Chapter 10

Challenges during the first 12 months

Unlike Operations *Morris Dance* and *Lagoon*, Operation *Bel Isi* would turn out to be a longer-term operation. Its duration would exceed the four and a half month tour of the 1000-strong joint force deployed to Somalia in 1993, which had first exposed the Australian Defence Force (ADF)'s weaknesses in logistics and command and control.[1] The challenges faced in the first 12 months of Operation *Bel Isi* illustrated persistent problems with force command and sustainment that had been glimpsed during Operations *Morris Dance* and *Lagoon*. Headquarters Australian Theatre (HQ AST) had not understood the requirements for specific force preparation and deployment. Problems soon emerged with force sustainment.

The momentum of the establishment of the Truce Monitoring Group (TMG) at Loloho increased significantly with the arrival of HMAS *Success* and HMAS *Tobruk*, on 5 December 1997.[2] Lieutenant Colonel Paul Rogers was surprised and disappointed to find that HMAS *Tobruk* had been slowed down for several hours doing 'figure 8s' to allow HMAS *Success* to catch up, so that both ships could arrive together. Rogers needed to discharge HMAS *Tobruk* as soon as possible to set up the Logistic Support Team (LST) to support monitoring operations.[3] The New Zealanders had already conducted site reconnaissance and were calling on Rogers to provide the logistic support to set them up. Rogers had anticipated he would have to accommodate no more than 200 personnel in Loloho in line with the numbers cap put on the Headquarters Truce Monitoring Group (HQ TMG) and the LST. Unlike higher headquarters in Australia, the New Zealanders did not seem to be fussed if their numbers exceeded agreed limits. By 8 December 1997, Rogers was accommodating 207 New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF), 145 Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel, a Fijian liaison officer, and a Ni Vanuatu liaison officer—a total of 354 persons.

Logistic support was one of the contentious issues between the NZDF and the ADF during the lead up to Operation *Bel Isi*. Two separate national logistic systems ended up supporting the TMG. There was no coordination of these supply chains. During the rushed days in November 1997, there were robust discussions at Land Headquarters and the Logistic Support Force (LSF) about the command and control of logistic support for Operation *Bel Isi*, including the provision of weekly air force courier flights and arrangements for mail.[4] Colonel John Culleton and Lieutenant Colonel Murray Slip, a senior logistician at Land Headquarters, offered that problems identified supporting troops in Somalia in 1993 could be overcome by including logistic staff with operations staff at Land

Headquarters and establishing a special 'Operation *Bel Isi* Coordination Cell' at the Defence National Supply and Distribution Centre (DNSDC) to monitor resupply.

Colonel Jeff Wilkinson sought to be appointed Commander Joint Logistics as a component commander at HQ AST. Wilkinson commanded most of the logistic personnel and assets before their assignment to Operation *Bel Isi*. Unlike Culleton's staff, Wilkinson's formation was involved in the practical challenges of running logistic operations in Australia on a daily basis. Culleton's logistic operations staff did not have habitual relationships with deployed logistic personnel or day-to-day experience of ensuring that items of supply reached customers on time. As a joint logistic commander, Wilkinson envisaged being responsible to Jim Connolly and Frank Hickling for force sustainment of Operation *Bel Isi*. He sought command of Rogers and the LST, as well as influence over DNSDC, 1 JMOVGP and navy and air force assets.[5]

Hickling did not concur with Wilkinson's views, or that results of operational analysis of Operation *Solace* in Somalia and Operation *Lagoon* warranted the appointment of a joint logistic component commander.[6] Hickling took Culleton's advice that the remedial measures which he and Slip had put in place should be given the opportunity to work. He did not press Connolly to appoint a combined and joint logistic commander, who would monitor NZDF logistic support as well as control the ADF supply chain to Bougainville—a chain that would rely on navy and air force assets.

A comparative examination of the Australian and New Zealand force sustainment for Operation *Bel Isi* reveals gaps between intent and outcome. Connolly and Commodore Mark Wardlaw Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN), Assistant Chief of the Defence Force—Operations (ACOPS) NZDF, signed a combined New Zealand–Australian logistic support instruction for Operation *Bel Isi* on 4 December 1997. Hickling signed his administrative instruction for Operation *Bel Isi* two days later.[7] Wardlaw's and Connolly's instruction contained descriptions of the New Zealand and Australian arrangements for resupply that also specified coordination requirements. On paper, both their combined instruction and Hickling's instruction synchronised force sustainment effectively. There were some differences between NZDF and ADF approaches, but overall the NZDF and ADF resupply chains were viable, if nominated agencies complied with directions given to them.

By coincidence, both NZDF and ADF nominated their corresponding Land Headquarters to set up 24-hour logistic operations cells and to coordinate resupply. Headquarters Land Force Command in Auckland established a TMG Logistic Support Agency.[8] Land Headquarters in Sydney supplemented its operations room with logistic watch keepers, who came from Wilkinson's staff at Headquarters Logistic Support Force (HQ LSF) in Randwick. Both instructions

made their equivalent support commanders and joint movements organisations responsible for the provision of supply and movement of personnel and *matériel* to and from Bougainville. The instructions sought 24 hour-a-day responsiveness as well as cross-Tasman coordination of resupply flights. These flights were to occur on a weekly basis, with the Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) and the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) providing flights on alternate weeks.[9]

Aside from logistic watch keepers at Land Headquarters, the engine room for the ADF resupply chain was to be a DNSDC Operation *Bel Isi* Coordination Cell, with representation from 1 JMOVGP, 'to ensure all demands from Bougainville are actioned IAW [in accordance with] required timeframes'. Hickling's instruction directed this cell to provide periodic reports to his staff and Major General Des Mueller, Commander Support Command–Australia in Melbourne, on progression of demands with information copies to HQ AST on the volume of demands and any problems that might arise. The instruction by Wardlaw and Connolly directed Mueller to 'ensure all demands placed on the AS [Australian] resupply system for Op Bel Isi are tracked and satisfied within AUSMIMPS [Australian Standard Matériel Issue and Movement Priority System] time frames'. In addition, Mueller was to 'provide details to HQ TMG LST on delivery date/time for all demands placed on the AS [Australian] resupply system for duration of Op Bel Isi'.[10]

