three factors of race, class and custom provide better systemic explanations of the coup. Of these he weights custom as the most significant.⁹⁶ Under this heading he discusses chiefly power, the east and west regional divide in Fiji and the increasing political influence of commoners. He concludes that custom best explains the actions of the coup-makers.⁹⁷ What was clear though was that racial tension 'was also a powerful weapon in the hands of men who played the game of communal politics'.⁹⁸ Fear of Indo-Fijian domination, whether real or not, was an effective tool to 'rally the Fijians behind their chiefs'.⁹⁹

The RFMF were a key to the success of the coup and indeed were the only body that could organise such an event. The Fijian army had long been a politicised organisation despite being modelled on British Army lines. It was not established to defeat an external power – its role in colonial Fiji was to be ready to aid the civil power.¹⁰⁰ Over the years since the 1920s the RFMF had been called out a number of times in this role and, except for the 1959 Suva riots, all deployments in aid of the civil power role had been as a response to

⁹² Lal, p.118.

⁹³ Lal, p.5.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.7.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Ewins, Section 6, p.1.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.2.

⁹⁸ Lal, p.65.

⁹⁹ Lal, p.65.

¹⁰⁰ Jim Sanday, 'The Coup of 1987: A Personal Analysis', *Pacific Viewpoint*, 30 (2), 1989, pp.116 -131.

actions by the Indo-Fijian community.¹⁰¹ The Indo-Fijian community had been regarded by the colonial Government as 'unreliable' politically and its members were excluded from any military role.¹⁰² According to Sanday, the Fijian forces were an ethnic enclave because the Indo-Fijians would not volunteer for military service and therefore the colonial Government discounted them as being militarily suitable.¹⁰³ There was also a pay differential between Indo-Fijian and ethnic Fijian soldiers.¹⁰⁴ As a result there were only a handful Indo-Fijians in the Army and of these none held commissioned rank. The officer corps reflected the values of the ruling chiefs. The officers were 'socialized in the values of the conservative Fijian elite'.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, their allegiance to the Crown was strong and there was an acceptance of high standards of military professionalism. 'It needed a charismatic leader to steer the Royal Fiji Military Forces away from this'.¹⁰⁶ Rabuka was such a person despite the fact that he confused the need for his regime with the security of the state.

Rabuka's reasons for leading the RFMF in the coup are an important issue. Clearly he had private motives, and there is evidence that he had his 'own axes to grind',¹⁰⁷ as well as those of others. Ewins suggests that Rabuka had a fear of the Fiji Labour Party's 'socialism' as revealed by their overtures to the Russians, and fear of Libya's plans to negotiate a fishing agreement.¹⁰⁸ He was also concerned with any increase in India's influence in Fiji.

In respect of the RFMF, Rabuka was fearful that the coalition Government of Bavadra might change the policy towards admitting non-Fijians into the army. Indeed Rabuka's own written orders to the soldiers who conducted the coup show that this was something uppermost in his mind:

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p.127.

¹⁰² Ibid., p.127.

¹⁰³ Jim Sanday was the second senior ranking officer in the rank of Lieutenant Colonel at the time Rabuka took over. He is not an ethnic Fijian but Rotuman Islander and was sent home when the coup commenced. Jim Sanday was placed under house arrest during the coup which he opposed. Since then he has been a frequent commentator on the coup and the RFMF. He trained in New Zealand and has many NZ Army connections. He is current a Visiting Fellow at the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre at the Australian National University.

¹⁰⁴ Sanday, p.127.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p.128.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ewins, p.5.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

'Foreign Policy

GG's position very difficult as he will be forced to accept policies which are against the traditional interests but mostly important against the interest of the RFMF

Defence Policy

They are likely to introduce measures to gain political control over the RFMF e.g. intro of racial parity principle. This we cannot and should never accept.

Mission

To overthrow the govt and install a new regime that will ensure that the RFMF and national interests are protected. (Opord1/87)¹⁰⁹

Rabuka's personal future may also have been an issue as the RFMF commander, Brigadier Nailatikau,¹¹⁰ had indicated that he was going to court-martial Rabuka for disobeying orders regarding the return home of a soldier from the UN mission in the Lebanon some time earlier.¹¹¹ Nailatikau had earlier turned down an application to bring the soldier home to attend a family funeral service. Further, at a personal level, Nailatikau and Rabuka disliked each other. According to Ewins, Rabuka's military obsessions and his theories on race and tradition make Rabuka's claims in his book *Rabuka: No Other Way* that the coup was solely his idea ring true.¹¹²

The RFMF was professional in terms of its standards of training and discipline. It was well drilled in the art of war and had recently had considerable operational experience with the United Nations in the Lebanon. There had been a tradition of Commonwealth service and the Army was involved earlier in the Malayan Emergency, often working with New Zealand forces. More recently Fiji provided a battalion to the US sponsored Multi-national

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p.6.

¹¹⁰ Epeli Nailatikau, who was the son-in-law of Ratu Mara, was opposed to the coup.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p.7.

¹¹² Ewins, p.7.

Force and Observers in the Sinai. Numerous officers had acted as UN observers, including with the UN mission to Afghanistan.¹¹³

A number of Fiji army and naval officers, and soldiers, had trained in New Zealand (there were 47 in New Zealand on the day of the coup). Most officers attended training courses in tactics and staff work in New Zealand during the course of their career. Nailatikau, Sanday and Rabuka trained in New Zealand on a number of officer level courses. They were friends with, and their abilities were well known to, many New Zealand army officers. In terms of small arms skills and unit tactics the RFMF was considered a match for any New Zealand equivalent military unit.

What should have been clear is that any sort of involvement by New Zealand in post-coup Fiji was likely to be fraught with danger. In particular any military involvement would be especially dangerous. The likelihood of further polarising the racial problems by the insertion of armed troops, even to resolve a criminal act of hijacking a New Zealand national airline, must have been obvious. The political situation after the coup, particularly the lack of any clear authority in Fiji to issue diplomatic clearances and guarantee safety, would have made any use of New Zealand military forces problematic.

Importantly, the ability, training and commitment of the RFMF determined that this was a body that could not be ignored in any proposed deployment. Their reaction to any foreign intervention was at best highly uncertain, despite that many officials might have felt they knew them well. The fact that New Zealand did not correctly assess the situation leading up to the coup suggests that knowledge of Fiji and Fijian ways was not as complete, nor as sophisticated, as one might have believed. Importantly, the active role and the complicity of the RFMF in the coup itself and that the success of the coup relied on the RFMF, suggested that old relationships and friendships could not be relied on. Further, Fijian distrust and suspicion of New Zealand following the New Zealand Government's responses (and the Prime Minister's statements) meant that any the use of force or covert operation was potentially dangerous.

¹¹³ Jim Sanday, *The Military in Fiji: Historical Development and Future Role*, The Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Working Paper No: 201, Canberra: The Australian National University, 1989, p.5.

To those in Wellington on Thursday, 14 May 1987 all this was something to ponder on in the future. The Prime Minister, David Lange, told the House of Representatives in Wellington that he had received advice that morning ‘that it appeared a military coup had taken place in Fiji’.¹¹⁴ Following lunch the House resumed at two o’clock and the Prime Minister made a formal ministerial statement on the events to a sombre group of Members. Little was known at that point but already discussions had been held that morning with the High Commission in Suva and Lange had spoken with the Prime Minister of Australia, Bob Hawke.

At the same time Hawke had advised Lange that Nailatikau, Rabuka’s immediate superior, was in Canberra that day and the RAAF were arranging an aircraft to return him to Fiji.¹¹⁵ An Air New Zealand flight was scheduled to leave for Nadi at 2040 hours that night and 192 New Zealanders were booked on it. It was expected that the flight would proceed to enable some of the estimated 800 New Zealanders in Fiji to leave, if they wished to do so.¹¹⁶ Because Wellington papers were not published that day due to a strike it was to be the following day before many could read details of the coup.¹¹⁷

In the House both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, Jim Bolger expressed hoped that the Governor-General of Fiji could do something to restore democracy. Bolger noted that a New Zealand frigate was in the area and suggested that calm heads were needed. He expressed the hope that no outside power would seek to exploit the situation.¹¹⁸ The Prime Minister suggested in response that it would be tragic if New Zealand or Australia asserted some ‘neo-colonialistic posture’ but added that any legitimate cry for help could not be ignored.¹¹⁹ Lange’s concluding words – ‘that it has nothing to do with the dialectic of world political thrust; it is something that is exquisitely, and unfortunately, excruciatingly Fijian’ – gave a hint of the problems to come.¹²⁰

¹¹⁴ NZPD, Vol. 480, p.9010.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 9011.

¹¹⁷ *Evening Post*, 15 May 1987, p.1.

¹¹⁸ NZPD, Vol. 480, p. 9012.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

CHAPTER THREE: NEW ZEALAND'S REACTION TO THE COUP

While at a meeting with his three service heads on the morning of the 14 May, Crooks received a telephone call from Lange advising him that there had been a coup in Fiji. Crooks immediately instructed HMNZS *Wellington*, en route to Fiji on a planned visit, to proceed as planned but to stand off Suva and await further instructions. A Hercules C130 aircraft at RNZAF Base Ohakea was preparing to take army troops to Fiji and this was ordered to return to Auckland. Another Hercules aircraft at Rarotonga was directed to remain there.¹²¹

Ironically, at the routine intelligence briefing that morning in defence headquarters, the intelligence desk officer, Squadron Leader Clive Comrie, had indicated that any sort of coup activity was unlikely.¹²² This seemed to be an entirely off-the-cuff remark as, according to Gerald Hensley, the intelligence agencies had not considered that any sort of military coup was likely even though they did not expect the Bavadra Government to survive for its full term.¹²³

Major Alan Beaver, a New Zealand Army engineer officer, who was on secondment to the RFMF, heard of the coup as he was travelling to the north of Viti Levu with a Fijian engineer officer, Major Buivakaloloma. Buivakaloloma later became Minister for Works in Rabuka's administration. The two of them immediately returned to Queen Elizabeth Barracks where Beaver was asked by an engineer officer appointed by Rabuka to 'harden the Government's guest house where they were going to hold the politicians currently being detained at the barracks guardhouse'.¹²⁴ Beaver then realised that he should first contact the High Commission for directions. Before doing that he sent all the seconded New Zealand military staff to their homes. The New Zealand High Commissioner, Rod Gates, told Beaver that the Prime Minister had instructed Gates to bring him in to the High Commission to assist there. The following day Beaver arranged for all New Zealand

¹²¹ Defence Headquarters file note.

¹²² Interview, Peter Hotop, retired Director of Defence Intelligence, 3 September 2001.

¹²³ Hensley, 17 October 2001.

seconded military staff to be sent home to New Zealand which, after much frenetic activity including packing up and closing accounts and paying final bills, was achieved.¹²⁵ During his attachment to the New Zealand High Commission, Beaver established a high frequency radio station so that the High Commission could talk with the New Zealand and Australian naval ships in Suva harbour. In addition, Beaver obtained radios to enable the High Commission to talk to the scattered families of their staff. The families were becoming increasingly nervous over the growing number of riots close to the areas in which they lived.¹²⁶ Beaver also became another link between Rabuka and the High Commissioner because Rabuka seemed more comfortable talking with an old Army colleague than diplomats whom he mistrusted.¹²⁷ Beaver held two or three secret meetings with Rabuka, who at one of them, advised Beaver that he was handing over the reins of power to Mara. Beaver passed this information on to the High Commissioner who, according to Beaver, was sceptical, but it turned out to be true.¹²⁸ Another New Zealand Army officer, Major Paul Koorey, was in the Suva area on holiday with his family so he took the opportunity of meeting with Rabuka, whom he knew from army courses in New Zealand. Koorey was able to brief officials in Wellington on his return about what he had discussed with the coup leader.¹²⁹

Meanwhile in Wellington, following the chiefs of staff meeting, the operations room was put on to 24 hour manning status. The Minister of Defence's office was updated periodically with information. The Army's ready reaction force was not put on any heightened alert state and the Government had indicated that military action in Fiji was not contemplated. Nevertheless, RNZAF aircraft were put on two hours notice to move from Auckland. *Wellington* was still scheduled to arrive in Suva on 15 May 1987.¹³⁰ Over the rest of that week and the weekend events in Fiji were monitored and defence staff liaised with Beaver at the High Commission.

¹²⁴ Alan Beaver to author, dated 11 October 2001.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ Hensley, 17 October 2001.

¹²⁷ Beaver to author, 11 October 2001.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ The meeting and Koorey's subsequent call on the New Zealand High Commission, were reported back to New Zealand by the High Commission suggesting that Koorey be interviewed when he returned to New Zealand as he had not had time to explain the details of the meeting with Rabuka to the staff there. Cable message between Suva and Wellington dated 14 May 1987, MFAT 304/4/5.

Defence Headquarters decided that Fijian servicemen then in New Zealand under the mutual aid programme were not to report for duty, but were to remain in their barracks. *Wellington* eventually arrived in Suva on 16 May with a crew of 252 personnel. Commanded by Commander Alistair Clayton-Greene, the ship was directed to provide unarmed security assistance to the New Zealand High Commission in Suva. The head of the Fiji Navy, Commander David Lane, who had earlier warned that intervention by outside powers would 'simply achieve bloodshed', met the ship on its arrival.¹³¹ There was considerable discussion in Defence Headquarters over the likelihood of the requirement for an evacuation of New Zealanders in Fiji, but no firm guidance had been received from the Government, nor was any particular plan put in place. Brigadier Ian Thorpe, a New Zealander who knew the RFMF well, as a former commander of it, offered his services and this offer had been passed to the Minister of Defence.¹³² For his part Crooks' day was briefly interrupted, when he headed off to a meeting at Government House for a routine call on the Governor-General, Sir Paul Reeves.

In Wellington, the *Evening Post* and *Dominion* newspapers were not published until the day after the coup on Friday 15 May 1987, due to industrial action by staff.¹³³ The Prime Minister was reported in the *Post* as saying that the armed forces were in a state of readiness to assist in any evacuation; there appeared no threat to New Zealanders, he added.¹³⁴ Between 1000 and 2000 New Zealanders lived in Fiji and about 800 travellers were in the area: this was a higher number of visitors than normal because of the school holidays and promotional air fares.

Cabinet met on 18 May and spent most of the allotted time on the Fiji crisis.¹³⁵ It expressed the country's sense of outrage at the coup. It was reported that the New Zealand Government had been trying to negotiate to enable High Commissioner Rod Gates to see Bavadra, but that 'all efforts had been foiled by [Fijian] Army officers'.¹³⁶ A smuggled message had been received from Bavadra to which the New Zealand Government had

¹³⁰ Signal to defence units from HQ NZDF dated P 141127Z May 87.

¹³¹ *Evening Post*, 16 May 1987, p.52.

¹³² Signal dated 14 May 1987.

¹³³ *Evening Post*, 15 May 1987, p.1.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.1.

¹³⁵ Post-Cabinet press statement dated 18 May 1987 issued in compendium of Press Statements by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Wellington, on 19 June 1987, p.3.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.3.

responded. The New Zealand Government's policy was to strengthen the hand of the Fiji Governor-General and this was communicated both to Buckingham Palace and to the members of the South Pacific Forum.

The *Dominion* also reported that the Government would make available the Fijian officers in New Zealand at the time to assist the legitimate Commander of the RFMF, Nailatikau, then in Canberra, to use Fijian troops based in the Lebanon to stage a counter-coup. Lange had asserted at a press conference on 18 May that, 'on the basis of a loyalty test, ...[Nailatikau] has the potential to be in command of troops which far outweigh the number of troops on the ground in Fiji'¹³⁷. The Australian Department of Defence went through a planning exercise to mount a Falklands-style invasion to assist Nailatikau and Fijian soldiers who were out of the country to return. According to Mathew Gubb in his assessment of the Australian responses, this was 'Promoted particularly by New Zealand Prime Minister, David Lange...'¹³⁸

Lange's chief advisor in his own department, Henderson, would later say that Lange was unwise to have stated publicly¹³⁹ that the Government would consider helping Nailatikau (who was a son-in-law of Mara).¹⁴⁰ Lange also rejected any suggestions that New Zealand had done nothing to resolve the crisis so far, saying that it would have not been appropriate to 'wade in with [New Zealand] armed forces'.¹⁴¹

On the same day Lange declared that that Mara was 'the key figure behind the coup and in terms of the Fiji constitution Ratu Mara was guilty of treachery'.¹⁴² This statement outraged Mara who was a formal and sensitive man. Mara later claimed that it was this statement that helped him to decide to cooperate with the coup leaders. Lange's comment was indiscreet and unhelpful (when the full story could not have been known at that early stage) and he was to be continually reminded of it. For example, at question time on 9 June

¹³⁷ *Dominion*, 19 May 1987 and see also MFAT304/4/5, Wellington to All Posts, 23 May 1987 : Lange stated that New Zealand would consider logistic support to return the two Fijian battalions from the Middle East back to Fiji, the officers in New Zealand and the Commander of the RFMF in Australia at the time.

¹³⁸ Mathew Gubb, *The Australian Military Response to the Fiji Coup: An Assessment*, Working Paper No.11, Canberra: The Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, The Australian National University, 1988, p.2.

¹³⁹ John Henderson, 'New Zealand and Oceania', p.284.

¹⁴⁰ *Dominion*, 19 May 1987.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Evening Post*, 18 May 1987, p.1.

1987 the Leader of the Opposition, Jim Bolger, asked Lange whether he stood by ‘the accusation of treachery levelled at Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, or has he withdrawn and recanted?’¹⁴³ Lange stood by his statement that he had in fact never accused Mara of treachery but rather that he had stated that an analysis of what happened at the time suggested that Mara’s actions had at the time constituted treason. Lange was then accused by National MP George Gair of having ‘flexible principles’.¹⁴⁴

In Suva, on the day the coup occurred, the New Zealand High Commissioner received a call from the Government Building in Suva, where RFBF soldiers were clearing out all the offices and taking people into custody. The caller, probably a party member or one of Bavadra’s staff, asked the High Commissioner to assist in protecting Dr William Sutherland, Bavadra’s private secretary and a key adviser and policy maker in the Fiji Labour party. Sutherland played a key role in writing the party’s election manifesto. Fijian soldiers were trying to arrest him after the coup.¹⁴⁵ Sutherland was married to a New Zealander and he and his wife and two children lived in Suva. Gates then decided to send a flagged car to the building to attempt to take Sutherland to the safety of the High Commission Chancery where he would be under diplomatic protection. At this point no-one knew how safe Government members and their key staff were from the coup leaders and many feared the worst. Clearly Sutherland feared for his life at this early stage of the coup, when what would happen to supporters of the deposed Government was not at all clear.¹⁴⁶

The extraction task was successful and Sutherland was later to be joined by his family. They were safely housed at the Chancery in downtown Suva. In one sense though the Chancery was not all that safe as directly opposite were the Fiji police barracks occupied by armed soldiers of the RFBF. They were keeping the Chancery under observation. Gates said he later regretted taking the Sutherlands in not only because of the need to provide facilities and food but having to deal with his family and colleagues who came to see them.¹⁴⁷ His presence was clearly becoming an embarrassment to the High Commissioner and the New Zealand Government. Indeed by the day after the coup there

¹⁴³ *NZPD*, Vol. 481, p.9218.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Evening Post*, 18 May 1987, p.1.

¹⁴⁶ Interview, Rod Gates, 6 December 2001.

was speculation by reporters (albeit that the High Commission would not confirm this to the press) that Sutherland was being sheltered.¹⁴⁸ Sutherland's presence was to become of some significance later in the month when the hijacking incident occurred and when consideration was given to deploying New Zealand troops.¹⁴⁹

New Zealand's initial reactions to the coup were restrained, while clear in their denunciation of the military overthrow of the recently elected multi-racial Fiji Government. Lange's informal indication of support for the RFMF Commander to return to Fiji with expatriate Fijian troops assisted by New Zealand, and Lange's personal attack on Mara, caused reactions in Fiji. Other Pacific countries also objected and the statement seems to have been a factor in encouraging the Australian Government to at least consider military options. Despite quickly backing down from his offer to assist the return of troops, the off-the-cuff comments by Lange confirmed to indigenous Fijian, and many Pacific leaders, that New Zealand did not demonstrate an understanding of the local situation. Lange saw himself as an expert in the Pacific islands and also believed he had a good knowledge of the local situation in Fiji and he was probably motivated by the fact that he had many Indo-Fijian friends. He felt he understood the 'island way' and islanders.¹⁵⁰ This was reinforced by the fact that Bavadra's was a Fiji Labour Party coalition and that Lange knew people like Sutherland

In addition Rabuka and other key officials in Fiji would have known of the actions taken by New Zealand to protect Sutherland. Later, during the hijacking, concerns over Sutherland's safety may have coloured Lange's thinking when he was considering the use of New Zealand special forces to resolve the hijack.

This then provided the context within which New Zealand would face difficult decisions that would have significant political-military connotations.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ *Evening Post*, 16 May 1987, p.1.

¹⁴⁹ Secret MFAT files concerning Sutherland were not able to be accessed by the author, so the Government's position on Sutherland cannot be confirmed.

¹⁵⁰ Henderson, 30 October 2001.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE HIJACK AND PREPARATIONS TO MANAGE THE INCIDENT

At around 8.40 am on Tuesday 19 May 1987, Crooks received a call from Lange advising him that there had been a hijack of an Air New Zealand aircraft on the ground at Nadi *en route* to Tokyo. No details were available but Hensley activated New Zealand's counter-terrorist machinery. He ensured the Beehive operations room was set up and staffed.¹⁵¹ Senior officials and staff in Defence Headquarters were briefed, though there were no specific tasks or details for them to act on until more information had been gathered.

The incident began when the aircraft, flight TE24, had been taken over by Ahmjed Ali who worked at the airport for an aircraft-servicing company. He had walked on to the aircraft at 7.15 am, showing his pass. He entered the cockpit to check the refuelling documents as part of his usual duties, but then closed the door. Ali announced to the seated crew: 'I'm here to blow you up. My life is in danger. They are going to kill me'.¹⁵² In the cockpit were the Captain, retired RAF Vulcan pilot Graeme Gleeson, and his flight crew who were preparing to receive fuel for the next leg. Ali had dynamite, with a protruding fuse, strapped to his waist. It was believed he had taken the dynamite from a local gold mine. The cigarettes, which he chain-smoked throughout the incident, provided a means of lighting the fuse.¹⁵³ Ali also threw a parcel on to the knees of Gleeson. This contained another stick of dynamite, also connected to a short fuse.¹⁵⁴

At times during the ordeal Ali was quite calm and allowed the crew to fetch drinks from the plane's galley.¹⁵⁵ However, at one stage he became so nervous after speaking with his family, who apparently were berating him for what he had done, that Gleeson thought he might set off the dynamite. Ali's hand holding the cigarette was trembling very close to the

¹⁵¹ Hensley, 17 October 2001.