The demand chain for resupply was included as Annex B to the combined instruction as a 'flow diagram'. It showed that LST staff at Loloho would send demands for supply to logistic staff at HQ TMG in Arawa, who would send them onto Land Headquarters staff. Presumably logistic watchkeepers would then forward them to DNSDC, who would satisfy demands and arrange with the joint movements group (1 JMOVGP) for consignments to go to Richmond RAAF Base for onward movement to Bougainville, either in RNZAF aircraft transiting through, or on Australian aircraft from Air Lift Group (ALG) based at Richmond. In short, General John Baker delegated theatre command of Operation *Bel Isi* to Connolly, who delegated operational command to Hickling, who directed Mueller, the national distribution centre at Moorebank, 1 JMOVGP and Headquarters Air Command—in an instruction—to make the supply chain to Bougainville work, in conjunction with the RNZAF.

Thus, Hickling and his staff had responsibility for resupply, but depended on the cooperation of enabling supply and movements agencies that they did not command and had no habitual relationship. Would Mueller's staff, Connolly's Joint Administration Branch and his joint movements group, as well as a special Operation *Bel Isi* Cell at DNSDC make the system work better than it had for Operation *Solace* in 1993 and Operation *Lagoon* in 1994? Would assigned logistic staff from Administration Branch, Land Headquarters and watchkeepers from Wilkinson's headquarters, who were supplementing Culleton's operations staff,

be sufficient to solve problems as they arose? Discussions over the provision of a weekly air force courier to Bougainville quickly faltered: there would be no courier.[11] Staff from ALG at Richmond advised that once a C-130 *Hercules* load of stores and personnel was ready for onward movement, they would assign an aircraft in accordance with extant priorities.

By January 1998, the consequences of rushed logistic planning and capping numbers without analysing services to be provided were now being felt. Resupply arrangements had also begun to fail.[12] There was no coordination of air movements by the NZDF and the ADF into and out of Bougainville.[13] Staff at joint movements groups in Auckland and Sydney had no mechanism to achieve coordination either through a joint logistic commander and his headquarters or through the New Zealand Land Force Headquarters or Land Headquarters in Sydney. The only communication between the two land headquarters across the Tasman Sea was through liaison officers, who reported what they saw but were not employed to remedy coordination problems. Major Neil Smith, the ADF Liaison Officer at Land Force Headquarters in Auckland, wrote:

> In summary, the co-ordination of air movements, and the use of each other's aircraft for the onward movement of personnel and stores had not been well coordinated at this stage of the operation, which means that it could be not described technically as a combined operation, i.e. not one whereby the logistic resources are put under the command of an individual either to move or to resupply.[14]

In effect, Operation *Bel Isi* incorporated two parallel force sustainment operations. According to Rogers, there was no monitoring of the priorities of demands for items of supply. Onward movement of consignments from Australia and New Zealand was decided by order of arrival at air force bases rather than by operational priorities. There were numerous examples of where low-priority items were flown to Bougainville ahead of more critical items.[15] On 23 and 24 January 1998, Rogers sent minutes to Culleton's staff listing those items that had not been delivered on time or, indeed, at all.[16] He recognised that the Christmas period meant that the ADF logistic system would be less responsive; however, the operational tempo in Bougainville did not take a Christmas holiday. He anticipated that delays would mean that vehicles and equipment would continue to be unserviceable for excessive periods of time. He pointed out that his authorised holding of spare parts in Bougainville was limited. As a consequence, the LST had to rely on a 'just in time' responsive resupply system from Australia. Furthermore, all vehicles and specialist equipment items had been kept to a minimum; thus, there were no spare vehicles or major items of equipment to bring on line if others became unserviceable while awaiting spare parts.[17] He wrote: 'The result is that if an item is unserviceable, the LST capability becomes severely limited until parts can be obtained.'[18]

In his minute to Culleton on 23 January 1998, Rogers provided specific examples of critical spare parts not arriving on time. One of the two refrigeration containers broke down on 29 December 1997 and still awaited spare parts before it could be repaired three weeks later. For the time being, HMNZS *Endeavour*, alongside at Loloho, kept perishable food cool. One of two 60 kVA generators had been unserviceable since 14 December awaiting spare parts. If the other generator broke down, there would be no electrical power in Loloho except that provided by New Zealand ships moored alongside. Rogers emphasised that the LST should not have to depend on RNZN goodwill. After the New Zealand ships left on 31 January, the ADF logistic support system for Operation *Bel Isi* would be on its own.[19]

Rogers detected that the Australian air force's air freight system was off-loading consignments for Operation *Bel Isi* and reloading them later. Some items were just not arriving or were being lost somewhere along the air supply chain. From mid-December until mid-February 1998, the number of outstanding demands not satisfied by their requested delivery date grew steadily. Fifty per cent of items, on average, were late; with about half of them being over two weeks late.[20] Rogers was sending logistic reports each week describing the deterioration in resupply, including his highest priorities for remedial action. The ADF logistic system was simply unable to supply spare parts to an offshore operation in a timely manner. Well- meaning staff at Land Headquarters could only pass on Rogers' concerns to Mueller's headquarters in Melbourne. Rogers wrote:

> To put it quite simply, the satisfaction rate is disappointing, and does not reflect what should be expected on an operation. It is apparent that delays are occurring in some instances within the supply system and other instances because consignments were unable to be married up with aircraft in a timely manner. In particular there had been a number of opportunity aircraft flying into Bougainville which have been poorly utilised.