¹⁵² *Evening Post*, 20 May 1987, p.2.

¹⁵³ *Dominion*, 20 May 1987, p.1.

¹⁵⁴ *Evening Post*, 20 May 1987, p.2.

¹⁵⁵ *Evening Post*, 18 May 1987, p.1.

fuse.¹⁵⁶ The fact that Gleeson had worked with Ali in Air Pacific some time before helped Gleeson calm him down when he became agitated.¹⁵⁷

Ali demanded that the deposed Prime Minister had to be released from custody of the RFMF. He wanted the aircraft to take off to allow him to conduct further negotiations from the air. Among his various requests were demands to fly to Libya and later to fly to Australia. The crew managed to stall all Ali's requests. Negotiations were carried out by the aircraft's short-wave radio between the aircraft and Air New Zealand's security manager in Auckland, Ross Anderson, a former police officer trained in hijack negotiations.¹⁵⁸ The crew also had communications with the control tower at Nadi where a local Indian police officer was handling the incident. There were 105 passengers and twenty-one cabin crew on the aircraft. The majority of the passengers were Japanese tourists.¹⁵⁹ Luckily, an off duty aircraft pilot, Captain Brian Ruffell, was one of the passengers seated in the front of the aircraft. Realising there was a problem he made an announcement over the aircraft's public address system. He then started to move all passengers off the aircraft, while the hijacker was occupied in the cockpit. The hijacker saw them going off and ordered them back on; he seemed very agitated and unstable.¹⁶⁰ The passengers stayed off the aircraft and were escorted to the terminal and safety.

Back in New Zealand, Hensley worked from an office outside the Prime Minister's suite. From here he talked with the New Zealand based airline representatives handling the incident from Auckland. He let Air New Zealand make all the on-the-spot decisions with the aircraft captain as he tried to coordinate initiatives being considered in Wellington. Hensley's working environment was causing him many difficulties as he was without proper operational support. Having set up the operations room in the Beehive basement when he was told of the hijacking, Hensley then went upstairs to Lange's office. He made a recommendation to Lange that the Terrorist Emergency Group should be activated, as was the standard procedure for incidents of this type. This was the very event that this body had been established to coordinate and handle.

¹⁵⁶ *Evening Post*, 20 May 1987, p.1.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.2.

¹⁵⁸ *Dominion*, 20 May 1987, p.1.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

The Terrorist Emergency Group was an informal operational group comprising Hensley, the Chief of Defence Staff and the Commissioner of Police. The Prime Minister and other Ministers and officials attended when decisions were required at their level. Hensley was very concerned that Lange did not want to use the Terrorist Emergency Group nor the operations room set up for this team, but for some reason wanted to run the crisis from his own 9th floor office. This meant that the vital tasks of gathering and assessing important information fell solely on the Prime Minister in person, without the support structure that the emergency group was designed to provide. In his diary Crooks commented that he too was concerned that the Terrorist Emergency Group had not been used to manage the incident.¹⁶¹

As a result, Hensley set up an operations room of sorts in the Lange's ante-room, where the only two available telephones rang constantly. At one point the Minister of Police, Anne Hercus, came along and, seeing the plight of Hensley offered to help. She was given the job of answering one of the phones.¹⁶² A Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade teleprinter link direct with the High Commission in Suva was set up at the start of the incident. Senior High Commission staff in Suva, and foreign affairs officials in New Zealand, were communicating 'keyboard to keyboard' as the incident unfolded.¹⁶³

The hijack incident had ended at 1.00pm hours when Ahmjed Ali was over-powered.¹⁶⁴ In the aircraft Ali had been in touch with the Nadi air traffic control tower where his family had been called in to assist. He had become agitated as six hours passed with no resolution of his demands. While Ali was pre-occupied on the aircraft radio and sitting in one of the pilots' seats, the engineer, Graeme Walsh, hit him over the head with a whisky bottle, which he had in a bag outside the cockpit. All three crew members thereupon fell on Ali. He was subdued, handed over to the local police and then carried off on a stretcher to Lautoka hospital to have his head wound treated.¹⁶⁵ Following the hijacking incident the aircraft crew had a party at the Travelodge to celebrate the successful conclusion of the

¹⁶⁰ *Evening Post*, 20 May 1987, p.1.

¹⁶¹ Crooks, 14 March 2001.

¹⁶² Hensley, 17 October 2001.

¹⁶³ The cable traffic from 19 May, confirming these exchanges, is on MFAT 304/4/5.

¹⁶⁴ *Dominion*, 11 April 1992, p.2.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.1.

incident and to release the tension.¹⁶⁶ Ali would later become a Member of Parliament in Fiji.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ *Dominion*, 20 May 1987, p.1.

¹⁶⁷ Henderson, 30 October 2001.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESPONSES AND PROBLEMS

At around 10.20 am, just under two hours after the news of the hijacking had reached Wellington, the Minister of Defence rang Crooks to convey a direction from Lange that an RNZAF aircraft and a special air service team should be dispatched to Nadi as soon as possible.¹⁶⁸ When Crooks queried the task he was told that the team was to be ready to act to resolve the incident. He pointed out the likely problems to the Minister, suggesting that he needed much more precise instructions as to what the Government required. That clearer directions as to the nature of the task were not forthcoming was a matter of deep concern to him. O'Flynn indicated that there had been no contact with the Fiji authorities. Crooks agreed to continue with preparations with the utmost urgency in the meantime. The Chief of General Staff, John Mace, also expressed his concern and asked for instructions to deploy armed troops to Fiji in writing.¹⁶⁹

Having been asked to deploy an aircraft and a special air service team to deal with the incident, defence staff officers set in train plans for the deployment of the counter-terrorist team (known as the Black Team) of the New Zealand Special Air Service unit. The frigate *Wellington* was readied for a fast transit to Lautoka, which was much closer to Nadi, in case she was required to provide assistance there.¹⁷⁰ The counter-terrorist team, based at Papakura Camp near Auckland, could be configured and ready for deployment from New Zealand in four hours. Draft operating instructions were prepared which set out that the task was to be 'flexible', given that the planning staff had no idea as to the exact nature of the operation. Issues such as co-operative arrangements with the Fijian authorities, rules of engagement, legal issues and liability were of concern to the planning staff. The New Zealand Police were also preparing their specialist hostage team in case it was needed.

Crooks was trying to contact Hensley urgently, without success, and the staff at Defence Headquarters were unable to tie down any other officials that had knowledge of the

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ *Dominion*, 20 May 1987, p.1.

coup.¹⁷¹ Furthermore, no one in defence had been told of the meeting being convened in Lange's office.

Crooks made a number of attempts to contact Hensley, including ringing him at home. Lange's Principal Private Secretary, Ken Richardson, was finally contacted. He advised Crooks that Hensley had been despatched by Lange to join an Air New Zealand aircraft being sent to Nadi where he was to report on any danger to New Zealanders and to assess on the ground what measures that might need to be taken to resolve the hijacking.

Soon after he had set up himself in the Prime Minister's ante-room, Hensley updated Lange that the passengers were safely off the plane and that the hijacker was being managed successfully. Given this, Hensley assessed that it was unlikely that the aircraft would now take off, but that it could not be completely ruled out. With a full load of fuel control of the situation would be lost once the aircraft was airborne. At the end of that briefing Lange instructed Hensley to travel to Auckland quickly to join the Air New Zealand aircraft that the airline was sending up to Nadi. A police specialist negotiating team were also being sent up on the aircraft to manage the negotiations on the spot.

Hensley twice, and very firmly, expressed his reluctance to go to Nadi. Nevertheless, having vociferously represented his strongly held view that his place was in Wellington coordinating the operation, he was obliged to follow the Prime Minister's directions. 'To have argued again, or refused to go, would have been insubordinate'.¹⁷² As he turned to leave the room he overheard talk in the group of using the New Zealand Special Air Service anti-terrorist team. Hensley returned to the room concerned to know what was being discussed regarding their use. He successfully sought an assurance from the Prime Minister that he would not despatch any Special Air Service troops while the negotiations were underway.¹⁷³ Once he had Lange's assurance, Hensley quickly went home, packed a small bag, and flew to Auckland to join the Nadi-bound flight.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ Crooks, 14 March 2001.

¹⁷² Hensley, 17 October 2001.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

On finding out about Hensley's mission, Crooks was somewhat alarmed and annoyed, as it seemed a precipitate action (as it did to Hensley).¹⁷⁵ Defence officials had not been consulted before this action was taken.¹⁷⁶ Around 10.30 am he went to the Prime Minister's office in Parliament Buildings to try and find out what was going on and to intercept Hensley before he left for Auckland. Crooks and his Assistant Chief of Defence Staff (Operations), Brigadier Don McIver, sprinted the 300 metres from Defence Headquarters in Stout Street to the Beehive. Although they missed Hensley, they met Richardson in the Beehive basement. He agreed to take them to the 9th floor to Lange's office telling them that this was from where the incident was being managed.¹⁷⁷

Having arrived at the Prime Minister's office Crooks and McIver waited for around 15 minutes before being invited in. Eight to ten people were in Lange's office including Tim Francis, the Acting Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Henderson, and a number of other unidentified people. Crooks thought that some of them might even have been from the media. There were no introductions and, given the uncertainty as to the identity of those in the room, Crooks felt he had to be guarded as to what he should say. With much activity and a constant stream of people coming and going an air of confusion prevailed, according to Crooks.¹⁷⁸ Lange received telephone calls throughout the meeting, some about other Government business.¹⁷⁹

It was evident that the failure to set up the standing emergency group to coordinate the event was taking its toll in an office not in any way equipped to handle the volume of information flowing in. Lange had to process calls as well as find time to evaluate information and make decisions. Up until the time Crooks and McIver arrived, no professional military advice had been asked for, or provided.¹⁸⁰

Crooks outlined the measures that were being taken by the armed forces and expressed his concern over the lack of information, the hazards of deploying troops in a foreign country

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ *Dominion*, 11 April 1992, p.2.

¹⁷⁷ Richard Harman, 'Duel of the Davids', *New Zealand Defence Quarterly*, Wellington: Ministry of Defence, Spring, 1998, p.17.

¹⁷⁸ Harman, p.17.

¹⁷⁹ Crooks, 14 March 2001.

¹⁸⁰ Harman, p.17.

without their approval and his disappointment that he had not been involved in the previous discussions. Crooks then found out that the hijack attempt had involved only one hijacker and that all the passengers, except a few of the crew, were now clear of the aircraft and in no obvious danger. The 21 cabin crew had also disembarked, leaving only Captain Graeme Gleeson, First Officer McLay and the Engineer Officer Walsh on board with the hijacker.¹⁸¹

No-one seemed to know what the Fiji civil or military authorities were doing about the hijack situation, although Hensley was in contact with a Fijian police inspector who was located in the Nadi airport control tower. Crooks reiterated that he had concerns over sending a Hercules C130 aircraft and the Special Air Services team given that the hijacking incident was coming under control. He sought clarification as to what their role would be.