> The LST was structured on very light manning on the basis of receiving regular and responsive resupply from Australia. The commitment to provide the latter has changed, and it may be appropriate to reconsider a number of key premises regarding the structure and operation of the LST. If this would occur, we would need to increase the holdings of some critical items in order to ensure greater redundancy [spare capacity] on the ground. Holdings of repair parts would also need to be to be increased in Bougainville with the additional manning required to manage those holdings.[21]

Culleton passed Rogers' concerns through staff channels to distribution staff at the DNSDC and supply staff at HQ Support Command. There is no evidence

that anything was done to implement Rogers' recommendations.[22] The air force freight handlers continued to off-load and delay Operation *Bel Isi* consignments *en route*. Distribution staff delivered consignments of stores for Bougainville, either boxed or not, to Richmond Air Base for onward movement on the next available aircraft. They left it to someone else to pack, load and dispatch consignments. Once Operation *Bel Isi* consignments were picked up in accordance with air force priorities, aircraft flying north often stopped off at Amberley Air Base near Brisbane and Townsville Air Base to refuel and take on further consignments. On several occasions, Bougainville consignments were off-loaded to make way for consignments assessed by air force freight movements staff to be of a higher priority. Thus, Bougainville consignments remained at Richmond until they came to the head of the air freight queue, and they began to accumulate in hangers at Amberley and Townsville awaiting onward movement when there was space available on transiting aircraft. There was no automated means to identify when, where or why air force staff off-loaded Operation *Bel Isi* consignments, or when they were likely to be loaded for onward movement again. Bags of mail were in stranded consignments waiting in Sydney or off-loaded at Amberley and Townsville. No one was counting the mail bags into the air force air freight system and verifying their arrival in Bougainville. Intermittent mail diminished the morale of those serving in Bougainville, who were disappointed because their Operation was only a few hours flight time from Townsville.[23]

By mid-February 1998, the ADF resupply system into Bougainville was becoming more unreliable and the NZDF system had virtually stopped. Roger's staff had submitted just over 850 demands for resupply during the previous 10-week period. An average of 56 per cent of demands arrived on time, 28 per cent arrived over two weeks late and a further five per cent arrived over four weeks late. Just over 10 per cent of demands failed to arrive at all. During the same period, his staff submitted 770 demands to the NZDF logistic system under combined logistic support arrangements agreed by the ADF and NZDF. An average of 16 per cent was satisfied on time, with a further 14 per cent arriving over two weeks late. By the end of the period, 68 per cent of demands had not been met at all. After 31 January 1998, the NZ resupply system shut down, leaving 90 per cent of outstanding demands unsatisfied.[24]

It was somewhat ironic that Colonel Wilkinson, who had failed in his quest to be appointed Joint Logistic Commander in December, arrived at Arawa on 15 February 1998 to take over from Colonel Steve Joske as Chief of Staff. He received a personal insight into the problems of resupply. His trunk containing his personal effects was off-loaded without his knowledge or consent in Townsville. Subsequently, it took 10 days for his trunk to reach him in Bougainville.[25] By the time Wilkinson arrived, Rogers had handed over to Major

Kim Faithfull and returned to Australia. Before his departure, Rogers wrote in his final report that air resupply arrangements and lack of spare parts were limiting operational effectiveness.[26]

By the end of February 1998, Hickling was frustrated with the management of re-supply to Bougainville. He directed the acting Commander LSF, Lieutenant Colonel Craig Boyd, to manage demands from the TMG and to monitor and trouble shoot the Operation *Bel Isi* resupply system. The provision of logistic watchkeepers in Culleton's operations room had failed. The Operation *Bel Isi* Coordination Cell at DNSDC was disbanded. Yet again the ADF's national distribution organisation had proved to be base-centric and unresponsive. The ADF's 1 JMOVGP proved to be a booking agency rather than a logistic agency, monitoring the movement and delivery of consignments. The air force air freight system continued to disappoint. Hickling, and his staff had failed to ensure a responsive resupply chain to a deployed force, just as Arnison and his staff had failed to do so for Operation *Lagoon*, and Major General Murray Blake, the Land Commander in 1993, and his staff had failed to do so for Operation *Solace* in Somalia. None of these officers had authority or control over the enabling logistic organisations or transport assets.

In an effort to improve the management of the Operation *Bel Isi* resupply system, Boyd established a 24-hour-a-day logistic operations room, dubbed the Logistic Management Centre, run by captains and warrant officers at HQ LSF. He and his staff performed the functions of processing, monitoring and troubleshooting the supply chain for Operation *Bel Isi*, but were not given any authority over enabling agencies operating the chain or access to Hickling to discuss resupply issues. Operations and logistic staff at Land Headquarters ensured that they would still be conduits to Hickling on issues related to Operation *Bel Isi*.[27] Thus, Boyd had responsibility for the performance of the resupply system, but no authority to report directly to Hickling (who commanded ADF participation in Operation *Bel Isi*) or to influence the air freight system.

In March 1998, staff at the Logistic Management Centre managed to improve the resupply and air movements system substantially by hectoring distribution staff at DNSDC and staff at supply depots. Though there was no automated cargo visibility system in the air force freight system, Boyd's staff monitored the movement of consignments by telephone. He requested that army corporals from Joint Movements Control Offices at Amberley and Townsville search air force aircraft for Operation *Bel Isi* consignments wherever those aircraft might be in the air force system. The dogged approach of these corporals kept Operation *Bel Isi* consignments on aircraft and moved off-loaded consignments back onto transiting aircraft as well as ensuring a regular delivery of mail bags.[28]

For the first time, a group of logisticians led by an experienced logistic commander followed up on every supply demand, and manually tracked every

Operation *Bel Isi* consignment through the air freight system. Boyd and his staff, with the assistance of communications specialists from the army's 145 Signals Squadron, developed software to automate the processing and tracking of demands for items of supply dubbed LNIDS—Logistic National Interim Demand System. For the first time in its history, the ADF had an automated system of following the progress of demands for an offshore operation—from the time they were raised to the time when they were delivered.

The transfer of day-to-day logistic management to HQ LSF proved to be timely. In April 1998, the TMG was about to transition under a new mandate called the Lincoln Agreement to an Australian-led Peace Monitoring Group (PMG). On 4 March, Brigadier Roger Mortlock's replacement, Colonel Jerry Mataparae, distributed a brief on preparing the TMG for a reduced New Zealand presence.[29] He recommended an abrupt reduction of numbers of NZDF personnel from 160 to 30 and return of selected vehicles, stores and equipment to New Zealand. He envisaged achieving the transition by 30 April. He was trying to draw in ADF resources as soon as possible to achieve this transition.

Wilkinson had been aware of the New Zealand policy to minimise support to Operation *Bel Isi* soon after his arrival in mid-February. Indeed, Baker recalled later that the NZDF had been trying to maximise ADF support and minimise their own from the inception of New Zealand diplomatic initiatives to seek a political solution to the Bougainville Crisis.[30] Wilkinson had also become concerned about the serviceability of NZDF vehicles and radio equipment. Unroadworthy vehicles and faulty radio equipment increased the risk of accidents and breakdown in communications during emergencies when patrols were away from base camps. Beginning on 1 March, Wilkinson began sending special situation reports to Hickling describing the deterioration in safety and operational effectiveness caused by vehicle and radio unserviceability. Risk was also accumulating because the NZDF was not replacing those NZDF Special Forces personnel who had completed their tours of duty. In their stead came inexperienced drivers, medics and radio operators.[31] Wilkinson wrote on 5 and 6 March specifying the challenges Mataparae and he faced trying to get sufficient NZDF support.[32] Mataparae and senior officers in New Zealand were at loggerheads over safety issues related to the numbers of helicopters and air hours; the serviceability of vehicles and communications equipment; supply issues, such as spare parts; the replacement of Special Forces personnel; and lack of canteen services. After not receiving reinforcement and satisfactory resupply in the first week of March, the RNZAF advised that the next resupply flight would not arrive before 18 March 1998.

Wilkinson now requested 10 Land Cruisers and Australian drivers with radio communications skills to be dispatched urgently to ensure that team operations could be conducted safely. He also sought support to establish a back-up ADF

tactical communications network to guarantee communications in an emergency. He wanted experienced Australian driver/signallers assigned to each monitoring team to ensure that each team had an experienced operator at its base camp 24 hours a day. He assured Hickling that ADF personnel would be safe in monitoring teams now that Bougainvillean moderates had convinced hard-liners that the ADF would have to assume control because the New Zealanders could not be expected to meet the costs of monitoring operations indefinitely.[33]

Connolly directed Hickling not to act upon Wilkinson's requests until further clarification was sought from the NZDF. In Wilkinson's opinion, the achievement of TMG objectives and the safety of monitoring team personnel were now being threatened by New Zealand pride and Australian stubbornness. Nothing was being done about the serviceability of vehicles or radio equipment. Of the 23 NZDF vehicles located with monitoring teams, 12 were off the road; and team commanders were operating most of the remaining vehicles in an unroadworthy condition.[34]

By the second week of March, the situation on the ground in Bougainville with vehicle and radio serviceability was not improving. The promised experienced drivers had not arrived from New Zealand. The NZDF was not improving the supply of spare parts or sending replacement vehicles. On Monday 9 March 1998, David Ritchie, First Assistant Secretary South Pacific, Africa and Middle East Division, at the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), spoke with Admiral Chris Barrie, the Vice Chief of the Defence Force (VCDF), at an inter-departmental meeting. Ritchie made it clear to him that the situation on the ground in Bougainville was unsafe and endangered Australian Public Service (APS) monitors. He referred to Wilkinson's signals that had been passed to him by Reece Puddicombe, the Australian diplomat serving as the Deputy Commander of the TMG. Ritchie recommended immediate action to clarify the situation on the ground and to determine the way ahead for logistic support.

Barrie reacted to Ritchie's recommendation by contacting Connolly and directing him or Hickling to proceed to Bougainville and take every necessary action. Connolly was reported to have been irritated by this unexpected intervention from Canberra and the release of Wilkinson's correspondence to DFAT.[35] Connolly wrote to Barrie on 12 March suggesting that Wilkinson had been guilty of 'special pleading' outside his chain of command and that he had provided unbalanced reports.[36] Nonetheless, Connolly directed his staff to facilitate the deployment of 10 Land Cruisers and drivers.

Baker appointed Brigadier Bruce Osborn, a senior officer with years of recent experience specialising in intelligence, as the first commander of the new PMG that would be established under the Lincoln Agreement. Connolly signed his directive to Osborn on 29 April 1998, the day before he took command.[37]

Connolly would retain 'theatre' command and delegate 'operational command' to Hickling, including administration and logistic support.[38] Connolly stated that Australia's military strategic intent was 'to conduct peace monitoring group operations in accordance with the Lincoln Agreement, and to that end you are required to ensure that the monitoring and reporting are to remain the main effort'. Connolly directed Osborn

> to manage a phased transition from the current predominantly military operation to a civil commercial undertaking as soon as feasible [and] to co-ordinate the transition to civil and commercial arrangements in a way that focuses combined efforts and does not compromise the impartiality of the PMG, yet still allows effective monitoring of the situation on Bougainville during the time of increasing political and reconstruction activity.[39]

On 5 May 1998, Osborn received a written directive from Hickling detailing his responsibilities and reporting obligations.[40] Though not differing substantially from Connolly's directive, it did formalise that Osborn was serving two masters and had two lines of reporting and communication. Connolly's directive also confirmed that navy vessels and air force aircraft moving in and out of Osborn's area of operations (AO) would remain under operational control of the Maritime and Air commanders. Though titled, 'Combined Force Commander' and 'Joint Task Force Commander' respectively, Connolly and Osborn were neither.