There was a general discussion on the Fiji situation and much talk about the High Commission in Suva. Crooks was not clear as to why this latter discussion took place, as there was no immediate danger to the High Commission. He pointed to the presence of HMNZS *Wellington* tied up in Suva, standing by for evacuation purposes if required. Her presence had earlier been authorised by Fijian authorities. *Wellington's* sailors were available to maintain security at the High Commission and any other duties required of them.

Throughout the meeting there were references by Lange to getting troops to Suva for some undefined purpose. This began to concern Crooks who questioned the wisdom of injecting armed forces into Fiji without the concurrence of at least the RFMF. Tim Francis, responded by saying: 'Why not?'¹⁸² This response from a senior diplomat surprised and annoyed Crooks who pointed out that at worst it would be seen as a hostile act by a foreign country. At the meeting there was no information as to the whereabouts of Fijian troops and whether they were at Nadi. Crooks had correctly assumed that at least some had been deployed to the airport following the coup. Consideration also had to been given to the reaction of Fijian civilians in what was a highly charged and tense political situation.

¹⁸¹ Press statement, 19 May 2001, p.15.

¹⁸² Crooks, 14 March 2001.

Indeed, there was an example of how potentially dangerous matters were at the airport when about 3000 Indo-Fijians gathered at the airport perimeter fence after hearing of the hijacking. At one stage they were pushed back by ten policemen with batons, but the crowd attacked them. Heavily armed Fijian soldiers then attacked the crowd with rifle butts and beat a number of people.¹⁸³

In fact Gates, at the New Zealand High Commission in Suva, had been instructed by those managing the hijack incident in Lange's office to seek clearance for the New Zealand Special Air Service team to land at Nadi and assist with the incident. Gates was directed to visit the Fiji Governor-General and seek formal clearance, which he did.¹⁸⁴ Ganilau did not want Gates to approach the RFMF, however, and it is not clear whether the Governor-General then contacted them himself. Gates had an excellent relationship with Ganilau and at that stage was still being given direct access to Government House. Gates did suggest to Lange that it would be important to let the local Nadi RFMF commander know of the plans to bring in the New Zealand troops in an RNZAF aircraft. Gates was permitted to do this. Since the coup on 14 May he had been under direct orders not to talk with anyone involved in the coup.¹⁸⁵ Ganilau agreed with the approach suggested by Gates, possibly because Lieutenant Colonel Ratu Tomasi Korovakaturanga, the local northern division RFMF army commander based at Labasa was his son. When Gates contacted Ratu Tomasi he promised to let him know when the RNZAF aircraft was overhead. He also informed Lieutenant Colonel Banavou, who was commanding the RFMF troops at the airport itself.¹⁸⁶ Those in the Beehive office knew this. There is a file note, most likely written by Lange, on one of the tele-printer messages, 'Tell Banavou'.¹⁸⁷

Beaver, at the High Commission in Suva, had also been rung personally by Rabuka, who offered Fijian troops to cordon and secure the airport to allow the Special Air Service team to conduct their operations. According to Beaver, Rabuka also gave formal clearance to him at that time for New Zealand Special Air Service troops to conduct operations in respect of the hijacking.¹⁸⁸ Crooks asserts that neither he nor his staff knew of this

¹⁸³ *Dominion*, 20 May 1987, p.1.

¹⁸⁴ Signal on MFAT 304/4/5, dated 19 May 1987.

¹⁸⁵ Gates, 6 December 2001.

¹⁸⁶ Gates, 6 December 2001.

¹⁸⁷ Handwritten note by David Lange on tele-printer exchange dated 19 May 1987, MFAT 405/4/5.

¹⁸⁸ Beaver email, 11 October 2001.

approach to Beaver by Rabuka. Nor it seems did Gates. This meeting does not appear to have been transmitted back through the foreign affairs or defence communication networks.¹⁸⁹

Any deliberate withholding of information from Crooks and his Defence Staff would have constituted a serious breach in the relationship between Lange and his senior military adviser in a potentially life-threatening, and constitutionally sensitive, situation.

Henderson, who was present in Lange's office almost all of the time, was quite sure that there never was any intention to withhold any information but suggested that the pace of events and the urgency of the situation may have inadvertently led to this.¹⁹⁰ The general air of confusion in the office, the arrangements to manage the incident and the volume of critical information cannot have helped matters. Nevertheless, this was a significant breakdown in communication, over a critical issue, between the officer responsible for the troop deployment and his political masters.

Unaware of the nature of clearances that had been obtained, and because only the flight crew was still aboard the aircraft, Crooks suggested that sending the anti-terrorist team would be highly inappropriate. Their *modus operandi*, dress and background would make them dangerously provocative in what was already an unstable situation. New Zealand, Australia, and Britain had condemned the coup and at that stage all of these countries were refusing to communicate officially with the military authorities in Suva. Crooks suggested that a different and more suitable troop composition was necessary. He suggested medical, air movements staff and communications people, with suitable protection, would be a more useful mix of capabilities to deal with the changed situation.¹⁹¹ It was finally agreed that the special forces counter-terrorist team would not need to be included in any deployment. However, Lange restated the need to despatch an RNZAF aircraft with troops, but for some wider and ill-defined purpose.¹⁹² 'There was talk about how to get troops from Nadi to Suva, and it became disturbingly clear that there was an intention to proceed with the mission, even though the original reason to assist in resolving the

¹⁸⁹ John Henderson, 'New Zealand and Oceania', p.284.

¹⁹⁰ Henderson, 30 October 2001.

¹⁹¹ Harman, p.19.

¹⁹² Crooks' diary notes.

hijacking incident was no longer the primary objective', Crooks recalled¹⁹³. He was also concerned to know what level of support Rabuka had internally in the Fiji military forces. As it transpired it was significant but this was not known in Wellington at that stage.

It was thought that at least the two most senior officers, Nailatikau and Sanday, would be opposed to Rabuka's actions. Indeed at the time of the coup, after he had been sent home by Rabuka, Sanday established himself in an observation position near the barracks so that he could secretly observe the comings and goings. Beaver reported that at some time in the early days Sanday appeared at his house looking very much the worse for wear, having spent time outside in the elements watching the army's activities. Beaver took him in, fed and showered him, and then put him to bed to recover.¹⁹⁴

Apparently getting nowhere with the discussion, Crooks asked Lange to put in writing the request to deploy troops and RNZAF aircraft to Fiji. Lange thereupon instructed Henderson to prepare a letter. Henderson's initial draft was quite detailed, but Lange, 'being the wary lawyer' wanted a much briefer and more general direction and re-drafted it on the spot.¹⁹⁵ The letter, which Lange signed and gave to Crooks, has since gained notoriety. It was a relatively vague instruction to the Chief of Defence Staff to send troops for some unspecified task:

I hereby instruct you to despatch immediately a RNZAF C130 aircraft with sufficient military personnel aboard to act as required to protect New Zealand's interests in Fiji.¹⁹⁶

Lange was clearly impatient at the delay. Deciding he would get nothing further Crooks returned to his office at Stout Street to work on meeting the revised requirement.

Crooks comments on the meeting in his diary notes as follows:

An extraordinary episode. The objective appeared to move from the initial purpose of being ready to assist in resolving a hijack incident to one of

¹⁹³ Harman, quoting Crooks, p.17.

¹⁹⁴ Beaver to author, 11 October 2001.

¹⁹⁵ Henderson, 30 October 2001.

getting troops on the ground in Fiji for a non-specific task. There appeared to be no appreciation of the significance of what was being undertaken or of the worst case consequences that could result. However, having stated the concerns, we were bound to proceed to carry out the direction given and to continue to act with all urgency. There was also the factor that, after launch it would take several hours of an aircraft to reach Nandi so there was plenty of time for recall in the light of reconsideration. Nevertheless, it was clear that the PM was impatient for action and was less pleased that troops were not already on the way. Apart from anything else, that indicated an obvious lack of understanding of operational realities.¹⁹⁷

Lange gave quite a different version of what transpired at this meeting in his 1990 book, *Nuclear Free - The New Zealand Way*. It seems he may have confused the events of 14 May with later events. He stated that:

I summoned military commanders to my office. I wanted a task force. I wanted aircraft put on standby. I wanted a ship to sail to Fiji to carry home the rescued. The chiefs of the army and air force complied with my requests. I asked the Chief of Naval Staff to ready for sail HMNZS *Monowai*, a survey craft. The admiral was not of a mind to send a ship and urged caution. I told him I was not asking him to commit his craft to combat... I asked the Chief of Defence Staff to implement certain evacuation plans. I was advised that he could not because the Chief of Naval Staff was opposed to the move. I put my instructions in writing. These were conveyed to the Chief of Naval Staff. The admiral refused the instruction. He insisted that my instruction be referred to the Defence Council...¹⁹⁸

After returning to his office in Defence Headquarters Crooks reflected on the confusing session with Lange. The Minister of Defence, who was present at the meeting, had been strangely silent. Frank O'Flynn, Crooks recalled, 'seemed delegated to the role of a go-between and spent most of the time saying nothing, sitting off to the side of the room'.¹⁹⁹ Given his growing concerns with the processes being followed, Crooks was determined to

¹⁹⁶ Prime Minister to Crooks, 19 May 1987.

¹⁹⁷ Crooks diary notes.

¹⁹⁸ Lange, *Nuclear Free*, p.163.

work through his Minister when making requests of the Government. He was not prepared to sideline O'Flynn, despite the fact that 'it was difficult to have a sensible conversation with him.'²⁰⁰ Following pressure from the other Chiefs of Staff, Crooks agreed to approach the Minister. He rang O'Flynn and expressed his concern about the mission and the potential for its misinterpretation by the Fiji authorities. O'Flynn advised that the deployment should still proceed and agreed to the appointment of the Commander Land Forces, Brigadier Mike Dudman, to command the deployment. Reluctantly, O'Flynn agreed to a request from Crooks that the Minister should convene an urgent meeting of the Defence Council.

Crooks and his three service chiefs felt that the only proper and constitutional way forward was to insist on a meeting of the Council. Chaired by the Minister of Defence, the Council was the only authority able to issue orders for the type of deployment now proposed. 'That was legal and constitutional nonsense, but it was the position'.²⁰¹ The Council met at around 1.30 pm in O'Flynn's office and the Secretary of Defence, the three Chiefs of Staff, the Assistant Chief of Defence Staff Operations and the Chief of Defence Staff were present. The Secretary of Defence, Denis McLean, attended the meeting as he was a permanent member of the Council, although he had not been formally involved in any of the discussions to date. However, he had kept up with events by talking with Crooks, who had an adjoining office.²⁰²

After 45 minutes discussion on the measures taken to date, Lange and Henderson arrived in the Minister's office to join the Council meeting. Lange was then briefed by each of the chiefs of staff, where they gave their views as to the procedures and time required for the deployment of armed troops, aircraft and ships. The Chief of Air Staff, Air Vice-Marshal Patrick Neville, was particularly forthright over what he regarded as inadequate directions and the way the whole matter had been handled.²⁰³ Neville explained to Lange that the military was a 'blunt instrument' and that once our troops had violated the sovereignty of

¹⁹⁹ Crooks, telephone interview, 11 September 2001.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ David Crooks, written comments on a draft by McGibbon for his article 'New Zealand Defence Policy from Vietnam to the Gulf', pp.111-142.

²⁰² McLean to author, 19 October 2001.

²⁰³ Crooks, 14 March 2001.

Fiji ‘we could never recover, so why would we want to do it?’²⁰⁴ According to Crooks, Lange listened but did not contribute to the discussion. At the end of the meeting he announced that the hijack was over and criticised the group over the delays and the response times.

Afterwards, as the group dispersed, Lange said to Neville that as a result of all this he had lost a ‘window of opportunity’. Neville took this to mean that he was referring to an option to use soldiers to extract Sutherland from the Chancery in Suva. Neville knew that Sutherland was hiding in the Chancery as he had gone down to the operations room each morning and had read the cables between the High Commission in Suva and Wellington as they had been copied to Defence Headquarters.²⁰⁵

Back in the Minister’s office in Wellington the Council continued to discuss the Fiji situation in general. It considered the need for any evacuation contingency including aircraft, should that become necessary.²⁰⁶ There was a discussion about the disposition of ships but Lange had difficulty accepting the realities of response times and the practicalities of readying a ship which was in dry dock.²⁰⁷ He was particularly critical of the difficulties involved in getting HMNZS *Monowai* ready to sail referring to it as the ‘banana boat’.²⁰⁸ Crooks advised that the *Wellington* was already tied up in Suva and giving all necessary support. The meeting did agree that HMNZS *Canterbury*, which was currently in Cairns, should proceed to Fiji. Advice was received during the meeting that an RNZAF aircraft was ready to depart for Fiji at 3pm that day. In the light of developments the order for its despatch was cancelled.

There was some reference during the meeting to the New Zealand High Commission being used as a refuge by Fijian political refugees. This raised further concerns over the role of military personnel in relation to diplomatic conventions. Crooks appears to have had no specific knowledge that Sutherland, or anyone else, was being harboured, although Defence Headquarters was receiving foreign affairs cables, which did indicate this was the

²⁰⁴ Interview, Pat Neville, 30 November 2001.

²⁰⁵ Neville, 30 November 2001.

²⁰⁶ Henderson, 30 October 2001.

²⁰⁷ Crooks, 14 March 2001.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

case.²⁰⁹ After the ousted Fijian Government members were released from their incarceration in the guest-house in Government House grounds, Bavadra and his family had made their way to the New Zealand High Commissioner's residence outside Suva and had spent several days there. At one point when a mob appeared to be heading towards the residence there was a plan to extract them by the *Wellington's* Wasp helicopter and later a chartered seaplane, but in the end Bavadra and his family returned to his village safely by road.²¹⁰

In his comment to Neville noted earlier, Lange may have been referring to William Sutherland and family still in the High Commission Chancery. Later, Hensley played a key role in extracting Sutherland by arranging for the unarmed sailors from the *Wellington* to stage a mock fight among themselves outside the Chancery to distract those in the police station. During the 'altercation' Sutherland was hidden away in a group of sailors returning to the *Wellington* after duty at the Chancery. Hensley eventually used his rental car to take him to Nadi, where he flew to Sydney on a scheduled QANTAS flight.²¹¹

Crooks left the Defence Council meeting in O'Flynn's office feeling very uncomfortable. He recorded in his diary that:

There was impression (*sic*) that PM and Minister felt that this insistence [to hold a Defence Council meeting] was unnecessary and a device to frustrate intentions. Nothing could be further from the truth. There were deep concerns, but preparations were progressed with utmost urgency. Defence advice and concerns had been forthrightly expressed, but no more than was duty under the Act.²¹² The PM obviously felt that Chiefs of Staff had deliberately delayed matters and that the calling of a Defence Council meeting was an obstructive measure. There seemed to be little concern by the PM for the potential consequences of the proposed actions nor any appreciation of the operational difficulties faced by Defence.²¹³

²⁰⁹ Neville, 30 November 2001.

²¹⁰ Beaver, 11 October 2001.

²¹¹ Hensley, 17 October 2001 and Gates, 6 December 2001.

²¹² Crooks, diary notes.

²¹³ *Ibid.*

Again Lange has a quite different recollection of what transpired at meeting. He recalled:

Its members [Defence Council] were summoned and I went to meet them. Here again the admiral balked. He told the council that the *Monowai* would take five days to sail to Fiji. In its former life before it joined the navy the *Monowai* was a banana boat, in which humble capacity it used to make the journey between Auckland and Suva, capital of Fiji, in three days. The admiral was sent off to get another figure and finally came back with an estimate of sixty-seven hours... One of our frigates made it to Fiji, thanks to the Australians, who refuelled it on the journey.²¹⁴

Henderson has publicly commented on the events surrounding the hijacking at Nadi. Referring to the extensive media discussion on the responses to the 1987 coup that took place in the press in 1992, he took issue with the claims that New Zealand contemplated military action against Fiji. He suggested that Ratu Maru agreed to serve in Rabuka's post-coup administration because of the threat posed to Fiji by Australia and New Zealand.²¹⁵ He stated that these accusations by Maru were given credence by the 'extraordinary assertions by the then Chief of Defence Staff, Air Marshal David Crooks, who claimed that the actions contemplated by Prime Minister Lange could have put New Zealand and Fiji forces into conflict'.²¹⁶ Henderson denied that New Zealand contemplated a military assault in Fiji and that Lange had never considered military intervention to restore the Government of Fiji. He did comment that the Prime Minister unwisely said he would consider a request to assist in the return of Fijian soldiers overseas on UN duties.²¹⁷

Henderson explained why Lange did contemplate military action which, he emphasised, would have been carried out with the agreement and cooperation of the Fijian Government. He went on to say that only in certain circumstances would they have decided to deploy troops in to Fiji. These would have been: for the protection of New Zealand citizens; for the security of the High Commission in Suva because there were some deposed members of the Fijian Government being sheltered there and finally to deal with the Air NZ hijacking incident. He asserted that the Fiji Governor-General had given

²¹⁴ Lange, *Nuclear Free*, p.163.

²¹⁵ Henderson, p.284.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.284.

approval for the New Zealand naval ships to enter Suva and that 'clearance was obtained to fly in a New Zealand special forces team to end the hijacking'.²¹⁸

In fact none of the chiefs of staff had suggested that anyone had contemplated military action to restore the Fiji Government. Their concerns were only to have clear directions as to the task they were to do and assurances as to the appropriate political clearances for the deployment of New Zealand soldiers in to a foreign country. They were not satisfied with what seemed to them to be a cavalier approach to the deployment of armed troops into a foreign country for whatever purpose. Their unease was also heightened by Lange's statement the day before the hijacking that he would consider assisting Fijian troops outside Fiji to return to deal with the coup perpetrators. Lives could be at stake in a volatile environment. Further, there were naval personnel from *Wellington* already on the ground in Suva successfully conducting security operations at the New Zealand High Commission.

Crooks seemed unaware that any deposed Fiji Government members, or any officials, were being sheltered in the High Commission, nor that formal clearances for the deployment of the New Zealand Special Air Service counter-terrorist team had been obtained from any reliable Fiji authorities. Indeed these had been the very assurances they were seeking at the time, and which were not forthcoming from the Prime Minister, or his officials, on the day of the hijacking.²¹⁹

The immediate crisis was averted when the hijacker was overpowered, but the matter was not to fade away for many years. A fierce debate erupted in the press in 1992 as a result of Lange's book *Nuclear Free-The New Zealand Way* and the series run in the *Dominion* newspaper. There were claims and counter-claims. For example, a Navy spokesman, Lieutenant Lawrence Tye, said that Mr Lange was talking fiction according to the extracts published and that he had confused events.²²⁰

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.284.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.285.

²¹⁹ Crooks, 11 September 2001.

²²⁰ *Evening Post*, 12 November 1990.

The conflicting reports over what transpired, and the way the incident was handled at the highest levels of Government, caused a major outcry in the press and parliament. In 1992 the Prime Minister of the newly formed 1990 National Government, Jim Bolger, ordered a formal inquiry into the affair. He later would not release the report as according to him it was 'not in New Zealand's interests' to do so.²²¹

The next chapter will look at the fallout from the events of 19 May 1987 and the major press interest in 1992. It will also analyse the events of that day in Wellington to try and make some sense of what happened and why.

²²¹ *New Zealand Herald*, 27 July 1992.

CHAPTER SIX: UNDERSTANDING THE LEGACY

Once the hijack incident was resolved the New Zealand Government faced other pressures, including the on-going problems in Fiji and the second coup in September that same year. Convention dictated that defence officials could not make public their concerns and Lange was experiencing serious internal pressure from a Cabinet divided over the economic and political direction of the country. There were also ongoing defence and foreign policy issues to resolve following the independent stance taken by the Government in foreign affairs and defence. An election was due later in 1987. In 1989, having been re-elected for another term, Lange's position as Prime Minister was under serious threat. By that time the Labour caucus was quite divided and as Lange says: 'Early in 1989 the Labour Government was hardly recognisable as the force that carried the country in the 1987 election.'²²² By then his Cabinet had little interest in foreign policy unless there was some domestic controversy about it.²²³

The hijack responses were made public by the release of Lange's book on 13 November 1990. The launch of the book was preceded by extracts published in the *Sunday Star* the day before the book was publicly available. After the National Government came to power in November 1990, some official papers of the incident were released following a press request under the freedom of information provisions. The release included a copy of the letter to Crooks from Lange, directing the despatch of a force to deal with the problems in Fiji. Press interest was further sparked by information from retired defence officials who were clearly annoyed by the interpretation of events of the hijack incident in Lange's book. A number of articles in the national press dealt with events and questioned the processes followed that day.

It was not until the *Dominion* ran the substantial three part feature article by Steve Evans from 19 May 1992 (the anniversary of the date of the incident) entitled, 'Lange and the Fiji Crisis' that matters heated up. During the period of the articles there were calls for a Royal Commission of Enquiry; in the end the National Government settled for an internal review,

²²² Lange, *Nuclear Free*, p.198.

²²³ *Ibid.*, p.199.

which was coordinated by the Head of the Prime Ministers' Department, Simon Murdoch. The draft report was prepared by Hensley.²²⁴ Very little new seems to have been included in the report, according to Hensley, although its detailed contents cannot be confirmed as the report was not released by Bolger. The report has since been mislaid.²²⁵ Later, in 1998, the official Ministry of Defence's public relations magazine, *New Zealand Defence Quarterly*, published an article called the 'Duel of the Davids' by political journalist Richard Harman.²²⁶ This article repeated the approach taken in the newspaper series. Henderson asked the Ministry of Defence for an opportunity to respond with an article countering the claims made but his request was not agreed to.²²⁷ Such were the strong feelings over the events of 19 May 1987, at least in some minds, that it was not a dead issue even by 1998.

The strength of feeling over an incident, which was only of six hours duration, can be seen from the level of press interest that erupted in the *Dominion* series five years after the hijacking. Except for the article in the *Defence Quarterly*, in international affairs publications and in McGibbon's reference book on New Zealand military history, the issue has now faded away - at least publicly. Distilled down the differences relate to issues of interpretation over what exactly took place in Lange's office, the intention of the parties and what each of them - effectively Lange and Crooks - were trying to achieve.

What is clear enough is that Lange's recollections of the sequence of events in his book are not supported by a number of people that were present at the various meetings.²²⁸ He seemed to confuse activities at a number of meetings including the second coup in Fiji in September 1987 and responses to the Vanuatu incident a year later in May 1998. Indeed Crooks suggested that this is what might have happened.²²⁹ Some of Lange's press statements are clearly inaccurate, at least as reported in the newspapers. However, there is little merit in attempting a blow-by-blow analysis of who said what, or to apportion blame. What is important to try and make sense of what was a failure of the Prime Minister and

²²⁴ Hensley, 17 October 2001.