Immediately after arrival, Osborn began sensitive negotiations to ensure that the parties to a ceasefire agreement, signed on HMAS *Tobruk* at Loloho on 30 April 1998, would comply with the conditions of that agreement.[41] Unhelpfully, Francis Ona, self-proclaimed President of an independent Bougainville and hard-line secessionist, delivered public and private threats to the PMG.[42] Osborn presented Connolly with his assessment of the future of the PMG during his initial visit to Bougainville on 27 May 1998.[43] In his opinion, Connolly and Baker were overly focused on extracting the ADF from Bougainville as soon as possible, and handing the task over to DFAT and the Australian Government's overseas aid program, AusAID. In Osborn's view, they did not appear to appreciate the complexity and exhausting nature of negotiations and the fractiousness of armed groups in Bougainville, or that there was an ever-present danger of a return to fighting.[44] Osborn was drawn to his DFAT confidants, who worked closely with him on a daily basis to facilitate progress towards a political solution to the Bougainville Crisis. Since taking command on 1 May 1998, Osborn found that his most important advisor was his Australian chief negotiator, Greg Moriarty, and his most important strategic level confidant was David Ritchie, who attended all of the key negotiations and had an astute understanding of the issues in Bougainville and Papua New Guinea (PNG). Ritchie

in Canberra, along with Ambassador David Irvine and his staff in Port Moresby, provided the political 'back stopping' that Osborn sought. Like Osborn, Ritchie assessed that the future of the PMG should be decided by events rather than by a timeline, and that the continued participation of the ADF would be crucial for success.[45] Osborn felt that Operation *Bel Isi* required 'a whole–of-government approach', but that this was not being achieved because Connolly and Baker wanted to withdraw ADF assets.[46]

Though the PMG was evolving into a reasonably capable *ad hoc* regional peacekeeping organisation—one well-supported by an intensively managed supply chain from Australia, as at July 1998 there were still problems with monitoring operations and morale.[47] The internal and external political and cultural dimensions of the PMG's mission were still immature. Much of the internal friction as well as politically and culturally insensitive behaviour were due to poor selection and inadequate pre-deployment training of both Australian and New Zealand personnel.[48] Specific force preparation and rotation were not working effectively. Some Australian and New Zealand personnel remained ignorant of the cultures of the Fijians and Ni Vanuatu, and were also antagonistic to their more relaxed South Pacific colleagues. This attitude also applied to Bougainvilleans. Some Australian and New Zealand patrol commanders had been making political gaffes in their addresses to village gatherings that exposed their ignorance of the origins and nature of the Bougainvillean Crisis and Bougainvillean culture.[49]

Specific force preparation and rotation for the transition from the TMG to the PMG had not been well-designed. Pre-deployment administration and training for the Australian contingents at Randwick was unsatisfactory. Many Australian personnel had to endure late warning for deployment and poor administrative support from their units and higher headquarters.[50] Often they had received either incorrect or insufficient information on what personal equipment and clothing to take to Bougainville. Those assigned to monitoring teams felt that they received insufficient relevant information on the political and cultural dimensions of monitoring operations. Despite being located at Randwick Barracks alongside Rogers, and his men and women who had served in Bougainville with the TMG, no Australians who had served with the TMG were invited to brief the next rotation of personnel during their pre-deployment training on conditions in Bougainville.[51] It appeared that the enabling ADF personnel management agencies and staff at the Deployed Forces Support Unit were unable to properly select and prepare ADF personnel for politically or culturally sensitive regional force projection.

On 29 July 1998, Osborn took the opportunity, during a visit by the newly appointed Land Commander, Major General John Hartley, to air his concerns about a range of issues that he assessed were impeding him in achieving his

mission.[52] One of Osborn's key areas of concern, aside from insufficient 'political backstopping' by his military chain of command and a lack of a 'whole-of-government' approach, was intelligence. He raised his concerns during Hartley's visit, as well as in a letter on 9 August 1998 and in his post-Operation report on 20 October. Frustrated at the lack of improvement in intelligence arrangements over the six months of his time in Bougainville, he was scathing in his assessment of the Defence Intelligence Organisation (DIO), Connolly's Australian Theatre Joint Intelligence Centre (ASTJIC) and the Office of National Assessments (ONA) in Canberra.[53] He noted that ASTJIC had provided one substantive assessment of the future of the peace process, and that the last advice from DIO had been in January 1998. He wrote:

> My real concerns at the time [9 August] was that I was basically having to operate in an information vacuum because of very limited collection and processing capabilities in the PMG and that we were seeing virtually no reporting on Bougainville from DIO, ONA and ASTJIC.[54]

He concluded his criticisms by stating: 'I still remain concerned with the continuing low level of intelligence support available to the PMG from outside the theatre.' He pointed out that the PMG had 'regularly articulated its information requirements to the theatre level [ASTJIC], [but that] 'the PMG [never] received any advice from the theatre level as to how or when it would meet the PMG's requirements'.[55]

After apprising Hartley of a range of problems in July 1998, there was a steady improvement in force preparation, rotation and logistics for Operation *Bel Isi*. He wrote, just before his tour of duty ended in October 1998, that, 'the level of support provided by LHQ [Land Headquarters] and the LSF are of the highest order and staffs are to be congratulated on the improvements that have been implemented over recent months'.[56] He commented that

> the overall coordination and effectiveness of supply will [not] be further improved until a single person is made responsible for overseeing the supply and delivery of all *matériel* to the PMG regardless of the sourcing Service. I believe that this will not be possible until a Joint Logistic Command is established. In the meantime, we welcome LCAUST's [Land Commander—Australia] recent decision to place the LSF in direct support of the PMG and note there has already been a significant improvement in the responsiveness of the LSF as a result.[57]

Osborn's period of command ended on 15 October 1998. Prospects for the peace process were still uncertain, though the initial truce and ceasefire had held for 12 months since the Burnham II talks in October 1997. There was plenty of unfinished business to keep his successor, Brigadier Roger Powell, busy. The election of a Bougainville Reconciliation Government was dependent on

agreements on governance for Bougainville that would take some time to conclude and involve an amendment to the PNG Constitution—another lengthy process. If legislation was not enacted to make way for autonomy, Bougainvillean moderates would face significant pressure from hard-line secessionists to withdraw from the peace process. Thus, with issues perilously balanced, Osborn left Bougainville and Powell began his six month tour of duty.