²²⁵ An unsuccessful attempt was made to obtain a copy of the report from the Prime Minister's office which attempted to locate it for the author.

²²⁶ Harman, p.17-19.

²²⁷ Henderson, 30 October 2001.

²²⁸ These include Crooks, Neville and McLean. In Crook's case hand-written diary notes made at the time support this assessment.

²²⁹ *Dominion*, editorial, 27 May 1992.

his defence chief to work together. It is tempting to see this whole affair as one of personalities clashing in what was a matter of minor consequence in the grand scheme of political activity in New Zealand at that time.

Lange was well known to be difficult to work with in a one-to-one relationship and he was prone to the throw-away line, which led him in to trouble a number of times.²³⁰ His distrust of the bureaucracy also encouraged him to work in unconventional ways. Henderson commented, in an insider's view of the Lange administration, that a common feature of the Lange period was an 'absence of the orderly, rational decision making process which is sometimes portrayed in political science textbooks.'²³¹ However, to conclude that Lange's personality, or that his operating style was the sole cause, would be trite and ignores a number of important other factors and influences. It also risks over-simplification of the causes.

The problems can best be understood by considering them under four broad headings: the political background to the incident, procedural and organisational matters, command and constitutional issues and finally, personalities.

The incident came at a time when relationships between the Government and the military were very strained. As has been discussed in some detail already, there were deep-seated differences between them over the Labour Government's foreign affairs and defence policy. There is no suggestion that defence officials acted in any improper way over dealings with their political masters. They were constitutionally permitted to express strongly their dissenting views to ministers, and clearly did so when the opportunity arose. According to Henderson, Lange took delight in ignoring officials' advice over possible implications of the nuclear-free policy, much of which was proved to be alarmist, according to Henderson.²³² The Government and Lange in particular were also convinced that in both the Foreign Affairs and Defence ministries there was a deliberate campaign to undermine and discredit the Government's nuclear-free policy. Lange makes it abundantly clear in his book that he believed there was active resistance to his Government's policies.

²³⁰ Richard Mulgan, 'The Changing Electoral Mandate', Martin Holland and Jonathan Boston, *Fourth Labour Government*, p.16.

²³¹ Henderson, 'Foreign Policy Decision Making', p.211.

²³² *Ibid.*, p.221.

Commenting on what he called the myth of the permanent civil service corps being neutral, he believed that while they did not favour one Government over another, this did not take into account the corporate culture that developed with its goals and values. These, Lange claimed were, by their nature, not neutral.²³³ It is hard to argue this is not a fair observation in regard to the defence establishment which, as an organisation, had been committed to maintaining an active military alliance with the US. Lange believed that his Minister of Defence faced ‘a kind of bureaucratic guerrilla warfare. Papers were lost, reports misplaced and items of expenditure unaccountably overlooked.’²³⁴ Needless to say, those in Defence at the time claim that this was nonsense. The point is that Lange and his Ministers believed it to be true. It was bound to affect the way that he and his staff related to Defence officials. When the crisis arose with the hijacking incident, Lange’s first instincts were to rely on a small group of trusted advisers, which did not include his Chief of Defence Staff. Sensibly, Crooks should have been involved directly and at the all important early stage of formulating an appropriate response.

Procedurally the incident was not well handled. Running a complex operation from an individual’s office was not efficient. It failed to recognise the complex inter-relationship of advice required and the need for simple and clear decision-making processes to be followed. Nor did it acknowledge the need to process, assess the value of, and interpret information as it flowed in from various sources. In these situations the need to sift good intelligence from bad is vital. Further, agencies could not be effectively coordinated in this environment. None of these requirements could be managed effectively, or safely, by a busy Prime Minister in his private office without the necessary systems and professional support in place. The Terrorist Emergency Group was prepared and the Beehive crisis room was set up to provide just this sort of support, but Lange, inexplicably, decided not to use either of them. This was a source of frustration to Hensley and Defence officials who understood the value of these organisations in a crisis. There has been considerable experience and expertise built up in handling emergencies by the officials and staff of the Terrorist Emergency Group. That Lange chose not to use the established systems and procedures was something they found hard to accept. As a result they could not do their job properly and it made the likelihood of failure of any mission much more likely. Lange

²³³ Lange, *Nuclear Free*, p.12.

²³⁴ Henderson, ‘Foreign Policy Decision Making’, p.221.

did recognise this in later crises, such as the second coup and the Vanuatu incident a year later. Here the operations were conducted using an operations room which was properly set up and staffed. According to Mace, the way the organisation set up to deal with the Vanuatu unrest 'was done a hell of a lot better'.²³⁵

As the coordinator of the Domestic and External Security Committee, Hensley was the expert in these matters so to ignore his advice over the use of the Terrorist Emergency Group and the Beehive operations centre was not sound. To then dispatch Hensley to Fiji, against his advice and when his place was clearly in Wellington coordinating responses, was the wrong decision to make given Hensley's responsibilities. One could surmise that Lange preferred not to have him around while he masterminded the responses alone. Henderson has suggested that there was some tension between Lange and Hensley and this may have been an underlying reason why Lange wanted Hensley out of the immediate area of Wellington.²³⁶

One other possible explanation is Lange's belief in his own knowledge of the South Pacific, including Fiji. This, tied to his mistrust of officials, may have led him to believe that he could resolve this incident on his own. 'David Lange had a strong interest in international affairs, and through extensive reading and travel abroad had built up considerable expertise'; he found that his 'knowledge of particular countries – such as Fiji - exceeded Foreign Affairs officials.'²³⁷ What Lange seemed not to take into account was his lack of experience in handling a crisis of this complexity and the political and international ramifications.

The potential danger of using police and the armed forces in a foreign country and the constitutional issues also seemed to have been treated lightly by Lange, although it is clear that quite reliable clearances had been obtained from the authorities in Fiji, at least the best available in the circumstances. Importantly, the RFMF were aware of the plan to deploy New Zealand special forces to assist dealing with the hijacking. Further, it seems that they were even prepared to assist the deployment. Why Crooks was not told this is unclear. The best explanation seems to lie in the disorganisation that prevailed as a result of Lange

²³⁵ *Evening Post*, 21 May 1992.

²³⁶ Henderson, 30 October 2001.

running the incident from an office not suitable for this type of activity. Henderson is adamant that there was no deliberate attempt to keep information from Crooks at any time.²³⁸ Also, it is hard to see what benefit or advantage there would be in keeping this information from defence officials.

While in an emergency, such as a hijacking, formalities could be dispensed with or shortened, there were procedures to follow. Had Crooks and his staff been involved directly, collegially, and early in the planning process, these issues could feasibly have been worked through. Instead, the chiefs of staff felt that they had to insist on the adherence to formal processes by calling a meeting of the Defence Council. The chiefs were sufficiently disturbed by the decisions, and the process leading to them, that they felt obliged to ensure that at least the proper approval mechanism was followed.

They were worried not only about the exact nature of the task but also were deeply concerned about the legality of the plans being developed by Lange. Once committed to a deployment it would have been very difficult to extract the deployed elements and to recover politically from the actions that had been taken. Other South Pacific nations had already expressed their views that New Zealand (and Australia) were interfering in the internal affairs of a sovereign state – and they felt that New Zealand had no appreciation of the South Pacific cultural and political environment. The chiefs of staff were acutely aware of the potential international ramifications of any military action that might be taken.

Planning and preparations to deploy proceeded apace in Defence Headquarters. There was no stalling at this level. The Special Air Service counter-terrorism team was being urgently prepared to deploy and the RNZAF Hercules aircraft was ready to take off within four hours. Under the circumstances, having completed the necessary planning and preparation for a long-distance deployment into a potentially hostile situation, this was a very acceptable response time. The standard call-out time for the Army's counter-terrorist unit was four hours, and this was achieved.²³⁹

²³⁷ Henderson, 'Foreign Policy Decision Making', p.217.

²³⁸ Henderson, 30 October 2001.

²³⁹ Harman, p.18.

Lange's lack of appreciation of how long it took to send a unit into operations without prior warning was evident. In a letter to the *Sunday Star*, Crooks said that Lange's 'sweeping disparagement of defence capabilities only reflects his ignorance of operational realities'.²⁴⁰ Ministers could not have reasonably been expected to have a detailed knowledge of the technical and professional implications in setting in train a deployment nor what was meant by stand-by times. Nor could they be expected to know how long it would take to prepare a ship, such as the *Monowai* in dry dock, for an operation. Lange's understanding of what was involved in deploying troops seems particularly naïve. However, this should have been able to be overcome by a Prime Minister asking for, and relying on, advice from professional advisers. The advice was given, but largely ignored. The dysfunctional relationship got in the way of sound decision-making, which brings us to the final factor to consider – the impact of personalities.

Personalities clearly loomed large in the way the crisis was handled. Bruce Jesson describes Lange as a man who had difficulty at interpersonal communications. 'A gregarious and likable man...detached and aloof...and finds it difficult to make sustained human contact', he concluded.²⁴¹ Jesson went on to say how he flitted from topic to topic in conversation, as he did in company where he flitted from person to person. He was the same in meetings. He noted that Lange rarely stayed for a full meeting of Cabinet.²⁴² This behaviour is consistent with what Crooks found when he joined Lange in his office to deal with the hijacking. Henderson suggested that what was attractive to Lange was not power, but rather 'the stage it provided on which he could perform.'²⁴³

If he was at not at ease with his political colleagues then he must have been doubly so with somewhat conservative and formal public servants and the chiefs of staff. Lange operated in a very informal way with his staff and did not stand on ceremony. Crooks is by nature a formal man, but with a quiet and forth-right manner that Lange might not have felt comfortable with. Like most of his senior military colleagues Crooks felt strongly that proper form, correct procedure – and good manners – were part of the way business was

²⁴⁰ *New Zealand Herald*, 11 April 1992.

²⁴¹ Bruce Jesson, *Fragments of Labour: The Story Behind the Labour Government*, Auckland: Penguin, 1989, p.53.

²⁴² *Ibid.*

²⁴³ Henderson, 'Foreign Policy Decision Making', p.217.

conducted. Excessive informality in the course of duty would never have been considered a suitable way to behave in dealings with the Prime Minister.

The extent to which the personalities of both Lange and Crooks played their part should not be under-stated. This should be regarded as an important, even critical factor, in the problems that arose. The impact of personalities could have been lessened if a more structured and consultative decision-making processes had been adhered to. A critical factor here was the decision of Lange not to use the Beehive operations room and not to convene the Terrorist Emergency Group.

Disasters often occur as a result of breakdowns in equipment, procedures and decision-making which individually may not be serious or critical but combined can prove serious. Aircraft accidents have provided many examples of separate but inter-related issues combining to cause catastrophic failures. While the problems that attended the responses to the hijacking did not develop into a disaster, there was clearly the potential for this to happen if the matter had not been quickly resolved.

The tensions and issues that arose on 19 May 1987 were a combination of stresses that can be traced back to the nuclear-free issue, poor Government and defence relationships, dysfunctional interpersonal relationships at a senior level and the failure to implement sound and agreed procedures. Finally, the personalities of the key players need to be added in to the mix. Fortunately nobody was hurt. There were no serious lasting effects from the events.