Observations

The first 10 months of Operation *Bel Isi* demonstrated that Baker's introduction of Connolly and his headquarters, as well as Mueller and his headquarters, into the chain of command for ADF operations was not working. Command, control and communications as well as resupply of spare parts had not improved substantially since operations in Somalia in 1993 and Operation *Lagoon* in 1994.[58] Unity of command was not achieved. Theory was not validated in practice. Joske, Wilkinson and Osborn all reported to two commanders simultaneously. Connolly retained what he called 'theatre command' for Operation *Bel Isi*, and 'operational command of reactive force protection operations', while delegating overall operational command to Hickling as a lead joint commander.

Baker's efforts to establish an effective permanent joint force headquarters and to delegate responsibility for synchronisation of the environmental commands and joint logistic support for ADF operations were not achieving success on the ground. Theoretical expectations of cooperation and synergy between the environmental commanders, the Service chiefs and the Service logistic commanders were not met. It might have been different if Connolly had been a three-star officer and been given full command over the environmental commanders, as well as their staffs, rather than having to coax them and have his small joint staff groups merely interact. However, Connolly appeared to be facing deeply-rooted resistance from the three powerful Service tribes to joint command. General Peter Gration, General John Baker and Admiral Alan Beaumont had been unable to exercise effective joint command for recent joint operations, so it was unsurprising that Connolly found it difficult during Operation *Bel Isi*. He was impeded by sharing the same rank as his subordinate commanders, his lack of authority over maritime and air assets for deployment and resupply, and naïve expectations of collegial cooperation between Service commanders and their staffs and his small joint staff groups.

Baker's appointment of Mueller as a joint logistic commander did not result in effective joint force sustainment for Operation *Bel Isi*. Based on Rogers' tactical level reports of faulty resupply, Mueller may have had command over service logistic commanders, but navy and air force transport assets remained outside his influence. Fleet managers from Headquarters Support Command–Australia (HQ SCA), formerly Logistic Command, and distributors and fleet managers from DNSDC, formerly Moorebank Logistic Group, as well as staff at ALG, controlled

the ways and means to support Operation *Bel Isi*. The same competing priorities that were extant in 1993 for supporting a battalion group in Somalia applied again in 1998, because the core business of these agencies was providing logistic and movements services to the ADF in Australia, not to offshore land operations. Like Connolly, Mueller faced resistance to joint command and control of logistic resources and maritime and air assets for operations.

Hickling declined to press Connolly to appoint a logistic component commander to coordinate joint logistic support for Operation *Bel Isi*. Aside from the results of his staff's operational analysis of Operations *Morris Dance*, *Solace* and *Lagoon*, he had no precedents to follow. The *Kangaroo* series of exercises in northern Australia did not rehearse joint force sustainment under a joint logistic commander. For the time being, Mueller had responsibility for coordinating joint logistic support for Operation *Bel Isi*. He may not have welcomed the appointment of a joint logistic commander at Connolly's headquarters. In 1993, General Officer Commanding Logistic Command might have been equally resistant to such an appointment in Land Headquarters, because resupply to offshore operations was his responsibility.

From the perspective of the functions of force projection, Operation *Bel Isi* was not all bad news. Hickling, his successor (Hartley) and staff at Land Headquarters maintained habitual links with DFAT for APS peace monitor training. These links doubled as early warning of Australian Government considerations for taking military action. Hartley, like Hickling, wished to avoid being forced into rushed planning and preparation for future offshore operations because he and his senior staff were not included in initial strategic-level contingency planning. Habitual links strengthened between Land Headquarters, the Deployable Joint Force Headquarters (DJFHQ) in Brisbane and 3rd Brigade to ensure that information on possible contingencies was passed quickly in an environment of trust, rather than one characterised by fear of leaks. Staff from Land Headquarters conducted seminars for DJFHQ and 3rd Brigade on lessons from previous short notice deployments, such as Operation *Solace* (to Somalia), Operation *Tamar* (to Rwanda) and Operation *Lagoon* (to Bougainville) that emphasised making good use of warning time that would more often come from the media in general, and Cable News Network (CNN) in particular, rather than the ADF chain of command. Based on the adage that '50 per cent of solving a problem is knowing what it is', commanders and staff learned from these seminars how to anticipate and manage risk factors, such as numbers caps; short notice for preparation; raising *ad hoc* headquarters; and unresponsive logistics, including inefficient air resupply.[59]

One of the major enhancements for force projection derived from Operation *Bel Isi* was in supply chain management. Osborn's post-Operation report testified to his satisfaction. Hartley's decision to place newly-promoted Brigadier Jeff

Wilkinson and his LSF in direct support of Operation *Bel Isi* removed Land Headquarters, a logistic support 'post office', from being accountable for the performance of the supply chain. Hartley did not have the authority to create a joint logistic commander, but he made force sustainment a subordinate command—not a subordinate staff—responsibility. The Logistic Management Centre, backed by the authority and experience of a one-star logistic commander, proved to be more effective in improving the ADF supply chain to a deployed force than the *ad hoc* Operation *Bel Isi* Coordination Cell at DNSDC, which had failed almost immediately in 1998.

The arrangements that Hartley put in place to anticipate short notice force projections, to educate subordinate headquarters and formations, and to improve force sustainment, recognised lessons from the past and trends evident for the future. These arrangements reduced, but did not remove, the element of risk from Australian force projection created by higher-level ADF command and logistic arrangements. The ADF still did not have a military commander-in-chief for operations and a permanent joint force headquarters with the authority and resources to deliver prompt, strong and smart force projection as part of a 'whole-of-government' response to international or regional events. The ADF also lacked a permanent joint logistic commander or headquarters capable of establishing and managing supply chains to deployed forces—whether they were deployed for Australian territorial operations or further afield.