CONCLUSION

The breakdown in civil-military relations that occurred over the hijacking on 19 May 1987 was, in terms of the incident itself, a short-lived affair. Nobody was injured, no overseas deployment eventuated; Defence Headquarters and the Prime Minister's office returned to their routine state the next day. The tensions that were evident over that short period of time may never have reached the level of debate in the media that occurred in 1992, but for the publication of Lange's book. Understandably, it raised the ire of a number of people, as it seemed to them a misrepresentation of the facts. Nevertheless, even if the crisis had remained out of the public gaze, it should not just be regarded as a trivial spat between two personalities.

The reason why it should not be regarded so lightly is that it represented one of the most serious breakdowns between a New Zealand Government and its military chiefs of staff. The breakdown could have had far-reaching implications. If the circumstances had been different then the result of the poor communications, poor procedures, incorrect decision-making processes and disregard for proper constitutional processes, might have led to major problems. Lives could have been put at risk. The use of armed forces in a situation where their rules of engagement and tasks are not clear is a recipe for tragedy.

Trust had broken down between two critical parties on 19 May, jeopardising not only the incident that day but the handling of any future emergencies. As it turned out there was another coup the following September. A year later an incident in Vanuatu required New Zealand to respond. Problems in Bougainville also erupted in 1990. Further, at any stage there could have been the need for civil-military cooperation within New Zealand – for example a local hijacking, an earthquake or another form of civil emergency, needing military support. Incidents like this are not generally preceded by warnings, so systems to deal with them have to be clear and unambiguous. All the parties should have understood and adhered to the standing operating procedures that had been established. Luckily, most of the lessons of that day were heeded, as is evident from the improvements noted by the next Chief of Defence Staff when he had to deal with the Vanuatu unrest.

Soon after the incident the Government commenced the process of restructuring the defence forces beginning with an external review by Derek Quigley. The events of 19 May precipitated one of the more significant changes – the abolition of the Defence Council. Government control of the armed forces was passed to the Minister of Defence working direct to the Chief of Defence Staff. The right of direct access to the Government by the individual service chiefs was also changed and full command of the three services was vested in the renamed Chief of Defence Force. The events of the coup also caused a number of Government policies to be reviewed, including the need for better coordination of responses, a focus by the armed forces on the South Pacific as their prime area of interest, and the need for a logistic ship, transport aircraft and helicopters. Better coordination between Australia and New Zealand to deal with regional instability was also a legacy of the coups.²⁴⁴

The period of the fourth Labour Government was one of great upheaval for New Zealand, both in the economic direction it was taking the country and in matters of foreign affairs and defence. The coups in Fiji occurred during this period of internal disruption. New Zealand response to the hijacking has to be considered in the context of the wider circumstances that all, in their own way, impacted on the events of those few hours.

The constitutional framework in which the defence forces operated underpinned their relationship with the Government of the day, and with the public. Through training and tradition servicemen had a clear sense of constitutional propriety, even if this was not sometimes fully or correctly understood in respect of the role and powers of the Governor-General. Some held to the view that they had a higher loyalty to their Commander-in-Chief. This may even have extended to questioning the Government should it make unwise or dangerous decisions. It is hard to know whether this view, if it was in fact widely held, affected the way the chiefs of staff acted in respect of the problems that arose over the hijacking incident. Service chiefs regularly called on and briefed the Governor-General which, in itself, infers some special relationship – one that constitutionally does not exist.

An example of this attitude arose when the Defence Act 1971 was being reviewed and the defence legal adviser, a senior uniformed legal officer, successfully resisted removing the

²⁴⁴ McGibbon, 'New Zealand Defence Policy', p.129.

section in the Act where the Commander-in-Chief is mentioned. This was against the advice of the constitutional expert advising the Government. Some Governors-General may have unwittingly encouraged this view. For example, Sir Denis Blundell occasionally wore an Army uniform with his Governor-General insignia when he had never been a regular soldier. It would be wrong, however, to put too much store on the impact that this relationship might have had on the chiefs of staff on 19 May 1987. It was a possible underlying factor in the approach taken by the chiefs when dealing with a Prime Minister whom they regarded as putting the armed forces at risk.

Nevertheless, on the day in question there was no doubt in the minds of all of the chiefs of staff that it was the Defence Council that had the relevant powers, and it was to this body that they looked for clear directions and their orders. They were also constitutionally correct in not immediately accepting Lange's direction to deploy armed troops, in his position of Prime Minister or as Minister of Foreign Affairs. This authority rested with the Council, acting on the direction of Cabinet.

The unknown factor that had to be considered the day of the hijacking was the situation in Fiji. There was always potential danger from a reaction by the RFMF. While they seem to have been accepting of a New Zealand role in dealing with the hijacking they may have responded quite differently to a wider and more general role, even one of providing additional protection for the High Commission. Certainly, any role in covertly extracting a Fiji Government official using armed New Zealand soldiers, if that was being considered, could have easily resulted in a violent reaction by the Fijians.

The thesis concludes that the causes were much more complex and extended well beyond the personalities of the two senior players than has been suggested in much of the material published to date. The problems between the Prime Minister and his Chief of Defence Staff were a result of a legacy of the political ethos of Lange and his Ministers, the government's nuclear-free policy, ignoring established procedures, constitutional matters - as well as a clash of personalities. This is not to suggest that personalities were not a key factor in the handling of the incident - clearly they were an important factor. Lange's style of working and his belief in his special knowledge of the Pacific and Fiji were also

important elements in the mix of issues that affected the way the crisis was handled. There was mutual distrust between defence staff and the Prime Minister's office.

Lange's lack of experience in handling the crisis such as unfolded on 19 May could have been ameliorated by surrounding himself with expertise that was readily available both within the Defence Force and from other emergency agencies. In particular Hensley should have been regarded as the key adviser to manage the emergency. To largely ignore or to even discount the advice of Hensley, the Chief of Defence Staff and the individual service chiefs, and then to remove Hensley from the centre of the decision-making process, was inexplicable behaviour. In the same way, not to use the operations room designed to handle such an event, was unusual.

The Chief of Defence Staff was not aware of the clearances obtained from the RFMF and the Governor-General of Fiji's office, when clearly successful efforts had been made by the High Commissioner to obtain the necessary permissions. The confusion that reigned in the Prime Minister's office which was clearly unsuitable to handle such a crisis, most likely led to this critical failure in procedures. This failure could have been avoided had decisions being taken in a more professional and structured environment, such as the Beehive operations room would have provided.

All these factors contributed to the way that the Government and the armed services approached the hijacking incident. Fortuitously, a tragedy was averted. It is now up to all of the parties to consider where their actions or omissions may have contributed to the failings that day. Individuals may have moved on, but the institutions remain - institutions that, in the future, will be tested again.

**FACSIMILE COPY OF DEFENCE FILE NOTE OF
SEQUENCE OF EVENTS: OPERATION FIJI²⁴⁵**

1987

14 May	1000	Coup started
	1045	CDS advised of military coup in Fiji Defence OPS centre activated RNZAF C130 bound for Fiji RTNZ HMNZS Wellington 400NM south of Fiji
	PM	RNZAF C130 bound for USA held at Rarotonga All aircraft placed on higher alert state Wellington to close Suva Number of NZ service personnel in Fiji determined
15 May		Wellington told to remain outside territorial waters and out of sight of land Draft contingency evacuation plans drawn up Revised alert states advised Daily defence resources and status reports initiated
16 May		Wellington arrived in Suva
17 May		<u>Sunday</u> Fiji papers cease publishing Monowai repairs ordered to be expedited
18 May		Southland sailed Mackay for Cairns Wellington commenced security of NZHICOM, 10 Pers
19 May	0900	Advised of hijack of ANZ 747 at Nadi PM ordered NZSAS to deploy
	1245	PM changed the plan
	1305	Hijacker in custody -----whisky bottle ----- Deployment to Fiji turned off Seconded to NZHICOM Suva as security officer
20 May		HMAS Sydney ordered to sail Suva Amended alert States

²⁴⁵ Copied as written in file note on Operation Fiji Defence Headquarters file.

- 21 May** Canterbury sailed Cairns for Fiji
Southland sailed Cairns for Darwin
10 Wellington sailors detained briefly
Wellington invited to leave Suva --- accused of P3k overflight
- 22 May** Monowai sailed Auckland for Fiji
Diplomatic clearance for HMAS Salwart to enter Suva
- 23 May** Wellington ordered out of Suva
Stalwart arrived Suva
Monowai returned Auckland for repairs and sailed again
- 24 May** Sunday
- 25 May** Alert States amended:
Canterbury refuelled from success
- 26 May** Approval for Wellington, Canterbury to leave Fiji and for FPDA and SWIFT venture ex to go ahead
- 27 May** Wellington and Canterbury depart Fiji area
Monowai arrived in Fiji area
- 28 May** Wellington arrived Apia
MOD. ordered cessation of MAP----OP Homecall mounted
- 29 May** Defence alert States amended as follows
1 x serviceable C130 to be available in NZ
All other assets to normal notice
- 30 May** Detained by RFMF --- Accused of being SAS
- 31 May** NZ Pers ex Fiji arrived Auckland
- 1 June** Monowai told to leave Fijian waters. Sailed at 012000 local with orders to remain outside Fijian waters.
- 3 June** Remaining Australian ships departed Fijian waters for passage back to Australia.

NEW ZEALAND AND FIJI MILITARY FORCES IN 1987

FIJI²⁴⁶

Total Regular Manpower: 2,600
Reserves: some 5,000

Army²⁴⁷

One regular infantry battalion²⁴⁸
One conservation corps battalion
One reserve (Territorial) battalion
One engineer squadron
One artillery troop
Major weapons: four 25pdr guns and ten to twelve 81mm mortars

Navy

170 men
Three modified US Navy 370 ton coastal minesweepers
A 102 foot patrol craft on order.

NEW ZEALAND²⁴⁹

Total Regular Manpower: 12615
Reserves: 6347²⁵⁰

Regular Army

Two infantry battalions
1 artillery battery
One light armoured squadron
1 SAS Squadron
Logistics and support units

Reserve (territorial forces) Army

Six infantry battalion (under strength)
Four field and one medium artillery batteries
One reconnaissance, one armoured personnel carrier and one anti tank squadron

²⁴⁶ The International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 1978 – 1988*, London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1987, p.156 and *Pacific Defence Reporter*, December 1986/January 1987, Annual Reference Edition, p.148.

²⁴⁷ Additional information from: John Keegan, *World Affairs*, (2nd Edition), Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1973, p.181.

²⁴⁸ The Regular and Territorial battalions were abroad in Lebanon with UNIGFIL and MFO at the time of the coup.

²⁴⁹ Sources as for Fiji forces.

²⁵⁰ The number of reserves needs to be treated with suspicion. Often 'book' numbers are quoted for territorial soldiers, but effective soldier number ie. fewer turn up and train. The effective figure could be at least half. Naval (489) and air reserves (220) are smaller but generally effective.

Main Army Combat Equipment:

Twenty six *Scorpion* light tanks
72 M113A armoured personnel carriers
Thirty nine 105 mm howitzer field guns
Ten 5.5in medium guns
Seventy four 81 mm mortars
Eighteen *Carl Gustav* 106 mm anti tank weapons

Navy

Four *Leander* frigates with 1 *Wasp* helicopter. Three have 1 x 4 *Seacat* missiles; one has 2 x 4 *Seacat*, and 1 *Ikara* ASW missiles.
Four large *Lake* patrol craft and four (reserve) inshore *Kiwi* class patrol boats
The survey vessels
One oceanographic vessel
7 *Westland Wasp* helicopters
One tanker on order.

Air Force

Forty three combat aircraft
Fighter Ground Attack: Two squadrons with 17 x A4K and 5 TA-4K *Skyhawk*
Maritime: One squadron with 6 P3-K *Orion*
Counter Insurgency: One squadron (also for training) 15 x BAC-167 *Strikemaster*
Transport:
Three squadrons:
Aircraft: 5 x C130 Hercules
7 x HS-748 *Andover* and 2 x *Boeing 727-100C*
Helicopters: 6 X *Sioux Bell 47G*
12 Bell UH-1D/H *Iroquois*
Other support and training aircraft are not shown.

Army and RNZAF Forces Abroad: (Included in totals above)

One infantry battalion and logistic support and 3 UH-1 helicopters in Singapore
One UH-1D helicopter and 35 personnel in the Multi National Force and Observers unit in the Sinai

SELECTED BIOGRAPHIES

Included are selected biographies of participants at the time:²⁵¹

Crooks, Air Marshal David Manson. (8 December 1931 -). Born at Rangiora, Crooks joined the RNZAF in 1951 after beginning flying with the Canterbury Aero Club. After Compulsory Military Training he joined the RNZAF and graduated as a pilot. He flew Mustang fighters and studied flying training in the United Kingdom in 1955. He was a pilot in 14 Squadron, then stationed in Singapore. He subsequently served in the Defence Secretariat, commanded the Flying Training School in 1963 at Wigram, attended the Royal College of Defence Studies in England, and in 1970 commanded Ohakea and Wigram bases. He was then successively Director of Strategic Policy at Defence HQ (1976-77), Air Officer Commanding RNZAF Operations Group (1978-80), and Deputy Chief of Air Staff (1980-83). As Chief of Air Staff from 1983 to 1986 he secured a major modernisation programme for the Skyhawks. He was made a CB in 1985. When he became Chief of Defence Staff in 1986, he faced problems of low morale and loss of purpose among the armed forces following the ANZUS dispute. His difficult relationship with the Government was exacerbated by the circumstances of the New Zealand Government's response to the first of the Fiji coups of 1987. The recriminations over these tensions have continued. He is a Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society. He acted as a consultant to the aviation industry after retirement as well as being involved in a number of service and community organisations

Domett, Read Admiral Douglas Brian. (1932-1994) Born in Hamilton on 12 May 1932 he was educated at Putaruru and Palmerston North Boys High Schools. He joined the RNZN in 1950 and served on HMNZS Black Prince, Pukaki, Hawea, Rotoiti, Endeavour, and Otago. He commanded HMNZS Waikato in 1972 and HMNZS Canterbury in 1974.

²⁵¹ Material on Crooks, Mace, Hensley, McIver and McLean drawn in part from Ian McGibbon (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Military History*, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 2000. Additional biographical material was provided by the Defence Force library and extracted from the *New Zealand Who's Who Aotearoa 1998*.

From 1970 to 1972 he was the Naval Attaché at the New Zealand Embassy in Washington DC. He was appointed Director of Resources Policy in Defence HQ from 1976 to 1979 and attended the Royal College of Defence Studies in the United Kingdom in 1980. In 1983 he was appointed Deputy Chief of Naval Staff. He was appointed Chief of Naval Staff in May 1987. He died on 9 December 1994.

Henderson, Dr John. Educated at Canterbury University graduating with an MA, later attended Duke University in the USA and completed a PhD in political science in 1976. Presently he is Head of the Political Science Department at Canterbury University. He was Deputy Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in London from 1982 to 1985. He became Director of the Prime Minister's Advisory Group from 1985 to 1989 where he was involved in reviewing defence policy. His publications include *Rowling: The Man and the Myth*.

Hensley, Gerald Christopher Philip. (4 December 1935 -) Born in Christchurch and educated at St Bede's College and at the University of Canterbury, where he graduated with a history MA, with honours. He began his career in the Department of External Affairs and saw service in Western Samoa, New York, London and Washington DC. From 1976 to 1980 he was New Zealand High Commissioner in Singapore. In the London post he was the executive assistant to the first Commonwealth Secretary-General. He then took up the position as permanent head of the Prime Minister's Department until 1987. Following the election of the fourth Labour Government in 1984, his position became increasingly difficult. In 1987 he was appointed as Coordinator for Domestic and External Security. Members of the Labour Government expressed concern at his proposed appointment as Secretary of Defence in 1990 and he was appointed Chief Policy Adviser in the Ministry of Defence. As a consequence of the controversy over what should have been a non-political appointment he was sent on a period 'gardening leave' by the Labour Government. He was Secretary of Defence from 1991 to 1999. As the principal architect of the 1991 Defence white paper, he developed the concept of self-reliance in partnership. This policy underpinned the National Government's approach to defence post-ANZUS. He was appointed a CNZM and retired in 1999 after 41 years public service.

Lange, Right Honourable David. (4 August 1942-) Born in Auckland, he was educated at Otahuhu College and Auckland University where he studied law. After admission as a lawyer in 1966, he practised law in Kaikohe and Auckland. He was active in the anti-Vietnam War movement. For a time he tutored law while completing an LL.M. He entered Parliament as the Labour member for Mangere in 1977. He became Leader of the Opposition in 1983 and Prime Minister after the general election in 1984. He led a series of radical economic reforms and the Government's strong anti-nuclear stance. After re-election in 1987 his Government became increasingly unpopular as the New Zealand economy foundered. He relinquished office in 1990 when he lost caucus support. He served on as a Member of Parliament until he resigned in 1999. He was appointed to the Privy Council in 1984 and was made a Companion of Honour in 1990.

Mace, Lieutenant-General Sir John Airth (29 June 1932 -) Born in Ashburton, he graduated from the Royal Military College, Duntroon in 1953 and was commissioned in the infantry. From 1955 to 1957 he was in Malaya with the original New Zealand SAS Squadron, and took part in Malayan Emergency operations, gaining a mention in dispatches. After serving in the Defence Secretariat for two years, he commanded the squadron between 1960 and 1962 and again in 1965, following his return from attendance at the Staff College at Camberley in the United Kingdom. He was involved in Confrontation operations in 1966 as a company commander in 1RNZIR and the Vietnam War the following year as the first commander of V Company. For this service he was awarded the MBE. Postings included to Director of Infantry and SAS (1969-70), Commanding Officer, 1RNZIR in Singapore (1971-1973) and Commander, New Zealand Force South East Asia (1979-80). He studied at the Joint Services Staff College, Canberra, in 1974 and the Royal College of Defence Studies in London in 1981. After serving as Deputy Chief of Defence Staff for three years, he became Chief of General Staff in 1984, and was appointed Chief of Defence Staff three years later. He was made a CB in 1986 and a KBE in 1990.

McIver, Lieutenant-General Donald Stuart (22 January 1936 -) Born in Auckland, he joined the New Zealand Army in 1952 and, after graduating from the Royal Military College, Duntroon in 1957, was commissioned and posted to the New Zealand Regiment. He gained active service experience in Malaya (later Malaysia) in 1958-59 and 1963-65

and in South Vietnam, where he was second-in-command of 2nd (ANZAC) Battalion, in 1971. He was on exchange in Canberra between 1973 and 1975. Later he commanded the Army's 1st Task Force Region in 1978-80, was Deputy Commander of New Zealand Force South East Asia in 1980-81, and attended the Royal College of Defence Studies in London in 1984. He was invested with an OBE in 1981. In 1987 he became Chief of General Staff, but left the position early in February 1989 to command the Multinational Force and Observers monitoring the Israel-Egypt peace treaty in the Sinai. He was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant General in this appointment. He was the first New Zealand officer to command a peace-keeping force and he held the post until 1991. He retired from the Army in 1991 and for the next eight years was Director of the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service. He is currently serving in the New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations, in New York. He was made an OBE in 1981 and a CMG in 1995.

Neville, Air Vice-Marshal Patrick. Neville joined the RNZAF in 1955 after service with the RAF. After serving with No 5 Squadron, then operating Sunderland flying boats in Fiji, he was selected for training in Britain in 1957 on Canberra jet bombers. The following year he joined No 75 (Canberra) Squadron in Malaya. In 1960 he joined No 14 (Canberra) Squadron at RNZAF Base Ohakea and following appointments in Defence Headquarters took command of the Strike Support Unit at Ohakea in 1966. Later that year he took command on No 14 Squadron and in 1969 was appointed Officer Commanding RNZAF Base Ohakea. Following a period in Defence Headquarters, Air Vice-Marshal Neville was appointed Senior Air Staff Officer in the Air Headquarters of the ANZUK Force in Singapore. In 1974, with the formation of the New Zealand Force South-East Asia, he was appointed Deputy Commander. Following his return to New Zealand in 1975 he held senior appointments on the RNZAF Air Staff in Wellington before taking command of RNZAF Base Auckland in 1978. Air Vice-Marshal Neville was appointed Commander RNZAF Support Group in 1979 and was subsequently appointed Air Officer Commanding RNZAF Support Group. He became Assistant Chief of Defence Staff for Operations and Plans in Defence Headquarters in 1982 and a year later appointed as Head of the New Zealand Defence Liaison Staff in London. He promoted to Air Vice-Marshal on assuming the position of Chief of Air Staff on 16 October 1986. He retired from the services in 1989.

O'Flynn, Honourable Francis Duncan (24 October, 1818 -). Born in Greymouth, he was educated in Christchurch and at Victoria University of Wellington from where he graduated with a BA in 1940. He was the NZ Universities cross-country champion in 1941. He served in the RNZAF in No 6 Flying Boat Squadron from 1942-46 after which he joined the law firm of Regan and Arndt as a law clerk. He returned to university and obtained a law degree in 1948. He was in a legal partnership until 1968 when he was called to the Bar as a barrister-sole, later becoming a Queen's Counsel. Entered Parliament for Labour as member for Kapiti in 1972. Between 1984 and 1987 he held a number of ministerial portfolios, including that of Minister of Defence. Somewhat marginalised by David Lange, he was frustrated at not being appointed Attorney-General and he retired from Parliament in 1987 after a period of illness. He was a member of the Otaki Borough Council from 1968 to 1971.

Rabuka, Sitiveni (Steve) (1947-) Rabuka was a protégé of Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau who is his paramount chief. He received his military training in New Zealand, Australia and India. He attended the Indian Armed Forces Staff College in 1979 and received an MSc in defence studies while there. He also attended the Australian Joint Services Staff College. At the time of the coup he was being groomed to take command of the RFMF. An accomplished sportsman, he has played rugby for Fiji and is a keen golfer. Rabuka is a strong Fijian nationalist but probably not a member of the *Taukei*. He was known to be an outstanding military commander with the ability to inspire troops, but it has been suggested he had limited administrative skills. He was well known to many New Zealand Defence personnel.

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²⁵³ Date protocols contained in military signals traffic are usually in the standard form 091115M May 87. The first two numbers are the day, the next four numbers the time, using the 24 hour clock system, followed by the time zone initial (M), then the month and year. In the example the conventional way to write this would be 11.15 am in New Zealand on 9 May 1987. New Zealand is in the Mike (M) time zone but signals are usually converted to Zulu (Z) time (GMT or UTS time). Zulu time is used to avoid confusion over when the time a message was sent.

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