For the time being, the Land Commander and his operations staff, supported by Commander LSF and his headquarters, made the military mechanics of Operation *Bel Isi* work. Concurrently, informal links with DFAT created an early-warning mechanism for force projection as well as establishing an informal inter-departmental conduit for the political and cultural dimensions of force projection into Australia's near region. These *ad hoc* arrangements made Operation *Bel Isi* an exemplar of sustained force projection, but they would only work if the Land Commander was in command. The challenge for Baker, Connolly and Mueller was to learn from Operation *Bel Isi* and put in place arrangements that would make joint command of operations, with accompanying logistic support, work more effectively.

ENDNOTES

[1] See Bob Breen, *A Little Bit of Hope, Australian Force—Somalia*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1998.

[2] Diary entry, Lieutenant Colonel Paul Rogers, 5 December 1997.

[3] Diary entry, Lieutenant Colonel Paul Rogers, 5 December 1997.

[4] The author attended all meetings at Land Headquarters related to these matters and received briefings on outcomes of meetings at HQ AST from Land Headquarters staff.

[5] The author attended a meeting between Colonel Jeff Wilkinson and Major General Frank Hickling on Monday 24 November 1997.

[6] The author attended a meeting between Wilkinson and Hickling on Monday 24 November 1997.

[7] HQ NZDF, 'Combined Australia—New Zealand Logistic Support Plan *Bel Isi* Truce Monitoring Operations on Bougainville', NZDF03130/PNG/1, 4 December 1997. Signed by Commodore Mark J. Wardlaw, RNZN, Assistant Chief of the Defence Force (Operations) and Major General Jim M. Connolly, Commander Australian Theatre. Copy held by the author. Major General Frank J. Hickling, 'Admin Instr 01/97—OP *Bel Isi* 051210LDEC 97', 5 December 1997, K97-01255, NAA, Sydney. Copy held by author.

[8] HQ New Zealand Defence Force, 'Combined Australia—New Zealand Logistic Support Plan', p. 5.

[9] See HQ New Zealand Defence Force, 'Combined Australia—New Zealand Logistic Support Plan', pp. 5 and 7, for New Zealand arrangements; and pp.8 and 9 for Australian arrangements. Hickling, Admin Instr 01/97, pp. 1, 2 and 4 restated ADF arrangements.

[10] HQ New Zealand Defence Force, 'Combined Australia—New Zealand Logistic Support Plan', p. 8.

[11] The author attended these discussions in early December 1997.

[12] Lieutenant Colonel Paul M. Rogers, 'Administration for the Truce Monitoring Group', Annex C to proposed 1 Australian Service Contingent Operation *Bel Isi* Report, p. 1. Forwarded to author on 13 August 1998 with a covering note advising that the annex was intended for inclusion in a Post Operations Report from Australian Service Commander 1, but Colonel Steve Joske did not produce a Post Operations Report.

[13] Rogers, 'Administration for the Truce Monitoring Group', Annex C to proposed 1 Australian Service Contingent Operation *Bel Isi* Report, p. 4, paragraphs 21–23. Also Major Neil Smith, 'Morning Situation Report', 20 January 1998, 'the joint movements group in NZ are not receiving timed information on RAAF flights in and out of theatre. I am not sure whether the problem is at Air Command in Australia or 1 JMOVGP. JMOVNZ would appreciate being informed of flight schedules.' Smith was ADF Liaison Officer at Land Force Headquarters in Auckland. He wrote several reports in January about lack of coordination of resupply flights.

[14] Rogers, 'Administration for the Truce Monitoring Group', Annex C to proposed 1 Australian Service Contingent Operation *Bel Isi* Report, p. 4, paragraphs 21–23. Also Smith, 'Morning Situation Report', 20 January 1998.

[15] Rogers, 'Administration for the Truce Monitoring Group', p. 4.

[16] Lieutenant Colonel Paul M. Rogers, 'Satisfaction of Demands for OP BEL ISI', LST 05/98, HQ TMG 611-1-1, 23 January 1998. Lieutenant Colonel Paul M. Rogers, 'Satisfaction of Demands for OP BEL ISI', LST 06/98, HQ TMG 611-1-1, 24 January 1998. Copies held by author.

[17] The key items requiring spare parts at the time were Land Cruisers and Land Rovers, LCM8 landing craft, generators and refrigerators.

[18] Lieutenant Colonel Paul M. Rogers, 'OP *Bel Isi* LST LOGREP 01/98 for Period ending 30 Jan 98', LST 19/98, 31 January 1998, HQ TMG 611-1-1. Copy held by author.

[19] Rogers, 'Satisfaction of Demands for OP BEL ISI', 23 January 1998.

[20] Lieutenant Colonel Paul M. Rogers, Minutes 5/98 and 6/98 of 23 and 24 January 1998 respectively. Lieutenant Colonel Paul M. Rogers, 'OP BEL ISI LST LOGREP 02/98 for Period Ending 7 February 1998', LST Minute 23/98, 7 February 1998, HQ TMG 611-1-1. Copies held by author.

[21] Rogers, Minute 5/98, p. 2.

[22] The author reviewed numerous emails and signals from Land Headquarters to 1 JMOVGP and to the Sydney Joint Movements Control Office (JMCO) at the time, drawing attention to 'lost' consignments and the possible need to re-order items of supply from DNSDC if they could not be found. Presumably JMCO staff passed these concerns onto air force staff at ALG, Richmond.

[23] Diary entry, Lieutenant Colonel Paul Rogers, 2 January 1998. Copy held by author.

[24] Rogers, 'Administration for the Truce Monitoring Group', attached tables Sheet 1 and 2. Copy held by the author.

[25] Colonel Jeff B. Wilkinson, Conversations with author in Bougainville in February 1998. The author was in Bougainville conducting research at the time.

[26] Rogers, 'Administration for the Truce Monitoring Group', p. 5.

[27] The author discussed these issues with Lieutenant Colonel Boyd in February 1998.

[28] The author's discussions with Boyd; also the author's personal observations during several visits in Sydney and Bougainville.

[29] Colonel Jerry Mataparae, 'Preparing the TMG for a Reduced NZ Presence', LHQ Operations Log, 4 March 1998. Copy held by author.

[30] General John S. Baker in interview with author, 30 August 2005.

[31] Colonel Jeff B. Wilkinson, 'Special Commanders SITREP OP BEL ISI', LHQ Operations Log, 1 March 1998; and Colonel Jeff B. Wilkinson, Commander's Diaries, Land Headquarters.

[32] Colonel Jeff B. Wilkinson, 'Special Commanders SITREP OP BEL ISI', LHQ Operations Log, 5 March 1998; Colonel Jeff B Wilkinson, 'Special Commanders SITREP OP BEL ISI', LHQ Operations Log, 6 March 1998; and Wilkinson, Commander's Diaries, Land Headquarters.

[33] Wilkinson, 'Special Commanders SITREP', 5 March 1998.

[34] Wilkinson, 'Special Commanders SITREP', 6 March 1998.

[35] Colonel John Culleton in interview with author, 1 November 1997.

[36] Major General Jim M. Connolly, 'Rectification of TMG Capability Deficiencies', 12 March 1998; and Wilkinson, Commander's Diaries, Land Headquarters.

[37] Major General Jim M. Connolly, 'Directive by Combined Force Commander to 44087 BRIG B. V. Osborn, Commander Peace Monitoring Group for Operation *Bel Isi* Phase II', COMAST Directive No 19/98, HQAST 455/98, 29 April 1998, HQAST 612-10-3, 29 April 1998, HQ AST, Potts Point.

[38] Connolly, 'Directive by Combined Force Commander to 44087 BRIG B.V. Osborn, Commander Peace Monitoring Group for Operation *Bel Isi* Phase II', COMAST Directive No 19/98, HQAST 455/98, 29 April 1998, HQAST 612-10-3, 29 April 1998, HQ AST, Potts Point, p. 3.

[39] Connolly, 'Directive by Combined Force Commander to 44087 BRIG B.V. Osborn, Commander Peace Monitoring Group for Operation *Bel Isi* Phase II', COMAST Directive No 19/98, HQAST 455/98, 29 April 1998, HQAST 612-10-3, 29 April 1998, HQ AST, Potts Point, p. 3.

[40] Major General Frank J. Hickling, 'Directive by Land Commander—Australia Directive to 44087 BRIG B.V. Osborn, Commander Peace Monitoring Group and Commander Joint Task Force 106', Directive 26/98, 5 May 1998, K97-01211; and Brigadier Bruce V. Osborn Commander's Diaries, Land Headquarters.

[41] Copies of briefs, minutes and records of conversations are located in Osborn's Commander's Diaries at Land Headquarters. Also Brigadier Bruce V. Osborn in interview with author, 23 July 1998.

[42] Copies of letters from Francis Ona to Brigadier Bruce V. Osborn are located in Osborn's Commander's Diaries, Land Headquarters.

[43] Brigadier Bruce V. Osborn, 'Concept of Operations—PMG Operations on (sic) Bougainville', 4 June 1998, HQ TMG 611-1-1. Copy held by author.

[44] Brigadier Bruce V. Osborn in interview with author, 29 July 1998.

[45] Osborn in interview with author, 29 July 1998.

[46] Osborn in interview with author, 29 July 1998.

[47] Brigadier Bruce V. Osborn, 'OP *Bel Isi* II: Post Operation Report—BRIG B.V. Osborn', Peace Monitoring Group, Arawa Youth Centre, 20 October 1998, pp.7–9, K97-01211, NAA, Sydney.

[48] Osborn, 'OP *Bel Isi* II: Post Operation Report—BRIG B.V. Osborn', Peace Monitoring Group, Arawa Youth Centre, 20 October 1998, pp. 6–7.

[49] Osborn in interview with author, 29 July 1998.

[50] Lieutenant Colonel Gary R. Banister, 'Chief of Staff Post Deployment Report', HQ PMG, 11 August 1998, pp. 1–3. Copy in Brigadier Bruce V. Osborn's Commander's Diaries, Land Headquarters. Banister was Chief of Staff PMG from 1 May 1998 to 31 August 1998. His report summarised the ineffectiveness of specific force preparation and rotation.

[51] Major Paul M. Nothard in interview with author, 25 July 1998 (Nothard was the operations officer at Monitoring Team Buin); Corporal Laura Kenny in interview with author, 25 July 1998. (Kenny was a linguist and intelligence operator at Monitoring Team Buin); M.J. Byrne in interview with author, 27 July 1998 (Byrne was an APS peace monitor at Monitoring Team Wakunai); and Major David J. Bartlett in interview with author, 28 July 1998 (Bartlett was operations officer at Monitoring Team Arawa).

[52] Brigadier Bruce V. Osborn, 'Discussion Points—LCAUST, 29 Jul 98', 29 July 1998'. Copy located in Osborn's Commander's Diaries. Copy also held by author.

[53] Osborn, 'Operation *Bel Isi* II: Post Operation Report', pp. 6–8.

[54] Osborn, 'Operation *Bel Isi* II: Post Operation Report', p. 6.

[55] Osborn, 'Operation *Bel Isi* II: Post Operation Report', p. 7.

[56] Osborn, 'Operation *Bel Isi* II: Post Operation Report', pp. 8–9.

[57] Osborn, 'Operation *Bel Isi* II: Post Operation Report', p. 9.

58 Brigadier Bruce V. Osborn, 'OP *Bel Isi*—Communications Report', PMG 001/98, X687/98, 3 June 1998. Commander's Diaries, Land Headquarters. Osborn wrote a covering letter to a report by his signals officer Captain Stokes entitled 'X6 Post Operational Report' which was submitted unsigned on 28 May 1998. Stokes identified difficulties caused by an unclear relationship between HQ AST and Land Headquarters on the subject of communications, as well as highlighting a number of challenges he faced with *ad hoc* staffing caused by the numbers cap and inexperienced staff. He emphasised that an inefficient resupply of equipment, batteries and parts, 'had a significant effect on operational capability at the time'.

59 The author conducted these seminars and maintained links on behalf of the LCAUST.